



HOUSE OF COMMONS

## Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

### Oral evidence: The effectiveness of the institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, HC 781

Wednesday 5 July 2023

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 5 July 2023.

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Members present: Sir Robert Goodwill (Chair); Sir Robert Buckland; Stephen Farry; Claire Hanna; Carla Lockhart; Jim Shannon; Mr Robin Walker.

Questions 340 - 366

Witness

[I](#): Doug Beattie MLA, Leader, Ulster Unionist Party (UUP).



## Examination of witness

Witness: Doug Beattie.

Q340 **Chair:** Welcome to this session of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, where we are continuing our investigation into the institutions and effectiveness of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. We are delighted to have as our witness today Doug Beattie, the leader of the UUP, who comes not only with an impressive political record but a military record that the Committee takes note of with great respect. Thank you very much indeed.

The leadership of the UUP, and especially David Trimble, was crucial to reaching an agreement in 1998, perhaps to the eventual detriment of your party. Can you outline for this Committee how your party sees the legacy of the agreement in its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year? Basically, it is the exam question: discuss.

**Doug Beattie:** Thank you for inviting me. When you look back at 1998 through the prism of 2023, you can find all the faults and all the frailties. You need to revert to what it was like in 1998 and everything that went before and what we were trying to achieve. David was instrumental in that. If there was no David Trimble, there would be no peace process. There would be no Belfast/Good Friday agreement. In the same way, if there was no John Hume there would have been no process to be able to start with, but I have to say that they were never alone.

There were lots of people, men and women, many of whom who are unsung heroes of the whole process, who sometimes get forgotten about in many ways. It was a really historic and monumental time in 1998 and it achieved something that people thought we could not achieve. It balanced the un-balanceable and allowed us to stop killing each other. Without a doubt, there are people walking the streets today who would not be walking the streets but would be in their graves had we not had the Belfast/Good Friday agreement.

The second thing it did is it allowed for a democratic process for people to be able to advance what they wanted and their aspirations for the future. As a unionist, clearly mine is for a United Kingdom, but for others it was a united Ireland. It gave them that democratic process to be able to look at that.

Lastly, it allowed for us to govern ourselves, for Northern Irish politicians to work for Northern Irish people and the very uniqueness that is Northern Ireland as part of that United Kingdom. It allowed us to do that.

All of this was no nirvana, of course, from 1998. There were some huge issues that were never dealt with and constructive ambiguity was a real issue. The issue of legacy was never fully dealt with in 1998. It was never fully dealt with afterwards. My party was the only one of the five main parties that stood against the Stormont House agreement legacy mechanism, for very good reasons. I will not go into that now, but maybe



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if somebody wants to ask, I can explain that. Certainly we cannot accept the legacy Bill that we have today either.

The issue of legacy was never really dealt with. The issue of how we deal with victims was never really dealt with properly either. They got the huge injustice of watching people walk out of prisons who committed some of the most heinous crimes. It was difficult for them to do that, but it was part of an agreement to give us that peace. That was in the expectation that later we would do something that would claw back some of that injustice that was meted out, but we never really did that.

People talk about whatever we do in legacy having to be victim-centred. Whatever we do in legacy has to be justice-centred, but it has to be co-designed with the victims. I come from a family who are victims themselves. My Uncle Samuel was murdered also, so we understand how people feel, not to a great extent. Others feel the pain an awful lot more.

There were many things that did not happen with the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. That nirvana was not there. One of the biggest problems from 1998 onwards is that the UK Government, the Irish Government and others took the foot off the accelerator. They thought in 1998, "Here we have a deal. That is it. We have skinned this rabbit. We have fixed it". Actually, no, it was a process that needed to be nurtured with all its frailties.

After the collapse in 2002, we had that period of direct rule, which nearly regressed and went backwards in many ways. We ended up with a separated prisoner regime based on that, and other things. Then we got it back up and running again with the St Andrews agreement. Then we have had various agreements since, leading up to New Decade, New Approach.

The problem with all these agreements is that they are sticking-plaster agreements. They are not agreements where we have got everybody together and come up with a true outworking of what we wanted, like we did in 1998. 1998 was transparent. It involved all the parties and those who were opposed to it were very vocal in their opposition to it, and quite within their rights to be very vocal. Other agreements that followed were agreements that were not done by consensus and were not transparent. The people who voted, overwhelmingly, for the Belfast/Good Friday agreement in 1998 suddenly realised that what they voted for was being slowly undermined over time.

I remember New Decade, New Approach, which got us back up and running after three years of nothing, when Sinn Féin collapsed the Assembly. Steve Aiken was the Ulster Unionist Party leader at the time. We were sitting in Stormont House and were still in negotiation mode. Then somebody walked in and handed us a copy of the deal and said, "That is the deal". We said, "Okay, we have not seen this", and we started reading it. As we were reading it, we looked out the window and the Secretary of State was announcing it as the deal. We had not even read it.



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The whole point about what we did in 1998 to balance the un-balanceable needs to be changed. It has mechanisms in it for it to be reviewed and changed. 25 years on, what we have only ever done is do whatever we can do to get Stormont up and running again. We have not dealt with the foundation issues. The foundation issues of the agreement are where the problems lie.

Q341 **Chair:** Now we have new generations of politicians coming. John Hume, David Trimble, Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness are sadly no longer with us. Is a new generation maybe not as deeply scarred by the events of the Troubles? Is that going to change the way that people's attitudes move forward, or is it pretty much that nothing has changed and everybody is still a little bit entrenched?

**Doug Beattie:** No, things really have changed. If I am honest, I think that many of the younger generation still feel the effects of the Troubles. Mental health is intergenerational from way back then. When your father is suffering mental health about something that happened in the Troubles, it passes on to the family. In the main, people are moving away from that.

The politicians of the new era, many who are in this place here, have an outlook now that is more about how we progress Northern Ireland forward. How do we deal with the economy? How do we deal with housing? There is a change where people are looking forward, but we are stuck. We are stuck still having to deal with some of these fundamental questions that we have never dealt. Legacy is certainly one of them, but so are foundations. I will go back to this, if you do not mind.

Those foundations of what we did in 1998 to balance the un-balanceable, 25 years on, are proving not to give us good Government. Northern Ireland and the people of Northern Ireland need good Government. That good Government needs to have the foundations to be able to create it.

**Chair:** Talking about this new young generation of politicians in Northern Ireland, we will go to Stephen Farry.

Q342 **Stephen Farry:** That is very kind of you. I am actually over 50, just for the record. You are very welcome, Doug. To pick up on your most recent comment there about the foundations and the design issues, if you look back at 1998, in effect, we have a very rigid consociational model that was designed for its times. There are issues around designations, the voting system and the method of forming the Executive. Do you feel that that system has helped or hindered Northern Ireland? Has that balance changed over time? What is the general approach of your own party towards reform in that regard?

**Doug Beattie:** This is what we need to understand about a 25-year process. What we did in 1998 was necessary. We had to do it or we would not have got anywhere. We needed that.

I know your position on the designation system and it is absolutely fair. I have to be clear that just because I designate as a unionist does not



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mean that I am not cross-community. I can be a unionist and absolutely believe that I can work for every single person in Northern Ireland, regardless of their religion, sexual orientation or community background. I can do that as a unionist. In fact, I believe that that is what the words "union" and "unionism" really mean.

Fundamentally, there is an issue where you have those who do not designate as either unionist or nationalist, who may feel that their vote is less than everybody else's. I fully accept that. What we did, which was necessary in 1998, should naturally go through some form of scrutinising and change in the most transparent way possible. I was a great advocate of doing the Belfast agreement 1 in 1998, Belfast agreement 2 10 years later and Belfast agreement 3 20 years later, so it was always developing.

Interestingly, Stephen—you will know this—if you go back to 2016, I think we saw a glimpse of a model that might well be able to work in Northern Ireland. Through one reason or another, and I will not go into it, the Executive ended up with just two parties, the DUP and Sinn Féin. The Opposition end up being the Ulster Unionist Party and the SDLP, so we had power-sharing in its essence in Government. We had power-sharing in its essence in Opposition. Actually, it seemed to be working really well.

The DUP and Sinn Féin seemed to be working really well together. The Opposition was learning, because it was new, but it looked like we had a model of an Opposition and a Government, but power-sharing was there. What we did not do was deal with the likes of the Alliance Party. Where would the Alliance Party sit in that? How would we make sure that the Alliance Party's vote is as valid as everybody else's within the institutions? We need to look at that and do that in the most transparent way.

My argument would be that it cannot be done right now because we had an election in May. The outcome of that election, based on our systems now, is known and needs to be implemented if we are going to allow democracy to work in Northern Ireland. As soon as we do, we need to start looking at how we improve this afterwards. It cannot go on now. We cannot just go back into the same old Executive where there is veto after veto, or relationships are not right and we do not have the ability to look to alternatives. We need to get into Government first before we can make that change.

- Q343 **Stephen Farry:** What happens if we find that there is a prolonged situation where we are not getting back into Government? Clearly, you are articulating the case for reform once we have the institutions up and running, which is fine in itself, but what if we have a prolonged impasse? Do you see any situation where you would consider reform ahead of restoration, if that is what it took to actually get the institutions back up and running, potentially compared to all the other alternatives, such as direct rule with an Irish dimension, et cetera, or whatever else people may have in mind?



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**Doug Beattie:** Every action has a reaction and we know that. If we try to do something without all of the parties buying into it, we could end up isolating some of the parties. I could not envisage the Executive getting up and running without the DUP, as the largest unionist party, being involved in it. I cannot envisage it. It simply would not work. In the same way, I could not envisage the Executive getting up and running without Sinn Féin being part of it. It simply would not work.

It is difficult to see how you bypass anyone in regards to this. That is why I am saying that, whatever we do, we have to be transparent. I know that it is popular to say, "The DUP is keeping Stormont down. Let us let it fade away in the wilderness and we will get back together and form a Government". It will not work. It would destroy Northern Ireland if we tried to do that. Northern Ireland works best through consensus.

I disagree with the DUP about Stormont being up and running now. That is fair. We are allowed to have our opinions on that. I do not think right now that doing anything that excludes any party is a good way around it. The only model is the model that we have now. Then we can do the changes after that. To answer your question, I do not think that there is a plan B, apart from the Belfast/Good Friday agreement.

If this is prolonged, the UK Government are going to have to take responsibility for what happens in Northern Ireland more and more, unfortunately. Does that mean that they will have to reach across to the Irish Government? They will. They have done it already. New Decade, New Approach was done through the UK Government and the Irish Government. I do not want to see that. I want our decisions to be made by our politicians here, in Stormont and in the Executive. I do not see a plan B at this moment in time.

Q344 **Sir Robert Buckland:** Doug, it is good to see you again. Welcome to the Committee. To develop that point, looking in particular at the many developments and the changes to the strand 1 institutions since they were set up—St Andrews is the most notable example, but it is not the only one—at the risk of seeking to pin you down, are there any particular aspects of those changes that the UUP would want to see rowed back on, changed or reformed? You have already mentioned that New Decade, New Approach was done basically on an intergovernmental basis between the UK and Ireland, which you rightly say is not necessarily the best way to govern Northern Ireland. Are there other aspects of those developments over the years that you think need change in order to allow democracy and normal business to develop in a way that we all want to see?

**Doug Beattie:** Thank you for the question. In many ways, I have kind of answered some of those in that. We cannot ignore the fact that there is a rise in people within Northern Ireland who do not designate themselves as being a unionist or a nationalist. We use the word "other". It is a horrible word, but for ease I will just use that. They designate as other. We need to make sure that what we do ensures that they have the same rights in voting and the same voice as everybody else. We are all in



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minorities now in Northern Ireland. There are no real majorities. Everybody is in a minority.

I look at all the past agreements, from St Andrews through to Fresh Start, the Stormont House agreement and New Decade, New Approach. I am sure there are other side issues in between. We never liked the changes that were made at St Andrews. We were very clear that we did not like the changes that were made at St Andrews. We believe that, in some cases, they were well-intentioned within the Executive, but it created a veto culture and a confrontational culture. I do not think that that was the intention, but that is what it has done. We never liked the change in the nomination of the First and Deputy First Minister, and we have argued that case as well. We did not like that. If we wanted to row back, it would be on things like that.

It is strange to say this but, in many cases, in order to go forward you might have to go back. You might have to go back to the factory settings, so the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, in order to be able to go forward again and do it with transparency. Of course, there were other elements that we did not like. It is very easy to sit here and say that it is one person's or one party's fault. That is not going to be any good to us whatsoever.

It is pretty much like the Stormont House agreement legacy mechanisms, which we were opposed to. We were hugely anti the Stormont House agreement mechanisms and still parties want us to revert to that. The Stormont House agreement legacy mechanism meant that, if you were kidnapped in Northern Ireland, taken across the border into the Irish Republic, tortured and murdered, you would not get an investigation. If you lost your limbs, were burnt or were left paralysed or psychologically damaged where there was no fatality, you would not have an investigation. If you had a HET desktop review, you would not get an investigation.

We found that that was really difficult. It gave an unwritten immunity to many of those people who carried out some pretty awful crimes, so we argued against that. Now we have a legacy Bill that does something nearly similar to that, where it hands out those immunities. There are many agreements out there and many things that we think could be changed. On that basis, we still have to deal with the fundamentals of where the problem is. Fundamentally, right now, the problem is that the model for the Executive does not produce good Government, after 25 years. It needs to be changed. It should have been changed long before now.

**Chair:** I would argue that it does not produce a Government at all a lot of the time, which is a bit of the problem.

Q345 **Carla Lockhart:** Thank you, Doug, for your time so far and for coming over to give evidence. I want to push you on something that you had outlined to Stephen in relation to the foundations and the design of institutions. Obviously there has been a push from particular parties to



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have the institutions up and running without the DUP and to exclude the DUP. I appreciate your comments that you think it would be foolish or foolhardy to go down that route in terms of the bloc that the DUP represents within unionism. Would you actually serve in an Executive as the UUP if the DUP was excluded? If moves were afoot within, say, Government to do that and to move things on without us as a party, would you serve in that Executive?

**Doug Beattie:** We are a party of good Government. We believe in good Government. We believe in a Government that should work for the people to create the best environment possible for our people and for Northern Ireland to flourish as part of the United Kingdom. That will only work when we all work together. We could not serve in an Executive if any political party who is entitled to be there is excluded by any means. The answer to your question is very direct. We could not. We could not serve in an Executive if we did something that put you outside. It is as simple as that.

I will add to this; I hope that you do not mind. In exactly the same way, if we did something that excluded the Alliance Party, which is entitled to be there, we could not serve in it. If we did something that excluded Sinn Féin when it was supposed to be in there, we could not serve in it as well. It is across the board, but we certainly could not. It would be bad Government and the opposite of what we stand for, good Government.

The bottom line is, Carla, that we talk and we are in the same constituency. The DUP is the largest unionist party. It has a sizeable mandate. You cannot sideline a mandate such as that. You simply cannot. If you tried to do that, Government would collapse quicker than you set it up, so no, absolutely not.

Q346 **Carla Lockhart:** Doug and I have the pleasure of both representing the Upper Bann constituency, the premier constituency in Northern Ireland. You will know that, within our community, many like to see unionist unity and unionism working together. I want to give you the opportunity, as a fellow unionist. Often within this Committee we hear voices that maybe do not articulate how significant the issue of the protocol and the Windsor framework is among the unionist community, be it business or grassroots loyalists, with regards to the constitutional issues it creates. I want to give you the opportunity to highlight to this Committee the issues that you, as a party, see with the protocol and the importance that you would level on having those resolved and the need to have them resolved prior to an Executive being reformed.

**Doug Beattie:** I will start by saying this: the concerns that I will lay out are best dealt with with a sitting Government. That is the first thing I will start with. The Windsor framework is not the starting place we would want to have had. The protocol was always going to be a bad deal and it was not going to work. The Ulster Unionist Party said that the moment it first came to the light of day on 2 October 2019. Ever since that date, 2 October 2019, I think that Lord Empey has been the most vociferous about how bad it has been.



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We have been absolutely clear. The protocol is a bad deal. It does not work. It damages the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. I remember that I was in the Executive Committee in Stormont. I am trying to draw this memory back, but I think that it was the Dáil's committee on the UK leaving the EU. I asked the chair of that committee a very direct question: "Does the protocol damage the Belfast agreement?" Her answer was "Yes, it does".

If they are saying it damages it and we are saying it damages it, the protocol should have never existed in the first place. The protocol is a bad deal and it has to be changed in some way or another. Then you go back to Brexit. As a party, we were quite clear that Brexit was going to be hugely destabilising for the United Kingdom and really destabilising for Northern Ireland. These things have all run on to each other.

It is really important that eventually we start to address all these issues. It may be that we cannot address them in the very short term, but the trade and co-operation agreement is up for review, I think, in 2025. That might be an opportunity to try to address some of these issues. We should be able to promote the best of the Windsor framework. There are some good things in the Windsor framework, and I can name them. We need to challenge the worst of the Windsor framework.

There are things in the Windsor framework that we cannot accept, because the Irish Sea border is still there and it should not exist. It is not going to be changed by being out of Government. That is where we fundamentally differ, Carla: you believe that you can change it without being in Government and I think that we need to be in the arena, fighting for that.

I had a meeting with Maroš Šefčovič in March 2022. In March 2022, he pretty much outlined the Windsor framework to me in all but name. I then met with the UK's ambassador to the EU the next day and he reiterated the Windsor framework to me in all but name. Then I met with the EU's ambassador to the UK in June 2022. Not only did he outline the Windsor framework to me in all but name, but he actually gave me a run-down of when it would come about. It would be brought forward in the spring.

The Windsor framework in all but name was agreed quite some time ago. If you look at the SDR, the security and defence refresh document, it has the Windsor framework in it. That was released only two weeks after the Windsor framework was put out there. That is quite a strategic document when you are talking about global security and defence. The Windsor framework was always coming about. It was all about when it would appear.

I guess that the point that you are making, Carla—I think we agree on this—is that we have to fight against the worst excesses of the Windsor framework. The protocol needs to be changed. The review of the TCA gives us an opportunity to do that. Where we differ is that we think that



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that is best done within a functioning Government and you believe that it is better to be outside.

**Q347 Carla Lockhart:** I will come back on that point. Hopefully, you say that the DUP's actions in removing themselves from the Executive and the institutions were fundamental in bringing about the changes of the Windsor framework. Had we not have done that, I believe firmly that we would still be in the situation where we would not have seen any changes to the protocol and certainly the rigorous implementors would have continued on that path. I think just putting that on record is important.

