



HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union Committee

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Paul Givan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice
Northern Ireland Assembly
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12 February 2020

Dear Mr Givan

The House of Lords European Union Committee, which I Chair, has, as part of its scrutiny of the Brexit process, taken a close interest in the implications for Northern Ireland of UK withdrawal from the European Union. The Committee has undertaken a number of visits to Northern Ireland, and plans to do so once more on Tuesday 25 February, when the Committee will be meeting at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, to hear evidence on the operation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland from business leaders, traders and academic experts. This visit will supplement evidence heard at Westminster, and the Committee hopes to produce a report on the operation of the Protocol in the coming weeks.

As part of this dialogue, the Committee would very much welcome the opportunity to engage with relevant Committees of the Northern Ireland Assembly, following the welcome resumption of the Assembly last month. I would therefore like to invite you, together with Chairpersons and representatives of other Assembly Committees, to meet my Committee in the course of its visit on 25 February. We would like to invite you to join us for a working lunch, to discuss how our Committees might work together in our respective scrutiny of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, and other topical issues arising from UK withdrawal from the EU. We would also like to invite you to participate in a roundtable seminar with business leaders, at 10:00am.

In the afternoon, the Committee will be taking formal oral evidence from academics and representatives of the ports and airports of Northern Ireland, and you would also be very welcome to observe these meetings.

The precise timings for the day are being finalised, and I will ask my officials to provide your officials with details of the final agenda as soon as it is ready.

I am also writing to let you know that the Committee has identified a number of other work priorities between now and the end of the transition period in December 2020. We would welcome engagement with your Committee, and other relevant Committees in the Northern Ireland Assembly and the other devolved legislatures, to support this work.

In particular, we will continue to scrutinise draft EU legislation during the transition period, and we have secured a commitment from the UK Government to continue to deposit EU documents in, and to provide Explanatory Memoranda to, the UK Parliament. I understand that House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee officials currently share EU

documents and Explanatory Memoranda with Northern Ireland Assembly officials. I trust this will continue. We will also share with you the results of our weekly sift of EU documents, along with any reports and significant correspondence on individual legislative proposals. In turn, we would welcome any information which relevant Committees in the Assembly wish to share regarding their views on EU legislative proposals, including in particular any which you judge raise matters of 'vital national interest', and which therefore may fall within the ambit of section 29 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020.

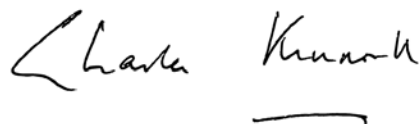
With this in mind, I would like to invite the views of Northern Ireland Assembly Committees on the European Commission's 3 February 2020 Recommendation for a Council Decision authorising the opening of negotiations for a new partnership with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, together with the UK Government's Written Ministerial Statement on UK/EU relations of the same date. The EU Committee will be considering a draft report on the Commission document at its meeting on Wednesday 5 March. If you would like to share your Committee's views, I would be grateful to receive them by Wednesday 26 February.

Finally, I can assure you of our continuing commitment to dialogue with Committees of the Northern Ireland Assembly with regard to our other priorities over the coming year. As well as scrutiny of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, these include:

- **Scrutiny of the future relationship negotiations;**
- **Scrutiny of the formal mechanisms for dialogue between the UK and the EU**, including the Joint Committee on the Withdrawal Agreement, and the Specialised Committees that report to it;
- **Inter-parliamentary engagement**, where we will continue to prioritise dialogue with the devolved legislatures, the European Parliament and EU national parliaments. In particular, we remain committed to the Interparliamentary Forum on Brexit, and recognise the value of applying this model for sectoral dialogue between relevant committees in each of the legislatures.

I have written in similar terms to Chairs and Conveners of other relevant Committees in the Northern Ireland Assembly, Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Lord Kinnoull', with a horizontal line underneath.

Lord Kinnoull
Chair of the European Union Committee