

[My Interventions in the Northern Ireland Stormont Brake debate](#)

John Redwood

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that because the EU will have powers over things such as VAT and state aid in Northern Ireland, it will also have powers on a drag-through basis over the whole United Kingdom? Does the whole United Kingdom not need a veto?

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. That is why we need a solution that enables the United Kingdom Government and this Parliament to regulate the entirety of the United Kingdom internal market. That is the solution. I am not saying that where Northern Ireland businesses trade with the European Union, EU standards and rules should not apply; I am saying that we can allow for that. What I do not accept is a situation where every business in my constituency must comply with EU rules even if they do not sell a single widget to the European Union. That is wrong, because it harms our place in the internal market of the United Kingdom.

The Stormont brake seeks to address the democratic deficit that I have mentioned, and to an extent, it provides a role for Stormont to pull that brake where changes to EU law occur, but I note that it does not give us any ability to deal with existing EU laws that impact on all manufacturing in Northern Ireland—laws that have been applied without our consent. To that extent, the brake cannot apply. It applies to amendments to EU law or changes new EU laws that are introduced.

I also note that in the proposed arrangements, it is available to the EU to take retaliatory action in the event that the UK Government apply a veto to a new EU law. That is a matter of concern to us in Northern Ireland, because retaliatory action could come in a number of forms. It could include the suspension of arrangements in the green lane, which would impact our ability to bring goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. We need to be clear that it is wrong for the EU to be able to intervene at that level in the free flow of goods from one part of the United Kingdom to the other. I highlight that issue as a real matter of concern to us.

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John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

Why do EU laws apply under this agreement to businesses in Northern Ireland

that are not trading with the EU? How many EU laws apply, and why can we not see a list of them?

Chris Heaton-Harris (Secretary of State for Northern Ireland):

It is less than 3%. This preserves access for Northern Ireland businesses to the single market, and yesterday I listed a whole host of different areas in which these EU laws are disapplied in Northern Ireland.

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.

Written Answer from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an estimate of the additional grid capacity the UK will need in 10 years' time to meet the increased demand for electricity and increased renewable supply. (160099)

Tabled on: 07 March 2023

Answer:

Graham Stuart:

Analysis set out in the Electricity Networks Strategic Framework[1], jointly published by BEIS and Ofgem, suggests grid capacity would need to increase to accommodate a peak electricity demand of between 85-90GW by 2033, up from around 60 GW in 2023.

[1]BEIS, 2022, Electricity networks strategic framework, Appendix 1: Electricity Networks Modelling, section 2.1, p. 12, figure 2, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electricity-networks-strategic-framework>

The answer was submitted on 15 Mar 2023 at 14:42.

Comment

This is an insufficient answer. It implies limited roll out of electric vehicles and all electric heating systems. The Minister does not go into the issue of how much extra grid capacity is needed to take into account the heavy predominance of wind power from Scotland needing transport to the heavily populated parts of England, nor how much extra capacity is needed to handle switching from renewables to stand by fossil fuel power when the wind does not blow. There is little sign of sufficient investment in grid capacity or local network capacity to match the ambitions to switch large amounts of energy use away from gas, diesel, petrol to electricity. The bulk of our energy use today is fossil fuel dependent.

Written Answers from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent estimate he has made of the level of (a) oil and (b) gas production in the UK

in the next two years. (160096)

Tabled on: 07 March 2023

Answer:

Graham Stuart:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero does not estimate levels of future UK oil and gas production. Projections are made by the North Sea Transition Authority and are published here:
<https://www.nstauthority.co.uk/data-centre/data-downloads-and-publications/production-projections/>.

The answer was submitted on 15 Mar 2023 at 14:42.

Comment

This was an unhelpful answer showing a lack of interest in domestic oil and gas output. Surely the Energy Department charged with providing greater national security of energy supplies should be able and willing to inform people of the current energy situation and say something about how they intend to improve it.