

Government launches public consultation to make outdoor measures for high streets permanent

Temporary measures that have given a huge boost to high streets and hospitality during the pandemic could be made permanent following a [public consultation](#) launched today (5 September 2021).

From marquees being put up in pub grounds, to street markets operating all year round, permitted development rights (PDRs) allowed people to enjoy al fresco dining and visit town centres and tourist attractions as the nation reopened from the pandemic.

These planning reforms also gave businesses and councils a lifeline to operate alongside the right to regenerate and new licensing arrangements.

The government is aiming to make a number of these permanent so that people can continue to enjoy outdoor hospitality and local attractions, and businesses can innovate, as we build back better from the pandemic. The public will now be able to give their views on the proposed reforms, so they can continue to benefit everyone in the future.

Secretary of State for Housing Robert Jenrick said:

The simple reforms we made during the pandemic to help hospitality businesses, markets and historic visitor attractions make use of outdoor spaces more easily, made a massive impact. They helped thousands of businesses and attraction to prosper, made out town centres livelier and have been enjoyed by millions of us.

As part of our vision to transform high streets into thriving places to work, visit and live, we intend to make as many of these measures permanent fixtures of British life as possible.

The permitted development rights introduced over the past year and that the government are now consulting on include:

1. Right for markets to be held by or on behalf of local councils

As lockdown restrictions were eased in June 2020, the government implemented a temporary PDR which allowed markets to be held by, or on behalf of local councils for an unlimited number of days, including the provision of moveable structures related to this use.

This supported communities to hold outdoor markets and encouraged the use of outdoor public spaces, both to increase public health initiatives and the reopening of the high street. The government is proposing that this right be

made permanent.

2. Right for moveable structures in the grounds of pubs, cafes, restaurants and historic visitor attractions

In April 2021, moveable structures such as marquees and additional seating were allowed for the first time in the grounds of listed buildings, helping support the important hospitality and tourism sectors.

This has helped businesses increase capacity as they reopened, and the government is now seeking views on making this permanent.

The consultation will also seek views on new permitted development rights to support the efficient development of Ministry of Defence sites. This includes providing more accommodation, workspace, and training facilities at fewer facilities to reduce the pressure on local authorities.

This consultation contains proposed changes to two permitted development rights in the [Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015](#) which were introduced to support businesses and the high street in response to the coronavirus pandemic. It covers the following areas:

Class BB of Part 4 permitting the provision of moveable structures in the curtilage of pubs, cafes, restaurants and historic visitor attractions.

The consultation is proposing that this be made permanent, subject to a number of factors, in looking to consult on a limitation of 56 days per year, bringing this in line with the right for the temporary use of land above. Views are also sought on introducing a height limit of 4 metres, and a size limit of no more than 50% of the existing buildings on site.

Class BA of Part 12 permitting for markets to be held by or on behalf of local authorities

This enabled markets to be held by or on behalf of local authorities for an unlimited number of days, including the provision of moveable structures related to this use. Previously there was a 14 days allowance per calendar year to hold a market under the temporary use of land permitted development right (Part 12, Class B).

This consultation also contains proposed new permitted development rights to support the delivery of infrastructure on Ministry of Defence sites, to invest and transform its estate. This includes providing more accommodation, workspace, and training facilities at fewer facilities.

To enable the efficient development of MOD sites and reduce the pressure on local authorities MOD is seeking permitted development rights:

- To enable us to expand our single living accommodation and it's supporting infrastructure by up to 25% of the footprint of the total

current single living accommodation buildings (and supporting infrastructure) on a military site at the time the legislation is brought into force.

- To enable us to expand our work and training facilities/space by up to 35% of the total footprint of the current workspace and training buildings on the military site at the time the legislation is brought into force.
- Where the proposed footprint on site exceeds 4,000 sqm, the permitted development rights will be subject to prior approval with the local authority in relation to the siting and scale of the work.
- Additional restrictions apply in relation to height.

These new permitted development rights will provide much greater flexibility and agility for those military sites that are being developed enabling MOD to utilise the sites better and deliver its full capability.

Secretary of State speech to the British Irish Association Conference

I would like to first and foremost open by thanking the British Irish Association for bringing us all together in these beautiful surroundings.

The BIA continues to play a key role in promoting good relations and a forum for discussion and debate for all of us from across the UK and with our friends and neighbours in Ireland.

