

The Northern Ireland Protocol

The Northern Ireland Protocol and the absence of early return of all our fishing grounds led me not to vote for the final Brexit settlement. I would have preferred to leave the EU on WTO terms, and felt we paid a high price for the Free Trade Agreement. As a heavy net importer from the continent the Trade Agreement was always likely to help them more than us. This was reinforced as with all EU trade deals by its concentration on goods where they are strong and its weak provisions on services where we are strong.

I voted for the legislation the Johnson government proposed to fix the border issues. There was always a ready fix of mutual enforcement, where we would police goods exported from NI to the Republic for them by ensuring such goods met their standards, and they could do as they wished for goods they are sending to NI. The UK had no wish to impose a north/south border and no need for one. The volumes of trade are low over that border. Far bigger were the volumes of trade between GB and NI which should be internal matters for the UK with no need for border controls. I was annoyed when this legislation which had passed the Commons was abandoned.

I voted against the Windsor Framework. This did impose a border between NI and GB, requires checks on GB to NI trade and requires all business whether for export or not to be EU law compliant in NI. It meant NI faced new EU legislation which it had no part in debating or amending which the rest of the UK did not have to adopt as a non member of the EU. It was no wonder the DUP felt they could not work in Stormont all the time they were treated differently to the rest of the UK and all the time they faced new laws with no representation.

I wish to see the draft law the government is now proposing which the DUP leadership says will address these two crucial issues. I look forward to seeing the guarantees the DUP has won on EU law and border controls to GB. It is important NI is fully part of the UK internal market with no additional controls on a sea border between NI and GB.