



# HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union Committee

House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

Tel: 020 7219 5864  
Fax: 020 7219 6715  
euclords@parliament.uk  
www.parliament.uk/lords

Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

8 July 2020

Dear Brandon,

I writing to express disappointment at the lack of engagement from your department in support of the Committee's scrutiny of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. As you know, the Committee published a detailed report on the Protocol on 1 June. But in spite of repeated requests to you, we have been unable to question you or your department on the Committee's findings since our report was published.

We first requested an evidence session with you on 21 February. We were told some weeks later that, as overall responsibility for the Protocol lay with the Cabinet Office, the Committee should hear evidence from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We subsequently took evidence from Mr Gove in May, but at his appearance before the Committee on 28 May, Mr Gove told us that responsibility for engagement with the business community in Northern Ireland in fact lay with you. The Committee has since that time repeatedly invited you to give oral evidence, but has been told, first, that you are unavailable (without further explanation), and then that the Minister of State, Robin Walker MP, is also unavailable until after the summer recess, and that the Northern Ireland Office will instead submit written evidence in the first instance. I attach a timeline of these requests and responses.

Listening to the concerns of the business community has been a key element of the Committee's work on the Protocol, and we held a follow-up meeting with the Northern Ireland Business Brexit Working Group on 16 June, hearing once again of their concerns about the lack of engagement with the Government. In view of your responsibility for this engagement, and the shortage of time before the Protocol becomes operational on 1 January 2021, the Committee is therefore anxious to discuss these issues with you urgently. I must therefore repeat my request that an oral evidence session be arranged with you or Mr Walker before the summer recess.

I am copying this letter to the Leader of the House of Lords, Baroness Evans of Bowes Park, and to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP.

Yours sincerely

Lord Kinnoull  
Chair of the European Union Committee

## **Annex – European Union Committee (“EUC”) request to see the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (“SoSNI) -February to July 2020 Timeline**

21 <sup>st</sup> February	EU Committee requests Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to give evidence as part of its inquiry into the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland
5 <sup>th</sup> March	Northern Ireland Office (“NIO”) refuse saying that Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (“CDL”) has leadership on the NI Protocol
5 <sup>th</sup> May	CDL gives evidence before the EU Committee including on NI Protocol
20 <sup>th</sup> May	Publication of Command Paper on NI Protocol
28 <sup>th</sup> May	CDL gives further evidence before the EUC. CDL says: “Our business engagement has now begun with Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and his team leading that”
1 <sup>st</sup> June	Publication of EU Committee report on the Protocol
9 <sup>th</sup> June	EU Committee again invites Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to give oral evidence
12 <sup>th</sup> June	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland declines, offering written evidence
16 <sup>th</sup> June	EU Committee hears evidence from Northern Irelands Business representatives. <b>Issue of NIO engagement raised</b>
17 <sup>th</sup> June	EU Committee Chair again writes to Secretary of State for Northern Ireland requesting an oral evidence session
30 <sup>th</sup> June	EU Committee meets the chairs of relevant Northern Ireland Assembly Committees. <b>Issue of NIO engagement raised</b>
30 <sup>th</sup> June	EU Committee chases NIO for a response to its letter of 17 <sup>th</sup> June
2 <sup>nd</sup> July	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland declines without a reason. Robin Walker (Minister of State for Northern Ireland) is offered to give written evidence with the possibility of oral evidence to follow
2 <sup>nd</sup> July	EUC responds that it would be prepared to see the Minister of State instead of the Secretary of State for an oral evidence session, but prior to recess
6 <sup>th</sup> July	NIO offers Minister of State for Northern Ireland for an oral evidence session in September. Further offers of written evidence.