

The UK internal market

The government has recently issued a White Paper setting out how the UK's single market and customs union will work as we leave the EU's single market and customs union.

The legal powers for our single market stem from the original laws and terms of the Union, and from the removal of the EU powers under the EU Withdrawal Act. The White Paper reminds us of the fundamental principles of the UK market, which rests on the principle that any company can supply goods and services throughout the UK. High standards will be maintained by UK laws and regulations.

The government proposes "enshrining the principle of mutual recognition into law" ensuring regulations are recognised across the UK. It also wishes to repeat in law the principle of non discrimination so companies can trade freely throughout the UK.

These issues will be contested by the SNP. Ever keen to bind us into common rules and laws with the EU in the name of their single market, they will doubtless oppose similar rules and regulations at UK level. Given their belief that they needed the common rules to carry on selling into the EU, they should be more worried about their ability to sell into the rest of the UK and grateful for legal reassurance offered by the Union government. Scotland sells more to the rest of the UK than to the rest of world together and more than to the whole EU of course.

The government needs to ask how much legislation it actually needs to continue these trading practises and principles, that pre dated our membership of the EU.

The government is offering more powers to devolved Administrations as we reclaim powers from the EU. As the White Paper says they will respect devolution, ensuring the devolved administrations "receive powers over many more policy areas than they currently hold as part of the EU, whilst ensuring that all intra UK trade remains frictionless". There will be transfers of power in 160 policy areas, whilst ensuring common frameworks to keep the single market together.

How much further would you go with devolution? How should the government respond to an SNP that wishes to use these issues to drive a wedge into the Union?