

Technical advisory group on alternative arrangements to the backstop established

The Government has taken a significant step forward in delivering on its commitment to find workable alternatives to the Northern Ireland backstop by establishing an advisory group of technical experts in customs and trade to test ideas.

The UK and EU have a shared desire to replace the backstop with alternative arrangements to ensure there is no hard border – and both sides have previously committed to prioritising the development of these in the next phase of talks.

The Technical Alternative Arrangements Advisory Group is the first of three domestic advisory groups that the Government [announced earlier this year](#). The second will be comprised of business and trade unions, and the third made up of parliamentarians.

These groups will help inform the UK's negotiations with the EU on developing alternative arrangements to the Northern Ireland backstop, set out in the Withdrawal Agreement, with the aim of replacing it by December 2020 so that it is never needed.

The first meeting of the technical group will take place today (Thursday 20th June). It will be co-chaired by Brexit Secretary, Steve Barclay, and Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Jesse Norman.

Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Steve Barclay, said:

“There has been considerable debate about the alternative arrangements that could be put in place to replace the backstop, including how we could harness the power of cutting-edge technologies, trusted trader schemes, and IT systems.

“There has also been shared recognition by both the UK Government and the EU Commission that this work must be an absolute priority as we shape the future partnership.

“The technical group will provide a forum for experts to discuss workable alternative arrangements, assessing both capability and timelines and bringing their significant experience to bear.”

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Jesse Norman said:

“This group represents a broad spectrum of views and expertise, all of which will be needed to achieve our economic, fiscal and security objectives in the unique circumstances of the Northern Ireland land border.”

The technical group will bring together individuals from both the public and private sector, and academia, who have expertise on issues spanning law, customs, supply chains, cross-border trade and technology.

They will consider processes associated with the movement of goods across borders and options for simplifying them, such as trusted trader programmes and advanced use of data and IT systems.

The Government has made available £20 million of funding to support the development, testing or piloting of ideas, including those that emerge from these groups.

Technical Alternative Arrangements Advisory Group Members: