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Mrs Ciara Ferguson MLA, Chairperson
Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny
Committee (DSC)

Our reference: MC2026/05127
Your reference: DSC 44/26

By email: [REDACTED]

26th March 2026

Dear Ciara,

Thank you for reaching out to me, and for the Committee's interest in Regulation (EU) 2026/405 on detergents and surfactants, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 648/2004. I am more than happy to provide you with a response, in order to assist with the Committee's important role in scrutinising EU legislation covered by the Windsor Framework.

Whilst I note the concerns raised by the Committee relating to the perceived impact of the application of Regulation (EU) 2026/40, it is the Government's view that there are benefits for Northern Ireland in applying this Regulation, set out in paragraph 30 of the Explanatory Memorandum, for example by streamlining labelling requirements, thereby simplifying the placement on the markets of relevant products. My expectation is that manufacturers will benefit from being able to take advantage of cost savings linked to other simplification measures. Although the number of businesses in Northern Ireland manufacturing detergents is likely to be small, less than ten, these businesses are likely to benefit from Northern Ireland's dual market access to both the EU market as well as the rest of the UK internal market.

Moreover, stakeholder evidence has found that over 90% of members of the UK Cleaning Products Association (UKCPI), supply to the EU and the majority of these have a legal presence in the EU to comply with EU regulations. The Government has continued to have active and direct engagement with the sector, including those that have submitted evidence to the Assembly's inquiry. The Government expects the vast majority of businesses to continue to be in compliance with EU rules, and therefore does not expect any incentives to cease supplying the Northern Ireland market.

The Government is, however, committed to protecting the UK internal market in all circumstances and supporting UK exports to the EU by breaking down unnecessary barriers to trade.

With regard to the Committee's question regarding the Government's approach to the detergents regime in Great Britain, as the Chancellor set out on 17 March, regulatory divergence with the EU should be the exception, not the norm.

As we set out in the Explanatory Memorandum, our stated policy intention for chemicals legislation is to take regulatory decisions made by trusted jurisdictions, such as the EU, as our starting point. This means that we are operating on a presumption of aligning our approach in Great Britain with that of the EU in order to ensure there is a single regulatory approach across the UK.

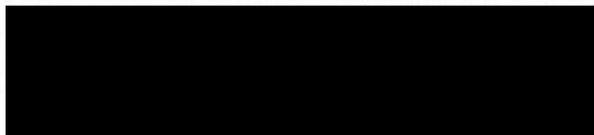
Work has already begun with stakeholders in GB and NI - who are largely in favour of a UK-wide regime - to inform and develop GB options that mirror the EU's approach to detergents and surfactants. The Government will work closely with industry and other interested parties to understand how best to facilitate the smooth flow of goods from Great Britain into Northern Ireland, including actively exploring how best to achieve an outcome of a single UK-wide label for detergents.

I recognise that industry has concerns about future Great Britain and Northern Ireland divergence. The Government will consult in good time before the end of the 42-month long transition period on how best to ensure a consistent UK market for detergents and surfactants. The lengthy transition period means we have significant time to work with industry on these arrangements.

These steps should provide assurance that this measure is unlikely to have a significant impact on the operation of the UK's internal market, and they reflect our commitment to safeguarding Northern Ireland's place in the Union, whilst also enabling its continued dual access to both the UK and EU markets.

Thank you for taking the time to write about these important matters.

Yours sincerely,



**RT HON NICK THOMAS-SYMONDS MP
MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE
HIS MAJESTY'S PAYMASTER GENERAL**

Mrs Ciara Ferguson MLA, Chairperson
Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny
Committee (DSC)

REF: DSC 44/26

12 March 2026

Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds MP
Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office

Issued via email to: wftf-sg@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Cc: [REDACTED]

Nick, a chara,

At its meeting on 12 March 2026, the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee (DSC) considered [Regulation \(EU\) 2026/405 on detergents and surfactants, and repealing Regulation \(EC\) No 648/2004](#).

This act was notified to the DSC on 5 March 2026.

The DSC decided to hold an inquiry into the replacement EU act, pursuant to paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Under paragraph 9(2)(a), the DSC must seek substantive discussion and engagement with the British Government. Therefore, the Committee is requesting your assessment of:

- Whether it appears likely that the application of the replacement EU act would have a significant impact specific to everyday life of communities here in a way that is liable to persist; and
- Whether it appears likely that not applying the replacement EU act would have a significant impact specific to everyday life of communities here in a way that is liable to persist.

In considering the potential for divergence, the Committee also requests details of the position in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Committee also agreed to ask whether the British Government is committed to aligning with the replacement EU act within the 42-month transition period, or whether there may be divergence for a period of time.

I would appreciate a response **by Monday 23 March 2026 at 11.00am**.

Le meas,

[REDACTED]

Ciara Ferguson, MLA

Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee