

# UK Government publishes its approach to the Northern Ireland Protocol

- The paper sets out how the UK will meet its obligations under the Northern Ireland Protocol – upholding Northern Ireland’s place in the UK and respecting the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement
- Businesses in Northern Ireland will have unfettered access to the rest of the UK market
- There will be no tariffs on goods remaining within the UK customs territory, and no new customs infrastructure
- Northern Ireland businesses will be able to benefit from the new free trade agreements that the UK will strike with countries around the world

The Government has today (Wednesday 20 May) published its [approach to implementing the Northern Ireland Protocol](#), as part of meeting in full its obligations under the Withdrawal Agreement with the European Union.

The command paper outlines how the protocol can be implemented in a pragmatic, proportionate way: one that protects the interests of the people and economy of Northern Ireland, recognises Northern Ireland’s integral place in the United Kingdom and its internal market, provides appropriate protection for the EU Single Market, and respects the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland.

It makes clear that the UK Government’s priority will remain strengthening Northern Ireland’s place in the United Kingdom, and above all, preserving the huge gains from the peace process and the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

The paper also sets out four key commitments that will underpin the UK Government’s approach to implementing the Protocol:

- There will be unfettered access for Northern Ireland’s producers to the whole of the UK market and this will be delivered through legislation by the end of the year.
- No tariffs will be paid on goods that move and remain within the UK customs territory
- Implementation of the Protocol will not involve new customs infrastructure – with any processes on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland kept to an absolute minimum so that the integrity and smooth functioning of the UK internal market is protected.
- Northern Ireland’s businesses will benefit from the lower tariffs delivered through our new Free Trade Agreements with countries like the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan – ensuring Northern Ireland firms will be able to enjoy the full benefits of the unique access they have to the GB and EU markets.

As set out in the paper, the Protocol will only remain in force as long as the people of Northern Ireland want it to. Democratically elected institutions in Northern Ireland will decide whether to extend or end the

arrangements in a consent vote that can take place every four years, with the first vote taking place in 2024.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Michael Gove said:

At the heart of our proposals is a consensual, pragmatic approach that will protect the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and the huge gains from the peace process.

Implementing the protocol in this way will ensure we can support businesses and citizens, and protect Northern Ireland's place in the UK's customs territory while upholding our commitments to the EU's Single Market. Northern Ireland will benefit fully from its access to the UK and EU markets.

The whole of the United Kingdom will be able to capitalise on the opportunities that will come from forging our own path and striking new free trade agreements with countries around the world.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP, said:

The UK Government's top priority is to protect the huge gains of the Northern Ireland peace process and as a new chapter opens in the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union, we are committed to ensuring prosperity and opportunity for all communities in Northern Ireland.

These proposals will implement the Protocol in a flexible, proportionate and sensitive way – while protecting the interests of both the whole of the UK and the EU. Our approach represents a practical way of implementing the Protocol while making sure that businesses in Northern Ireland can take full advantage of the opportunities presented as the United Kingdom begins to forge new trade links across the globe.

Today's publication also sets out plans to establish a new business engagement forum, which will meet regularly to allow Northern Ireland's businesses to put forward proposals and provide feedback on how to maximise the free flow of trade. The Northern Ireland Executive will be invited to join the forum.