These relationships were central to the delivery of peace and stability offered by the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and remain just as key, as we work to build back better and unlock the many opportunities that lie ahead for Northern Ireland.

The past year has been unlike any other but as we are slowly emerging from the worst public health crisis in over a century, our recovery from it is not going to be quick or easy.

That said, I am delighted to have the opportunity to join you today at a moment of great opportunity for Northern Ireland. In its centenary year, I believe we have a chance to reimagine Northern Ireland's position in the world as a global centre of creativity, ingenuity and prosperity over the next hundred years and more. To do this we will: equip our young people with the skills for a changing economy; invest in research and development to take advantage of new opportunities; and seek new markets for international trade to showcase Northern Irish goods and services to the world. It will take enormous effort and partnership over the next few years.

As we move beyond Covid-19 restrictions, I want to see Northern Ireland go

from strength to strength in terms of its society, its economic dynamism and its vital contribution as an integral part of the UK. The pandemic has demonstrated to us the power of community, our Union, and our collective endeavour, and with these tools we can conquer any challenge.

Northern Ireland has huge potential and this Government will play its part in helping to realise that potential.

Maintaining peace and improving security will be the bedrock of realising Northern Ireland's full potential. Huge strides that have been made in building a more peaceful society since the signing of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. Indeed, Northern Ireland is unrecognisable to the place that it was during the Troubles.

Thanks to the persistent efforts of all from across Northern Ireland the threat of violence is nothing like it was before the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. However, it remains true that, despite this significant progress, there remains a small number of individuals who wish to cause harm to local communities. Their actions are not reflective of the Northern Ireland that I have come to know.

The concerted joint efforts of criminal justice and security partners to disrupt terrorist, paramilitary and criminal activity are helping to make Northern Ireland safer for all communities. Operations such as ARBACIA, which saw 10 individuals arrested in August 2020 and later charged with a number of serious terrorist offences, together with the robust sentencing of terrorist offenders, contribute to a safer Northern Ireland, reducing the harm caused by terrorism.

However, there is still more to do to secure lasting peace and keep people safe. Violent and criminal groups do nothing but cause significant harm to individuals and communities across Northern Ireland.

That is why the UK Government is supporting wider efforts to tackle the threat of paramilitary gangs in Northern Ireland and the harms caused by organised crime groups, whether this is through financial support – such as the ongoing match funding we provided to the Northern Ireland Executive's Tackling Paramilitarism Programme and have done since 2016 – or the wider support from the National Crime Agency and HMRC to tackle organised crime.

While we have made significant progress on the path to lasting peace and are working to address the legacy of the past, there is much more to do to deliver prosperity in Northern Ireland.

The NI economy has so many of the ingredients required for economic success. Exceptional talent, creativity and innovation.

We are expanding into industries with enormous future growth potential, such as cyber security, where we now have 2,300 cyber professionals working in over 100 companies. And this, together with the fantastic progress in fintech, health and life sciences and advanced manufacturing, is one of the reasons Belfast is ranked in the Top 25 Tech Cities in the world; 2nd in the

UK after London.

But Northern Ireland currently punches well below its weight economically. The economy continues to lag behind the rest of the UK on many key indicators and has done for many years.

Despite its many strengths, this faltering productivity has had consequences for business competitiveness, for employees, and for taxpayers too.

Across Northern Ireland we see pockets of unacceptable deprivation where for too long people have struggled to access opportunities to work, upskill and access basic services that most of us take for granted.

The size of the prize if we succeed in addressing this is game-changing.

Northern Ireland's economic output today stands at around £42 billion. If we could close the gap with the rest of the UK within a decade then Northern Ireland would generate £16 billion more, each year, in today's prices. This would amount to around £8,500 per person.

Covid-19 has presented an extraordinary, additional challenge. Northern Ireland's economy has been hard hit, in common with the rest of the UK; both from the virus itself and the knock on impact on business output.

I am proud of the Government's response, which was swift and wide-ranging. We put in place a £352 billion package of UK-wide support to protect jobs and livelihoods, including the furlough scheme, the self-employed income support scheme and government-backed loans.

In Northern Ireland, these support packages have protected one-in-four jobs.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, we have provided the NI Executive £5bn in additional UK Government funding to ensure it has the necessary resources to address the public health and economic challenges.

We did what it took to give the economy every chance of weathering the storm.

Now is the time to build back better and in Northern Ireland that means it is time to go for growth, to put Northern Ireland on the map economically.

And as we move forward and build back better together, there are a number of UK wide Government initiatives which I believe will be particularly key.

The Community Renewal Fund will see £11m invested in pilot programmes and new approaches that will invest in skills, community and place, local business, net zero initiatives and supporting people into employment.

The Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across Northern Ireland, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. This is a multi-year fund that will see roughly £20m coming into NI this financial year.

The Community Ownership Fund will help to ensure that community groups across Northern Ireland can support and continue benefiting from the local facilities, community assets and amenities most important to them.

Our hugely ambitious UK Shared Prosperity Fund will replace EU structural funds and will target the areas and people most in need across Northern Ireland.

All this will come in addition to the extra funding we committed since the Executive was restored in early 2020 targeting public services, communities, places, trade, growth and innovation.

This investment includes the £2 billion New Decade, New Approach financial package; over £600m to the City and Growth Deal programme; £400m in the New Deal for Northern Ireland fund; and over £355m in support for firms in Northern Ireland to adapt to the post EU Exit reality through the Trader Support Service.

As we ramp up economic intervention and investment there are signs already that Northern Ireland is beginning to reap the benefits.

Early estimates suggest that by the end of 2020, Northern Ireland's economy had recovered all of the ground lost during the earlier part of the pandemic.

More promising still, Northern Ireland's productivity now stands at around seven per cent higher than it was at the end of 2019. This is one of the strongest improvements of any region in the UK, though we will need to see this growth sustained over time.

Working in partnership with the Executive and with the business community, we will not only secure this economic recovery, but also lay the foundations for significant economic growth.

This close working will provide for a more resilient and prosperous Northern Ireland – something which I'm sure you will agree is in everyone's best interests. It will contribute to the UK's global competitiveness, as well as boosting trade with the Republic of Ireland, as one of our closest trading partners.

As an obvious first step, we must capitalise on the strengths that Northern Ireland already has.

Since becoming Secretary of State, I have had countless conversations with business leaders and they are ambitious for what can be achieved.

I have already mentioned our growing strengths in cybersecurity, where, along with colleagues in the Executive, I look forward to seeing the number of cyber jobs in NI rise to 5,000 and beyond over the coming years. As we do this I also want to see Northern Ireland build on its globally significant strength in the areas of fintech, life sciences and advanced manufacturing.

30% of the world's aeroplane seats are made in Northern Ireland. It has the oldest whiskey distillery in the world. 1 in 5 of the world's computer hard

drives have parts made in Northern Ireland.

Elsewhere, Northern Ireland's tourism and hospitality sectors are doing phenomenal work. But we also have the creative arts – Game of Thrones was filmed here and Netflix have pledged a £150m investment in future screen productions.

Harland and Wolff, the aerospace industry and hydrogen buses and hubs are well positioned to drive the UK's green industrial revolution as we fulfill our ambitious commitments on climate change and the environment.

Two weeks from now, London will play host to the Northern Ireland Business and Innovation Showcase as part of our centenary programme. It will be a major opportunity to bring together leading companies and organisations from across Northern Ireland to promote their products, services, innovations and expertise to an audience of blue chip and international organisations from across the world.

Opportunities like this are practical examples of how we build momentum behind our Government's flagship policy to level up the UK's economy and society; and in that respect I am delighted that Northern Ireland is getting itself ahead of the game.

Levelling Up is for every part of the UK that needs it.

This Government will publish a landmark Levelling Up White Paper later this year, where we will set out policy interventions that will improve opportunity and boost livelihoods across the country as we recover from the pandemic.

And we have commissioned Sir Peter Hendy to carry out a review of Union Connectivity to look at what could be done to deliver the transport connectivity we need across these islands.

As a Government we are resolute in doing everything we can to enable Northern Ireland to succeed.

There needs to be a focus on innovation first and foremost.

As a Government, we are serious about this. We have committed to increasing UK investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027 and to increase public funding for R&D to £22 billion per year by 2024/25.

Through the R&D Roadmap we have been clear that we want to level up R&D right across the UK.

Then, through the 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, we have set out our plan to build back better, support green jobs, and accelerate our path to net zero.

There are exciting opportunities emerging for Northern Ireland to be a leader within the UK on hydrogen energy. The Government's ambitious and detailed Hydrogen Strategy published last month provides the beginning of a road map

to realising this.

Connectivity is an issue and connectivity through Covid stood out last year. It is important for the Union but also for all our islands.

Trade, investment and competition is vital to any advanced economy and despite promising results for Northern Ireland in recent years, we are still well off our ambition. We will work with the Executive and Invest NI to continue to promote Northern Ireland across the world and to support those industries with the greatest trading potential.

Levelling up is about addressing the fundamental challenges that hold different parts of the United Kingdom back, and in Northern Ireland that requires more than just innovation and investment – important though those are.

In order to truly level up, we need a more integrated and reconciled Northern Ireland. And I believe greater integration in education is one of the most important pathways to achieve that.

This year marks 40 years since the establishment of Lagan College, Northern Ireland's first integrated school. We are now seeing the fruits of the £500 million this Government put into integrated and shared education in the Fresh Start deal. Today, more children, from all communities, are being educated together. But there is still so much more to do.

I believe more than 7% of Northern Ireland's students should benefit from an integrated education. I think the Independent Review of Education is a chance to ensure that every young person in Northern Ireland can benefit from a high quality education, with reconciliation at its core.

So in this 40th anniversary year for integrated education, let us redouble our commitment to building a brighter future for young people across Northern Ireland. Because that way we will achieve a more reconciled Northern Ireland, where young people can grow up in a shared society, able to look forward rather than back to a divided past.

We have a clear ambition for Northern Ireland: to make it a better place to live, to work and to invest. Northern Ireland has huge potential, great talent to be tapped into, the ambition to succeed, and the determination never to return to the conflict and division of the past.

The UK Government is deeply invested, and so too am I personally, in helping Northern Ireland reach its full potential.

That is why today I am delighted to announce that the UK is investing more than £730 million to the PEACE PLUS programme. This includes the match funding contribution from the Northern Ireland Executive, and that, together with contributions from the Irish Government and the EU will ensure a total budget of over €1 billion euros (almost £1 billion).

PEACE PLUS is the new programme designed to fund and support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

Building upon the success of previous PEACE programmes which have funded a wide range of targeted initiatives, such as the Peace Bridge over the River Foyle and the regeneration of the Girdwood Barracks site in north Belfast.

PEACE PLUS comes at a critical time and as in previous programmes will significantly contribute and support those initiatives aimed at peace, reconciliation and fostering cohesion across all communities.

PEACE PLUS – the biggest PEACE programme yet – will deliver more than that, however. Peace and prosperity are intrinsically linked, and the programme will be a key driver in funding projects with a targeted focus on economic growth; ranging from supporting SMEs to tackle specific challenges and opportunities, to delivering economic regeneration and transformation in rural communities.

We remain deeply committed to our obligations as set out in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and the institutions it created. This is why we continue to support the work of the Special EU Programmes Body which oversees the PEACE PLUS programme.

This contribution delivers in full on the commitments we have made, and backed by a majority UK contribution of almost 75% of the total budget, I have no doubt that PEACE PLUS will have the maximum impact for the people of Northern Ireland.

This all sounds very ambitious, because it is.

But rightly so; because our vision for Northern Ireland is one where we fix the foundations for growth and let Northern Ireland unleash its true economic potential.

In doing so we will reach a point where Northern Ireland continues to strive and prosper as an integral part of the Union. Northern Ireland is stronger with the rest of the UK, and the UK as a whole better off for having Northern Ireland in it and reaching its potential.

This is the time to seize all the opportunities available for Northern Ireland. To consolidate the gains we have made in building a more peaceful society. To begin to move out of the shadow of the past. And to create a more prosperous society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Lord Frost speech at British-Irish Association: 4 September 2021

I want to begin by reflecting on just how much has changed since the BIA's last conference in September 2019.

At that time the UK was in the middle of its worst constitutional crisis for at least a hundred years. Parliament was effectively carrying out the role of the Executive but was unable to muster a majority for any specific course of action. The Government's ability to implement the democratic result of a referendum was in genuine doubt. At the core of those arguments were, of course, Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the first version of the Protocol named after them. That document of course predated this Government's arrival in office and I don't think it is a secret, indeed we say it in the Command Paper, that we would have approached the events of the preceding years in quite a different way.

