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Edwin Poots MLA
Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings,
Stormont Belfast,
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By email: speaker@niassembly.gov.uk

16 December 2025

Dear Edwin,

Following the Northern Ireland Assembly's democratic consent motion on the trading arrangements under the Windsor Framework, on 9 January 2025 I commissioned Lord Murphy of Torfaen to lead an Independent Review on those arrangements. I received his final report on July 9, 2025 the Government has now responded in line with Schedule 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. I am attaching a copy of our response which has been placed in the library of the House of Commons.

I was very grateful that Lord Murphy agreed to conduct the Independent Review, as an experienced former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He has my utmost thanks for the detailed consideration that he has given to these issues, and for the engagement he has conducted including with the Northern Ireland parties and the relevant civic and business organisations.

The Government's response reflects its commitment to ensuring that Northern Ireland's trading arrangements command the broadest possible support. In preparing this response, I have taken into account the views expressed in the Northern Ireland Assembly and Parliament; and those expressed by other public bodies and stakeholders, including the Federation of Small Business, the Independent Monitoring Panel and Intertrade UK. Given the number of reports that have been published within a six-month period and examined similar themes, I have concluded that a single, comprehensive response is the most appropriate and timely way to respond and set out how the Government will be taking action.

In particular, the Government is committing to legislation that will better support scrutiny of relevant regulations by the Northern Ireland Assembly and, as part of the measures announced at the Budget, we will be delivering a £16.6 million programme to boost trade within the UK internal market. This funding will deliver a significantly enhanced 'one stop

shop' facility, beyond what is available on GOV.UK, to provide a singular place for businesses to secure guidance on how to trade across the UK and the opportunities for businesses in Northern Ireland to trade across two markets.

The Government wants to deliver practical solutions for businesses and traders, on the basis of agreed arrangements with the EU. This has underpinned the Government's approach in the twelve months since I commissioned the Independent Review, including in the form of new arrangements for human medicines, freight and parcels. We have shown we have acted where the Assembly and industry have expressed concerns, such as in relation to maintaining important supplies for Northern Ireland dentistry, and on veterinary medicines, and we will continue to do so.

The Government will continue to work collaboratively with businesses, civil society, the Northern Ireland Executive, and our partners in the EU and its Member States, on all of these issues. In that spirit, we are working toward swiftly securing an SPS agreement with the EU from which Northern Ireland's traders and hauliers stand to benefit a great deal.

I would be most grateful if you could provide the enclosed response to Assembly Members as you see fit. I am copying in the Chair of the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee with thanks for the Committee's work on recommendations of particular relevance to them, which I have considered carefully.

Yours Sincerely,



**THE RT HON HILARY BENN MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**