



The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP

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

27 May 2026

Our reference: MC/26/59

Dear Edwin,

Thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister setting out the motion passed by the Assembly in January 2026. He has asked me to reply.

I take note of the debate and welcome the recognition of the advantages that dual market access can bring to Northern Ireland, and that the Windsor Framework represents a strong basis for giving certainty to businesses and traders. I am also conscious that, though not all parties in the Assembly supported the motion, Members from across the Assembly maintain an interest in ensuring that Northern Ireland's trading arrangements work well for businesses; reflect its particular circumstances; and help ensure growth and prosperity.


Northern Ireland will be able to further benefit from its position in both markets following the conclusion of negotiations between UK and EU on the new food and drink (SPS), Electricity and ETS agreements, which will further lower barriers to trade between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the EU.

But we are not content to rest whilst those agreements are finalised, and we want to continue to work hard to ensure that Northern Ireland's trading arrangements command the broadest possible support. In response to Lord Murphy's Independent Review, the Government will help businesses trading within the UK; improve the say that stakeholders and the Assembly have in the arrangements that apply; and continue to smooth the flow of goods. This will include £16.6 million in funding allocated at the Budget to deliver an enhanced 'one stop shop' advice service for small businesses, beyond what is available on GOV.UK, and new funding for Intertrade UK.

We will continue to talk with a range of sectoral stakeholders and businesses - including through a new Northern Ireland Business Stakeholders Group. This is in addition to the regular consultation carried out by both the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive with business and civic groups which are co-hosted by both the Government and European Commission every quarter. This reflects the specific arrangements for Northern Ireland to access both markets.

I hope that all of these measures will continue to support businesses to take full advantage of Northern Ireland's unique position.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Benn', written in a cursive style.

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



Department for
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& Technology

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26 May 2026

Edwin Poots MLA
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Our Ref: MC2026-00017638-THW

Dear Edwin,

Thank you for your letter of 11 February to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, the Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP, sharing the Northern Ireland Assembly's report Social Media: Children and Young People. I am responding as Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for AI and Online Safety and sincerely apologise for the delay in you receiving this response.

This is an important issue, and this government is clear that everyone – especially children – should be able to enjoy the benefits of being online while being protected from harm. We know many parents, carers and members of the public are concerned about the risks people can face online, and we are committed to ensuring there are stronger protections in place.

We will ensure that your correspondence and the concerns your constituent has raised are passed to the relevant government officials and taken into consideration as advice is developed.

You may also be aware that we are consulting on further measures to prepare children for the future in an age of rapid technological change. This includes potential age restrictions on social media and other services such as gaming sites and AI chatbots, restrictions on addictive design features and risky functionalities, and better support for parents and families. You can respond to this consultation [here](#).

Your constituent may also find it helpful to read more about the government's approach to the act [here](#), alongside useful information about Ofcom, the independent regulator for online safety. If your constituent's enquiry relates directly to Ofcom, they can write to them here: contact@ofcom.org.uk.

Your constituent can keep up to date with the latest government announcements and communications on online safety [here](#).

Finally, parents and carers may also find our [Kids Online Safety Hub](#) useful. The hub brings together practical information to help families talk about being safe online, use parental controls, understand online issues and know where to get support.

Thank you again for taking the time to write. We remain committed to making the UK a safer place to be online, while supporting people to navigate the online world with confidence and protecting users' rights, including freedom of expression and privacy.

Yours sincerely,

Kanishka Narayan MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the
Department for Science, Innovation & Technology

