

Trade frictions within the UK

Yesterday in Parliament I raised the issues of trade friction between the GB and Northern Ireland again in the Commons. I will post my speech when it is available.

I was pleased that Michael Gove now accepts there are important issues to be sorted out and is engaged in talks with the EU, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Republic of Ireland. Maybe he can get an agreement to sort these matters. If not he will need to legislate urgently in the spirit of the EU's acceptance that Northern Ireland is fully part of the UK's single market and customs area to ensure the smooth flow of trade between GB and Northern Ireland. Our border officials need to know that goods destined to flow between different parts of the UK should pass as easily as between London and Surrey when it comes to excise, VAT and goods checks. The idea that there would be lots of people seeking to evade goods checks into the Republic by routing things through Northern Ireland and claiming them to be UK domestic trade is wrong. Most of the trade we are talking about is large supermarkets supplying their stores in Northern Ireland, or deliveries by Trusted traders and large hauliers who wish to keep their privileged status and good record with the authorities.

I did not vote for the EU/UK Agreement because I had worries both about Northern Ireland and fish which I highlighted in the debate. These remain real issues and need urgent attention to tackle them.