A month later this apparently deep-frozen negotiating ice began to crack. At Thornton Manor on the Wirral, the UK and Ireland reached the outline of an understanding on some core elements of a new Protocol. Although a lot remained to be done, it was clear to me, and I'm sure to others present, that this was a decisive moment. For the first time, a way forward on these vexed problems seemed possible.

Since then, many other things that people said were impossible have nevertheless happened. The UK emerged from its constitutional madness, the British people decided, once again, to re-affirm the referendum result in a decisive general election result, Brexit happened, and a new trade agreement was agreed in record time. With so much now done, it is not easy to think ourselves back to the confusion of autumn 2019.

Yet here we stand once again, two years later, with so much settled, and yet with the vexed question of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland apparently as controversial as ever. Why are we here and is it reasonable that this question won't go away?

Yes, it is reasonable. Despite our best attempts, the issue is not settled. Our valiant efforts, in hugely challenging circumstances in 2019 and then in 2020, did not find the right balance. The fact that the arrangements have begun to come apart so quickly this year, albeit under the pressure of certain unhelpful actions which could not have been predicted in advance, shows that we have to look at this again. To repeat – it does not mean we got everything wrong. It means that we can learn from experience, that the balance is not right, and that a new balance needs to be found.

Before I go further I want to deal with one canard, which is that somehow this is all about "EU-bashing" (as it was put yesterday) to rally support domestically and that Northern Ireland is this Government's chosen instrument. That is obviously not true. The truth is that, quite apart from the obvious reality that it would be grotesquely irresponsible for us to behave in that way, we have no interest at all in having a fractious and difficult relationship with the EU or its Member States, and with Ireland above all. Quite the contrary.

Brexit is not a thing in itself. It is not a choice to live in permanent confrontation with our friends and neighbours. Rather it is a first stage, a necessary gateway through which this country had to pass in order to give us freedom, if we make the right choices, to free up and liberalise our economy

domestically, to restore genuine political choice to our electorate, and to rebuild the country from some of the distortions created by EU membership.

I hope that our friends in Europe do genuinely want us to succeed in that way – though occasionally we hear comments which cast doubt on that – just as we want prosperous and successful neighbours ourselves. Our domestic political aspirations are self-evidently much easier to deliver if we have good and friendly relations with our neighbours, based on our unprecedentedly broad TCA, than if we are in constant disputes and aggravation.

The truth is the other way round. The current tension in the relationship with the EU ultimately in my view has its fons et origo in the disagreements around the Protocol. Those are genuine substantive disagreements based on real things, and reflecting genuine concerns in Northern Ireland. That's why they need to be resolved in a genuine way.

The reality is that the problems we have run into on the Protocol go to the core of modern-day politics. I recognise that to many across Europe beyond these islands they will be parochial and frustrating. But we here know what is involved – existential issues of territory, of identity, of borders, all against a background of a peace process and institutions in Northern Ireland which can only bear so much weight.

The stakes are high. The arguments can be bitter. And I worry this process is capable of generating a sort of cold mistrust between us and the EU which could spread across the relationship. It's holding back the potential for a new era of cooperation between like-minded states in a world which needs us to work together effectively.

So we badly need to look reality full-on. To put our arrangements here onto a more durable and sustainable footing, one that represents genuinely mutual benefit. Until we do, it is going to be difficult to get the broader relationships into the right place. This will require effort, commitment and creativity.

So let me now turn to the Command Paper and proposed new approach which we set out in July. That document sets out this Government's view of how we got here and of the many missteps on the way which shape the current reality. I don't need to go into the detail for this audience, but suffice it to say that the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland as we now have it is a unique document agreed in unique circumstances of intense political pressure. It seeks to reconcile a number of important, but competing, aims, some, but not all of which, it has achieved.

Written clearly into the Protocol are a number of different principles: protecting all dimensions of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement – the Protocol's key purpose and *raison d'être* in the first place; ensuring North/South cooperation and avoiding a hard border; respecting the essential state functions and territorial integrity of the United Kingdom; protecting Northern Ireland's integral place in the UK internal market; and protecting the single market.

All these are at the heart of the Protocol. They are there in black and white. What we can't do is pick and choose between these.