In relation to your comments around the protocol having damaged the Belfast agreement, we believe that it has. We know that it has and I believe that your former leader, David Trimble, was very vociferous in saying that it had undermined the Belfast agreement, particularly cross-community consent.

How, as a party or group, could you go back into the institutions in Northern Ireland knowing that that cross-community consent does not exist, because not one unionist party or unionist MLA agrees with the Windsor framework, the protocol and the damage that it is doing to Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom? I think that your argument is a bit flawed. You need to be back in, but yet, if you are back in, it is damaging the Belfast agreement and the institutions because of that cross-community consent.

**Doug Beattie:** It is damaging whether you are in or out. That is the reality. The same damage is being done. The Windsor framework is being implemented now whether you are in Government or not in Government. It is happening now. I am saying that I would rather be inside the arena, fighting, using all that I can to fight against the worst excesses of it, while looking to see those things where we can benefit from that to strengthen our place within the United Kingdom. I do not think that that is a flawed way of looking at things.

I disagree with you in some cases. It is okay to disagree. The Windsor framework would have come about whether the DUP was in Government or not in Government. The only thing that was new and was a shock to me when the Windsor framework was announced was the Stormont brake. That was the only thing that was new that I saw. I do not believe that being out has had the effect that is needed.

The other thing is that I am a whole-UK unionist. I absolutely know that the United Kingdom is in a really difficult spot right at this moment in time. As a unionist, I want to make sure that this whole union works as England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. When I look to see the problems they have in Scotland, Wales or England, that is just as important to me as it is in Northern Ireland. I hope that they look to Northern Ireland and say, "That is important to us". The UK needs to work as a whole.

You have to ask the question of whether what we are doing now is damaging the United Kingdom. Is it damaging relationships within



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Northern Ireland? If the answer is yes, I do not see the sense in proceeding with something. If it is not giving you an outcome but is damaging our union, I do not see why we would continue with it. That is the fundamentals of where I am.

I will go back to this point. For the United Kingdom, the relationships that we have with the European Union and the US are really important, particularly because of the Ukraine conflict and Russian expansionism. That is why the Windsor framework appears in the security and defence refresh document. People know that, in order to secure our country, defence and security, we need to have good relationships with these other entities. That has been damaged over this period of time.

I will go back to what I have said to you previously, Carla. We are probably looking to do the same thing. We are just looking to do it in a slightly different way. We think that there are benefits to be had from the Windsor framework, including dual market access and other aspirational things in that, but there are challenges. You can only deal with those challenges when you are in the room and arguing those challenges.

**Carla Lockhart:** We differ on that.

**Doug Beattie:** We do. That is okay.

Q348 **Chair:** Following on from that point, I was actually in Brussels yesterday in a meeting with James Cleverly and Maroš Šefčovič. Hilary Benn, who was there, raised the issue of things such as veterinary medicines and how practicalities were starting to work out, and some of these interim temporary measures may well be permanent. Of course, that is at a time when it would be difficult to get a cigarette paper between EU regulation and UK regulation. If we start to diverge—that might be tightening up things, more likely than not; it is not necessarily a race to the bottom—do you think that that will make it more difficult to have the Windsor framework operating and that some of the workarounds that we currently have in place for things such as seed potatoes might be more difficult in the future?

**Doug Beattie:** Divergence is the problem. Divergence has always been the problem. The closer the UK stays to the EU, the easier it becomes. The issue about veterinary medicines was outside of the scope of the Windsor framework, but it was always meant to be outside the scope of the Windsor framework. If you speak to the Ulster Farmers' Union, it knew that it was outside the scope of the Windsor framework. That does not mean that it does not have to be dealt with. It still has to be dealt with, but that divergence becomes the real issue. That is why we have to really look at this.

This is why a standing committee in Stormont, as part of Belfast agreement institutions, looking at these very issues, is going to be extremely challenging but extremely important. It has to be resourced properly so it can look at these problems before they arise and have the ability to send out reports. If the EU intends to do something that is completely at odds with what the UK is doing, that standing committee



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should be able to engage with the European Union with a report to say, "If you do this, this is the damage you are going to cause. We are going to ask you not to do it".

There are ways around this. The only way that I can see that you can find solutions to some of these problems is by being in a room and fighting them out. I do not mean with fists. I mean fighting them out with thought to come up with solutions.

**Q349 Jim Shannon:** It is nice to see you, Doug, and to hear your words as well. Thank you for that. When it comes to the opposition to the Northern Ireland protocol and the Windsor agreement and the concerns we have over what has been brought forward, the one thing that shines through it is the fact that unionism, of whatever shade that might be, has been united in its opposition. I am one who believes in unionist unity, by the way. My personal belief has always been that the strength is one unionist party. How better can unionism work together, with the strength of numbers as well? The numbers are there, but they may be fragmented in unionism. How can we do it better together?

**Doug Beattie:** Politics is a strange old game. We are at each other's throats when people look at us, but then behind closed doors there is a genuine friendship and co-operation. You ask people about what unionist unity is and people will come up with a different model of what unionist unity really is. Is unionist unity one political party? Is unionist unity us working together on certain aspects? Is unionist unity just co-operation and people working together?

Without a shadow of a doubt, you and I sit here and we have a single aim. That is to maintain Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom. I believe we maintain Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom by making Northern Ireland really attractive within that Kingdom so that people want to stay there. For me, that means focusing on the economy. If you focus on the economy, it creates a good health service. A focus on the economy gives you good education, housing and jobs for young people, so they wake up in the morning with a sense of purpose and go to bed at night with a sense of fulfilment. That boring political issue, "Let us deal with the economy", becomes the issue.

We can work together and co-operate on things like that, but there will always be a difference within unionism about what tactics and what strategy we want to use. You are absolutely the largest party, Jim, and I do not take that away from you. You have a huge mandate and I have said that, but there are still an awful lot of people who vote for the Ulster Unionist Party and who believe that we should be in Government now.

If we tried to either merge or do something that brings us together for the sake of arguing one point, you will lose so many of those people. They will drift away. You need to be able to give people what they want out of life, what most people want out of life, if they are unionist, or even pro-union—because people do not want to be called unionists anymore; some people just want to be called pro-union—and that is a Northern



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Ireland that works. Where I can co-operate, and we should on issues about the union, I have no issue with that.

Right now, on some of the fundamental things—the exchange I had with Carla outlined one of them—people have different opinions. We have to be very careful that we do not disenfranchise those people who believe they are unionists by saying, “You are doing something now that is fundamentally against what we want”. I look at unionism as a spectrum from the extreme right to the extreme left and everything in between. In many ways, the DUP appeals to a huge chunk of that spectrum, but the Ulster Unionist Party still appeals to a certain part of it as well. If you take that away, you will lose support for the union and unionism.

**Q350 Jim Shannon:** I am a great believer in a broad church where we can have fundamental differences, perhaps, but there are many things that unite us rather than divide us. One thing that unites us very clearly as unionists at this moment in time is the protocol and the Windsor framework. I am wondering whether you have had any opportunity to have any discussions with the Secretary of State or the Minister of State in the Northern Ireland Office, or indeed with the wider Conservative Party here, in relation to finding a solution in relation to the Windsor framework and finding a way forward. Have you had those discussions? If so, what has been the outcome of them, please?

**Doug Beattie:** Yes, absolutely. I speak to everybody. I have a really good relationship with Sir Jeffrey. We meet often and discuss it, so we have a good relationship. I know that we cross swords at times, but that is politics. I have a really good relationship with Sir Jeffrey and with the NIO and the Westminster Government. We do discuss some of the issues that we want addressed at certain levels.

We want dual market access. People say, “You want to have your cake and eat it”. Absolutely, I want to have my cake and eat it. We want dual market access, but some of the other things we simply do not think are going to be good; they are going to be absolutely divisive. Building any form of infrastructure in Northern Ireland that are customs posts is going to be extremely divisive. Whether you call them red lane or green lane does not really matter. They are going to be divisive.

We made the argument that, if you have to build these things, if you have to do it, if there is something you have to do, take mitigating measures to stop it. Why build it in Belfast and Larne? Build it in Liverpool and Cairnryan. Try to take mitigating measures in regards to that. We have put forward ideas. That is me just throwing out a very low-level one, but we have put out ideas about what we can do to change that.

We have also put out ideas about what we can do in the future to maximise it and promote Northern Ireland’s place within the union. I will give you an example. Right now, we have a data-sharing mechanism between the UK and the EU for goods moving from GB to Northern Ireland. We believe that that data-sharing mechanism, or a variation of



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it, could end up as the data-sharing mechanism between the whole of the United Kingdom and the European Union.

If that becomes the case, we believe that the hub for that data-sharing should be in Northern Ireland, in exactly the same way that the hub for car vehicle registrations is in Swansea and absolutely copper-ties Wales into the union. If you do that for Northern Ireland, you copper-tie Northern Ireland into that same union. We are looking at ways of maximising the positives while we continue to challenge the negatives.

**Q351 Jim Shannon:** On the constitution, the Windsor framework very much puts a question mark over the constitutional position. You are right to say that there are many things in the green and red lanes, the technical issues or some of the framework stuff, that can be changed in a way. The Chair mentioned about the veterinary stuff, for instance, as an example of something that could be done right away, but you do not see much happening. Do you see anything happening to make changes?

If we are going to find a solution, there has to be a willingness within the Northern Ireland Office and Government. You will be aware of this one. Bertie Ahern's and Tony Blair's comments both said that, if you are going to find a way forward, you must not and cannot disenfranchise unionism. Therefore, if we are going to find a way, we have to embrace that. What are your thoughts?

**Doug Beattie:** Jim, you are absolutely right. I am going to go back to something I said before. If you are going to do things such as this, the best way to do it is to be absolutely transparent about what you are doing and how you are doing it. You are asking me about veterinary medicines: "Are you seeing any movement in that?" No, I am not. That does not mean that there is not any movement. That just means that I am not seeing any movement, so we are not being kept up to speed with what is going on.

That information field is really important. That is when I go back to what I was saying earlier on about when we made changes at St Andrews or at other places. If they are not done transparently and you do not bring people with you, not just political parties but people in general, it will not work in the long term.

Here is an interesting one for you, Jim. I remember sitting with the Secretary of State—it was not that long ago—and we were talking about the difficulties the DUP was having in regards to the Windsor framework. I asked him the question, "Are you negotiating with the DUP about the Windsor framework?" He said yes. I said, "Can you tell us what it is about?" "No, we are going to be doing it quietly. There is going to be no running commentary". That is actually the point that you are making. Nobody knows what is going on. If you do not know what is going on, all of a sudden something is slapped in front of you and you start saying, "I do not know what is happening here".

I met with the Irish Government. They thought that the discussions—I know that they are not—were about making sure that there was



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something put in in regards to a border poll. They thought that there were going to be fundamental changes to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. Why are they saying that? They heard. Nobody is briefing them. They do not know. That transparency is incredibly important so that people come along with you, as opposed to something just being thrown at them at the end of the day.

**Q352 Mr Walker:** It is good to see you, Doug. Over the course of our inquiry, we have heard various suggestions for institutional change. I totally appreciate what you said about now not necessarily being the time for changing the institutions. Once they are back up and running, they can be restored. I wanted to talk through some of those.

First, do you feel that unionism in general since the agreement has done enough to engage with the language of rights? One big element of the agreement, which I remember as a Minister often being pressed on by nationalists, was the Bill of Rights. That has not made its way through the institutions, and various committees that have been set up to explore it have always stalled. Do you feel that there is an opportunity perhaps for unionism to engage more with that language of rights and take the opportunity to move that forward from the agreement?

**Doug Beattie:** There is always an opportunity that we can do more. All of us can do more. There is more I can do for unionism. There is more that DUP can do for unionism. There is more that the TUV can do. We can all do more for our people and there is opportunity there.

People have to remember as well that we tried to say that what went before went before, but we are looking to the future, but it is still affecting where we are. When we talk about human rights, the simple right to life was taken away from so many people by terrorists of all colours and flavours. That is that human right and that still affects many people here in Northern Ireland.

I also sometimes think that there is a narrative put out there that we do not want rights, that actually we want something completely different. We want some form of supremacy over our neighbours. That is simply not the case. There are difficulties and we need to overcome those difficulties, but I think that we do. Sometimes, when you make what you believe is a fair discussion point about something, people think that you are trying to deny somebody something from that when it is actually just a fair discussion point.

I will give you an example. After I finish this, I will be hammered with this one, but I have been before. It is the issue of the Irish language Act. People think that, because you do not want an Irish language Act, you are anti-Irish language. That is simply not the case. I did not want an Irish language Act, but neither did I want an Ulster Scots Act. I did not think that I needed it or we needed it. I thought that Irish and Ulster Scots was growing in Northern Ireland really well without it, and far better than it was across the border, so I did not think that we needed an Irish language Act or an Ulster Scots Act.



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I have no issue with the Irish language in any shape or form. In fact, I have always identified as Irish myself. People will take that and say, "Your party is against rights because you are against that". That is simply not the case. People change things, but sometimes unionism is being portrayed unfairly.

Q353 **Mr Walker:** Is there not then an opportunity, as and when the institutions are back up and running, to make some of that progress that was promised in the agreement for a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights?

**Doug Beattie:** Yes. We worked hard in the last mandate, which was only two and a half years long in the middle of Covid, to try to progress that forward. We did not get to the end state on that, but we tried to do so much in a very short period of time. Some of these things just did not get the time and effort that they needed. I hope that we can get Stormont up and running and have a degree of stability for the next five or 10 years. Then we will be able to look at these things properly, with a forensic eye, and come up with something that is all-encompassing.

I said it here now. We should be looking at a Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom for everybody, regardless of their religion, sexual orientation or community background. That is a fundamental that I certainly believe in.

Q354 **Mr Walker:** In terms of some of those suggestions for increasing the stability of the democratic institutions, one that has been put to us is to have a voluntary coalition that could secure a supermajority of MLAs in the future. How would you respond to that suggestion?

**Doug Beattie:** I will stick with this. The Northern Ireland I live in and see today still requires power-sharing. We are still divided. I said that we are not majorities, but we still have a huge chunk of people who are unionists and a huge chunk of people who are nationalists. We still need to have power-sharing. Whatever mechanism we try to get up and running, there needs to be power-sharing within it.

Q355 **Mr Walker:** You mentioned that 2016 period where you had power-sharing in Government and in Opposition.

**Doug Beattie:** Yes, exactly. For me, something like that would be quite a good starting point. In fact, it was the mainstay of my first speech for the party in 2021. That does not fundamentally deal with the problem that we have still with those people who would be more of the Alliance Party or others, as the term is used, or the Green Party, or whatever. We still have to do that, but that should be done through a proper negotiation with all of the parties, so that we come up with something that is going to work in the long term, not in the short term.

Q356 **Mr Walker:** In terms of that, there is the idea that, if a party declined to nominate a First Minister, the right to do so could be passed to the next party or the next party in its designation. Is that something that you think could be explored?



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**Doug Beattie:** Yes, you could look at doing something like that. It would not be ideal, because you could then end up with a minority Government in many ways. A minority Government would simply not work. That is part of the negotiation, to be honest. I gave the answer to Carla earlier that nobody should be excluded. Right now, as we speak, you simply could not do any of that.

Q357 **Mr Walker:** In terms of nobody should be excluded, the language you used in that respect is interesting. I accept that nobody should be excluded from being able to form part of the Government but, if a party chooses to exclude itself and to stand back, that is somewhat different, is it not?

**Doug Beattie:** That is somewhat different if you look at that as something we are going to negotiate for change beyond getting the Assembly up and running again. It is not something that we can do now, today. When you go into that negotiation, that would then have to be agreed by all the political parties to make sure that that is what they are happy with. I would be loath to sit here today with a blank sheet of paper in front of me and say, "Yes, this is what I want to do".

This is the whole point about negotiations and talking. I am talking about the here and now. The here and now is that we had an election in May. We had an outcome to that election. We fought it on a particular system. Our Assembly and Executive needs to get up and running as per that system. That is where we are now. From that moment onwards, then we start looking at how we negotiate to create better foundations.

Q358 **Mr Walker:** Given what has changed, you have talked about balancing the un-balanceable—it is a very good description—as part of the original remit. That balance clearly has changed over time and we now have far more people who do not identify as nationalist or unionist. We have more people identifying as Northern Irish. With that evolved balance, do you think that there is an argument for looking at the mechanism for electing a Speaker and having that done on a more cross-community basis or a more supermajority basis, rather than necessarily on the current basis?

**Doug Beattie:** If you go to that power-sharing model of a power-sharing Executive and a power-sharing Opposition, it makes no sense whatsoever having a First and Deputy First Minister. They are joint roles. It becomes a single position with that. In many ways, you replicate exactly the same thing in Opposition. You are right. Things have changed so much and we have to reflect on change.

I was in Bosnia when the Dayton agreement was signed. Nobody really thought that it was going to be a success and it has divided Bosnia in half. You have the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I went back to Sarajevo, I think in 2003, and sat with the 18-to-24-year-olds and talked to them about their future. Not a single one of them was interested in talking about the conflicts past. They were all talking about the future.



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I guess that that is where Northern Ireland is going now. It is really difficult for those people who lived through the conflict to see that actually society is moving on. That is why we must deal with legacy fully and make sure that we do not allow victims to become victims for the second or third time.

**Chair:** When you said about not moving on from conflicts past, I wondered whether you meant the Battle of the Boyne or something more recent.

Q359 **Claire Hanna:** It is good to see you here, Doug. I want to pick up on Robin's point. Obviously it is highly desirable and necessary that we get back into the Assembly and meaningful decision-making together, in a power-sharing format. As has been indicated, there has been a majority for a Speaker. Both Mike Nesbitt and Patsy McGlone achieved over two-thirds of votes for a Speaker. The DUP had spoken about stepping down its engagement in the Assembly. You will remember that it withdrew in sort of a staged way last spring. Do you think that a change to the election rules for Speaker would, at the very least, allow us to get back into some sort of committee format in the Assembly? Would you support that relatively minor rule change in order to allow that?

**Doug Beattie:** I am going to go back to what I have said before. I do not think that any changes to our systems that we fought an election on in May should happen before we get it up and running again. I genuinely do not, because we set ourselves up for being in a really difficult position. If we arbitrarily changed the rules for the election of Speaker so we could do business—it is an attractive thing to do and I get that, because I want Government up and running now—we leave ourselves open for people to then not take part in any of that stuff.

Our committees would become lesser due to people being against this arbitrary change purely because the DUP are stopping that Speaker. We did not look at this as an outcome when Sinn Féin collapsed Stormont for three years. We did not look at how we could progress it then and it would be a little unfair to try to change it now. I absolutely agree with you that we need to change the system, but, unfortunately, we need to do the hard yards now to get the Executive up and running at its fullest before we do any of the amendments to this.

