

Why we must legislate on the Northern Ireland protocol to save the Good Friday Agreement.

[Bernard Jenkin Chair, Liaison Committee \(Commons\) 12:22 pm, 15th July 2021](#)

I beg to move,

That this House

supports the primary aims of the [Northern Ireland Protocol](#) of the EU [Withdrawal Agreement](#), which are to uphold the Belfast ([Good Friday](#)) Agreement in all its dimensions and to respect the integrity of the EU and UK internal markets;

recognises that new infrastructure and controls at the border between Northern Ireland and the [Irish Republic](#) must be avoided to maintain the peace in Northern Ireland and to encourage stability and trade;

notes that the volume of trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland far exceeds the trade between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland;

further notes that significant provisions of the Protocol remain subject to grace periods and have not yet been applied to trade from Great Britain to Northern Ireland and that there is no evidence that this has presented any significant risk to the EU internal market;

regards flexibility in the application of the Protocol as being in the mutual interests of the EU and UK, given the unique constitutional and political circumstances of Northern Ireland;

regrets EU threats of legal action;

notes the EU and UK have made a mutual commitment to adopt measures with a view to avoiding controls at the ports and airports of Northern Ireland to the extent possible;

is conscious of the need to avoid separating the Unionist community from the rest of the UK, consistent with the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement;

and also recognises that [Article 13\(8\)](#) of the Protocol provides for potentially superior arrangements to those currently in place.

The House approved this motion with Labour supporting when Bernard and other MPs including myself proposed it. What the UK government is now proposing by way of legislation is pursuing the policy laid out in this motion. It is important to avoid bringing into effect the many additional controls between NI and GB that the EU envisages. As the motion says there is no evidence of harm being done to the EU's single market by the failure to impose these extra controls on GB to NI trade.

More importantly, as the motion stated, the Good Friday Agreement takes precedence over the Protocol and that Agreement is now visibly damaged and undermined by the EU actions over the UK's internal market. Whilst the Protocol promised to respect our internal market the needless controls the EU has already imposed on internal GB/NI trade have done damage to our trade and more importantly have lost the support of the Unionist community for the Assembly and political process which lies at the core of the Good Friday Agreement.

The government should proceed swiftly with the necessary legal measure to restore UK internal trade. Labour would be wise to remember their support for this policy when they helped the Commons pass this motion. If they do so they help to restore cross community support for the Good Friday Agreement. Visiting US Democrats would be wise to read both Agreements and to grasp how the Protocol is currently undermining the Good Friday Agreement thanks to the heavy handed and wrong implementation by the EU.