But in fact what we often hear – first hand and in day to day conversations – is that the Protocol is all about protecting the EU single market. That this is the primary objective. And that that means that goods moving from Great Britain into Northern Ireland have to be treated if they were crossing an external border of the EU, without regard to other objectives.

And herein lies the problem: that isn't a correct assessment. Any approach which views this as being the 'heart' of the Protocol, as its primary aim, is fundamentally flawed and unbalances it.

We have seen the impacts of that lack of balance play out on the ground, both in terms of political and societal impact in Northern Ireland, in trade diversion, and in the impact it has had on the essential economic ties between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. I won't labour these points – this audience knows them better than any other.

To be clear: these difficulties flow from implementation of the Protocol – not 'failure' to implement it. We have problems precisely because we are imposing customs checks, not because we aren't. That is why solutions which involve "flexibilities" within the current rules won't work for us. The difficulties come from the way the Protocol is constructed, not just the way it is being implemented.

That is why we have had to set out the approach we have in the Command Paper. That approach is a coherent one. What we have put on the table is workable and manageable. It may be awkward, it may be unwelcome to some. It may challenge accepted ways of doing things in customs or goods standards. But I haven't heard anyone say it can't work in principle.

Our view of what must happen next is based on two possible routes – both, to be clear, centred in the Protocol.

One solution envisaged in the Protocol is set out in Article 16 – a provision for appropriate safeguard measures. It is clear that the threshold for triggering Article 16 has been met and it is open to the UK Government to take a range of safeguard measures on this basis. That is simply a statement of fact.

The other solution envisaged in the Protocol is the one which we would, for now, prefer to work on. It is the one set out in Article 13(8) – the explicit provision that a subsequent agreement may replace parts of the existing text.

That is where we need to put our efforts. We are now beginning a process of working out with the EU whether we can see a path forward that delivers a sustainable and enduring arrangement.

I hope this is possible.

But if this is to work, we need to see substantial and significant change. It is going to need serious engagement with our proposals, and specifically with

the three areas that we say need to change – movement of goods into Northern Ireland, the standards for goods within Northern Ireland, and the governance arrangements for regulating this. I want to be clear that any response which avoids serious engagement with those ideas, and aims at just dragging out the process, will in the end not work for us.

I don't want to go through the detail of our proposals today but I do want to underline two points in the Command Paper.

First, our proposals go with the grain of the Protocol. They do not remove it. They retain controls in the Irish Sea for certain purposes. They envisage that EU laws can still be valid, within certain circumstances, in Northern Ireland. And they recognise that the EU and Ireland have an extremely legitimate interest in how these arrangements are enforced. Some would like us to sweep all the existing arrangements away. That is not our position. It is obvious there will always need to be a dedicated UK-EU Treaty relationship covering Northern Ireland. It is a question of finding the right balance.

Second, some have seen the third of our three negotiating strands, on governance, as either ideological, nothing to do with Northern Ireland, or alternatively a discard designed to help us get what we "really" want. That is not the case and in a moment I will say why.

I make these two points because they are linked. We are sometimes told that the EU has made a major concession in allowing its border to be policed by a third country and therefore it is only reasonable that the full panoply of EU legal controls should be applied to make it work.

But we too have done something unusual and unprecedented – in accepting that another entity's external border can be operated through the middle of our own country. I am not sure that any country anywhere has done that. Nevertheless, our proposals in the Command Paper retain that concept for certain purposes. But if that is to be remotely workable, or have any chance of being sustainable in the future, it can't be on the basis of automatic extraterritorial application of EU law. It can't be on the basis of dispute resolution arrangements under which the EU institutions treat the UK as if Northern Ireland is a part of the EU with an 'end goal' of 'full compliance', without any of the checks and balances which apply within the EU. We can now see, from observed behaviour and the EU's rapid resort to legal action for minor issues, albeit paused for now, that such arrangements simply won't work and will be a constant source of aggravation and discord in the very sensitive circumstances in which they are designed to work.

So the current governance arrangements have to evolve to reflect the reality that this is an agreement between two sovereign and autonomous entities, not a relationship of subordination or one where one party's rules have to be applied mechanically by the other. Better ways are available and have to be found, and they exist in most other international treaties.