We fought an election. Sinn Féin was the largest party. Sinn Féin has to be the First Minister. That is democracy. I wish they were not the First Minister. I wish I was the First Minister, but there you go. I am certainly not going to be. The point I make is that that is what democracy is. We fought an election on a certain set of rules. We have to see this one through.

Q360 **Claire Hanna:** I am not disputing that, except that we fought an election and people are not having the democratic outcomes that they required. I suppose that colleagues will pick up about what we do if that renewal will not come. We have been drilling into the structures and practices. Do you think that a culture and behaviour change and a commitment to making



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it work would we sufficient, or are we going to need standing orders changes and technical changes in order to have a lasting and stable Stormont?

**Doug Beattie:** We absolutely need standing orders changes. We need something documented. It needs to be down there and agreed and then go forward with that. We always come back after a bit of a hiatus, and we always come back with goodwill, and it does not take long for us to fall into the old ways. The way to prevent us falling into the old ways is to make sure that we document and put down in standing orders exactly how we should be working in the Executive or in the Assembly, or whether we need to amend fully the ministerial code. It needs to be done.

I will go back to saying this. There are hard yards to be done here. Whether we agree or disagree with the DUP's tactic of keeping Stormont down, that is the reality of the system that we have in place. I disagree. I think that we are better to have Stormont up and running. For unionism, having Stormont up and running is better, but others disagree with me in regards to that within unionism, and that is that. We need to make those hard yards. That is done through persuasion and working with each other.

Q361 **Claire Hanna:** You, as a unionist, have withstood fairly intense sectarian abuse. It is important that people understand that sectarianism is not just attacks on them. It is some of the pressure that people exert on those within their own identity if they do not believe that they are upholding some sort of a code.

Would you agree with me that part of the dynamism in the conversation about constitutional change is that what the DUP's tactic is saying to people who are not unionist is, "You can no longer even have devolution within the UK"? Would you agree with me that removing the possibility of having basic governance structures in Northern Ireland is one of the accelerants in the conversation about constitutional change?

**Doug Beattie:** I will give you this in primary colours if I can, please, and very simply. We all suffer various types of abuse. Sectarian abuse or abuse within unionism is nothing new. I have to say that some of those people who jumped to my defence the quickest are from the DUP. In fact, whenever I appeared as the Lundy on top of the bonfire in Portadown, I think Carla was out very quickly in support of me. Likewise when my posters appeared with a noose around their neck and my office windows were smashed, the DUP came to my defence very quickly on that, as did others.

Temperatures rise at times and people do stupid things, thinking that they will get something out of it and they clearly will not. I said earlier—I cannot remember whether you were in the room—that I have a good relationship and talk often with Sir Jeffrey. Do I believe that he and the party want devolution up and running again? Yes, I do. I genuinely believe that they want devolution up and running again. I guess that, for



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them, there is a stumbling block that they have to overcome in regards to that. That stumbling block is going to be done through persuasion.

For unionism and the union to survive, we need to have functioning Governments in all component parts of that union. We need to make it work for all the people so they want to stay within this union. Sir Jeffrey understands that as well as I understand that and I think that he will eventually move.

**Q362 Carla Lockhart:** I respect your opinion and your comments today in relation to getting the Executive back up and running. You are absolutely right. The DUP wants to get the Executive back up and running. We want to see stable Government in Northern Ireland and my party leader, Sir Jeffrey, has been very clear on that.

I want to give you an opportunity to tell this Committee how damaging the Windsor framework and the protocol are. Ultimately, if the UK Government took steps to resolve the issues, the Executive would be back up and running in the morning. I want you to highlight, as a fellow unionist, the damage that it is doing. Surely the message out of today needs to be that the UK Government need to sort out the protocol and the Windsor framework.

**Doug Beattie:** Many things have happened over the years that have been really damaging for one or the other. Brexit was really damaging. It was really destabilising. It was not what the majority in Northern Ireland wanted, but it was a UK-wide democratic vote. Because it was a democratic vote, we, as a party, have said that that is what democracy is and we are going with that.

The protocol that came out of that was just awful; it was absolutely awful. It should not have been facilitated and people should not have used the language that they used to give the Government the go-ahead to be able to implement that protocol. It was awful. I do not believe that the Windsor framework is about Northern Ireland. The Windsor framework is about the relationships between the EU, the UK, and the US. It is there to improve the whole of the United Kingdom's standing internationally, but particularly with those two elements.

That is why we have said, time and time again, that the Windsor framework is not the starting point we would have wanted. There are things within the Windsor framework that are incredibly damaging. We want to argue and fight against those. Ideologically, it is really damaging relationships within Northern Ireland. It is not just damaging relationships between nationalists and unionists, but relationships within nationalism and unionism and relationships north and south of the border.

It is really damaging. People need to understand that it is damaging. There are things we can do to be able to fix it. I go back to where I was. I genuinely believe that the only place to do that is within Government. I honestly believe—people can disagree with me; I do not mind that—the UK Government and the European Union have no intention whatsoever of



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reopening negotiations on the Windsor framework. The best thing we can possibly do is to start to work as hard as we can now within Government so that we can get a review of these mechanisms when the TCA is reviewed in 2025.

You make the point about how damaging it is. It is damaging. The whole thing is damaging. We said it would be damaging. We said it would be destabilising. We said the protocol would not work. We have been saying this since 2014. We are where we are.

**Q363 Stephen Farry:** Just picking up where Carla left off, for the sake of balance, could you outline your party's view on the consequences of the current impasse in Northern Ireland? I am conscious that, alongside other parties, you are looking at the budget crisis we are facing at present and the consequences of that. How do you see that being resolved?

**Doug Beattie:** Society is crumbling around our ears. Of course, we can argue the case about the budget. The budget is major, but there are huge bits of legislation that we need to deal with at the microlevel that are not happening. Society is literally falling down around our ears.

Take the children's hospice, for example. If you look at the funding model for the children's hospice, it is now no longer fit for purpose. It is done through legislation. We have to get in and get the legislation sorted to make sure we can fund fully into the future the children's hospice in Northern Ireland. It is things like that. Society is crumbling around our ears.

