

The Protocol Vote

22 Conservative MPs including myself voted against the Statutory Instrument on the so called Stormont brake. Some said it was also a vote against the principle of the Agreement with the EU though that did not appear in the motion. It is reported that another 48 Conservative MPs abstained. The Statutory Instrument carried with a massive majority with all the Opposition parties other than the DUP voting for the government proposal.

The government only allowed 90 minutes to debate this wide ranging Agreement and constitutional change. Several MPs were unable to make speeches at all, several were limited to just 3 minutes and I only got a few seconds at the end. The Commons proceeded to an early adjournment at around 4.15 in the afternoon, showing that we could easily have had a four hour debate on this to accommodate more views and give the government more time to answer some of the many questions the SI raises.

The Labour spokesman wrongly accused me of supporting the Protocol in the past, unaware that on 30 December 2020 I spoke against the Protocol and fishing parts of the final EU/UK Agreement and refused to vote for it. I have been a long standing critic of the Protocol from inception.

There was no need to rush the Stormont brake part of the Agreement through Parliament. The brake can only be invoked following a request by 30 members of the Assembly in session. As there is no Stormont Assembly because the Unionists cannot accept this Agreement there can be no use of this brake. It is also difficult to see when it would be used were there in due course to be an Assembly in session, as the criteria are difficult for the UK government to trigger the process and for it to succeed without EU challenge.

All those interested in why I and others voted No yesterday should look at the legal advice I posted yesterday which was drawn up for the ERG.