Let me finish by urging everyone to take these proposals seriously. You should be in no doubt about the centrality of this problem to our politics and to this Government. The issue needs to be fixed and we are determined to

fix it. It is, as the PM made clear to allies at the G7 Summit, inseparable from our view of our own territorial integrity and of what is best for Northern Ireland in the decades ahead. It is important everyone grasps the opportunity, looks at the risks of not doing so, and acts constructively. We are absolutely ready to do so.

There is no doubt this is a challenging moment. But it is also a moment of huge opportunity. When one looks at the Protocol and sets it against other international challenges that we face, one wonders what future generations would say of us if we were unable to make the small muscle movements needed to get this right. If we can work to put the Protocol on a better footing, we can create a new dynamic – between us and the EU, but also of course between the UK and Ireland. If we approach this in the right way, we can move forward to a better relationship and one which truly delivers for everyone – Northern Ireland and Ireland above all.

[Holy See: New British Ambassador accredited](#)

World news story

Mr Chris Trott presented his Letters of Credence to Pope Francis on 4 September 2021



Mr Chris Trott (Image: Vatican Media©)

On Saturday 4 September 2021, Mr Christopher Trott presented his Letters of Credence to His Holiness Pope Francis, accrediting him as Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Holy See.

Following the Audience, HM Ambassador Trott said:

"I was honoured to present my Credentials to His Holiness Pope Francis this

morning. Today marks a highlight of my diplomatic career and I look forward to building further on the excellent relations between the United Kingdom and the Holy See during my ambassadorial mandate”.

“Throughout his Pontificate, Pope Francis has been working tirelessly on the global issues of our time. It will be a great privilege to work together with the Holy See and the Catholic networks to make a difference to the issues which concern us, from poverty to climate change, conflict prevention, international development, and freedom of religion and belief.”

[Read Mr. Trott’s biographical note](#)

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UK announces majority contribution to PEACE PLUS funding

The UK has confirmed that it will be investing more than £730 million* into the new PEACE PLUS programme to support economic stability, peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. This represents almost 75% of the total budget and delivers in full on the UK’s commitments to the programme.

Today’s announcement includes match funding contributions from the Northern Ireland Executive and ensures a total budget of almost £1 billion – the biggest PEACE programme to date.

The funding will support vital ongoing work to promote peace and reconciliation and contribute to the cross-border economic and territorial development of Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland.

The PEACE programmes have provided opportunities for participation and dialogue, and have brought decision-making and responsibility for community development closer to the people who are directly affected. It has funded a wide range of projects, including projects to support victims and survivors, young people and SMEs, infrastructure and urban regeneration projects, and projects in support of immigrants and of celebrating the ethnic diversity of society as a whole.

The PEACE PLUS Programme is the successor to previous PEACE programmes which have funded targeted initiatives such as the Peace Bridge over the River Foyle and the regeneration of the Girdwood Barracks site in north Belfast as a shared safe community space where people from different backgrounds can meet, relax and learn from each other.

*This figure has been calculated from the total figure in Euros, using an exchange rate of £1:€1.16448, noting this will change over the Programme period.

Northern Ireland Secretary, Brandon Lewis, said:

“Today’s announcement of more than £730 million to the PEACE PLUS programme is a concrete example of the UK Government’s commitment to helping Northern Ireland reach its full potential as a prosperous and stable part of the United Kingdom.

“As the majority investor in this programme we are determined that the PEACE PLUS projects and activities will promote stability and foster cohesion while also contributing to the economy; building prosperity and supporting the levelling up of Northern Ireland’s economy with the rest of the UK.

“The UK Government remains deeply committed to our obligations as set out in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and the institutions it created. This is why we continue to support the work of the Special EU Programmes Body which oversees the PEACE PLUS programme.”

Note to Editors:

- The UK will provide over £730m (based on the exchange rate as of 31st August 2021 of £1:€1.16448) in funding to the PEACE PLUS programme between now and 2027.
- Some of the best-known projects supported by the PEACE programmes include the Peace Bridge over the River Foyle and the regeneration of the Girdwood Barracks site in north Belfast.
- PEACE PLUS is the new programme focused on supporting social, economic and regional stability, in particular by promoting cohesion between communities. It is the successor programme to the current Peace Programme. The programme will contribute towards a more prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. It will fund activities that promote peace and reconciliation and contribute to the cross-border economic and territorial development of the region. This will be the fifth PEACE programme implemented by the Special EU Programmes Body.