We can say, "If we get Stormont up and running, all of our problems will be solved", but we all know they will not be solved. Of course they will not be solved. That will only be the start of the process. Without a Government, we can literally do nothing. People are really suffering. That is not taking into account any of the emerging issues that may happen at short notice, which we are not going to be able to deal with.

Looking at this in a societal way, Northern Ireland is really damaged. We have an opportunity here. The trade conference we are having on 12 and 13 September is a real opportunity to try to get investment into Northern Ireland. That is not just about inward investment; it is also about making ties so that our homegrown businesses can reach out globally as well. It is really important. People will come in and look for political stability in order to do that. It could be a missed opportunity, if we do not have Stormont up and running again.

Of course, the budget is a real issue. We need to do something about investing to transform. Your party says that; the DUP's Sir Jeffrey says that; I say that; Colum Eastwood says that; and Michelle O'Neill says that. We are all saying that, but we need a plan to be able to do that. We cannot get the plan to be able to do that until we get Stormont up and running again, until we thrash this out in a room much like this and come up with a solution. Until we do, society will slowly crumble around our ears.



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**Q364 Stephen Farry:** My next question is a complete non sequitur. We have talked a lot about the strand 1 issues under the agreement, but I want to turn briefly to strand 2 and strand 3, the north-south and east-west aspects.

Doug, you will recall that the north-south aspects were perhaps one of the most fiercely contested aspects of the Good Friday agreement negotiations themselves. Could you tell us your party's attitude and thoughts on how they have developed and operated over the past 25 years? Do you see any scope for the development of both the north-south and the east-west mechanisms?

**Doug Beattie:** Relationships are the key to everything on these islands. Whether you class them as strand 2 or strand 3, we are talking about relationships. We are talking about how we can work together and make life better for everybody on these islands.

If you look at the relationship between north and south, it has gone through a really strained period and it is picking up again. We kept talking with our Irish counterparts at every stage. We all have a mutual interest in this island, whether you are from Ireland or Northern Ireland. We are now rebuilding a lot of those relationships. I cannot see into the future. I do not know what it is going to be like come the next Irish election; I do not know who is going to end up in Government there. I do not know whether we are looking at another difficult patch or not.

The things we have managed to do cross-border have become a norm, in many ways. You could look at the Irish Air Corps helicopters coming across to help with gorse fires, or ambulances, if we look at cross-border healthcare. All of these things are really important for the people of the island. We need to maintain that north-south relationship.

Again, it has to translate east-west as well. Everybody thinks that the east-west relationship is between Northern Ireland and the rest of Great Britain. It is not. It is the whole island looking across to Great Britain.

To me, it is all about relationships. It is about relationships right across the island. Claire was at an event with me last night in Cambridge. We listened to someone from the Londonderry Bands Forum talk about how the all-island fund was helping them and improving relationships.

**Stephen Farry:** From the Fountain in Derry.

**Doug Beattie:** Yes, exactly. That was improving relationships.

**Stephen Farry:** We will get there eventually.

**Doug Beattie:** He was talking about the discussions they were having. We are putting away those old concerns and realising that it is in everybody's interests to work together to make sure our island, which is Northern Ireland and Ireland, and all of these islands work well together.

**Q365 Chair:** We have been talking about two workstreams. One workstream stems from Brexit, the protocol and the Windsor framework. This is



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something that is dynamic. There are negotiations going on. Jeffrey was with us in Brussels this week. We know the problems that need to be addressed, whether it is veterinary medicines or whatever.

On the other side, there is a constitutional workstream. This Committee has commissioned studies that have pointed towards significant public appetite for reform of the strand 1 institutions, but I am unclear how that could be made to work. You say that there are conversations going on that are confidential and nobody is sharing that information. Would it be through citizens and civic forums? Would it be through the Northern Ireland parties? Would it be something where the UK Government would take the lead, as we saw with the Good Friday agreement, when the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland took the lead?

I suspect we are talking about an evolution of the institutions, not a revolution. If we were to change some aspects of the election of the Speaker or the way the First Minister and Deputy First Minister work, how would that be delivered?

**Doug Beattie:** The elected representatives in Northern Ireland are elected by the people to represent the people. Therefore, it is quite clear that anything that could or should be done should be done through those political parties. It is then up to us to make sure we can cascade those things to our representatives and then down to the people so it can be delivered as close to the people as it possibly can be. That is a tried and tested way of doing it.

The difficulty comes when you grab the two largest parties, whoever they are going to be, put them behind closed doors, come up with a deal and then you come out and put it on the table. We need transparency. When I say to the Secretary of State, "What is happening in regards to the negotiations between the DUP and you in regards to the Windsor framework?" he should be able to say, "Here is where we are. This is what we are trying to achieve. This is what is coming down the line". Then we could have the discussion about whether that will or will not work. That discussion needs to happen with the political parties.

We do that with certain aspects of legislation. As much as we all hate the legacy Bill, we have done that with the legacy Bill. All the political parties have had an input into that. We all do not like it, but we have all had an input into it. We have been able to go to those people in the grassroots and explain that to them and set out what our position is in regards to it.

It can be done through the political parties. At a governmental level, it is really up to the Westminster Government to decide how they do that on a governmental level with Ireland, with the European Union, if they have to go that way, or even with the US. Certainly, to get it to that level, to get it to the people at a granular level, it has to start with the political parties who have been elected by the people.

Q366 **Chair:** Are you concerned that, if the political parties do not work together, do not engage and do not set up Stormont, it will be done to



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you rather than done by you?

**Doug Beattie:** That was always the case. Before 1998, that could always have been the case. We got an agreement where Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom was secured unless the people decided otherwise. Before that, there was an opportunity for people to throw us away, in many cases.

We have always been in a position where things can be done to us, unfortunately. That is one of the reasons why having Stormont up and running will stop things being done to us. We will have an input into these things.

**Chair:** Before I thank you, I have just been given this to read out. I am aware that there was a brief outage on parliamentlive.tv this morning with no live coverage available across all meetings, including this one, for seven minutes between 9.30 and 9.37. This has now been resolved, however, and the period of the outage is available to watch on the player as usual.

**Carla Lockhart:** There will be a ratings spike.

**Chair:** I am not sure how important the bit during that period was, but, if anyone was frustrated at missing that important bit, they can now watch it back.

Doug, thank you very much indeed for coming along and being so forthright, candid and helpful to the Committee. We appreciate your time. On behalf of the Committee, thank you very much indeed.