



HOUSE OF LORDS

European Affairs Sub-Committee on The
Windsor Framework

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Rt Hon Steve Baker MP
Minister of State
Cabinet Office
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23 May 2024

Dear Steve,

STRENGTHENING NORTHERN IRELAND'S VOICE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WINDSOR FRAMEWORK

As you know, the European Affairs Sub-Committee on the Windsor Framework's remit will come to an end following the dissolution of Parliament on Thursday 30 May 2024. In practice, this means that the Sub-Committee will finish its work at the point of prorogation, halfway through its current inquiry and before having had the opportunity to take evidence from you on 12 June as originally intended.

On 8 May, the Sub-Committee launched an inquiry into strengthening Northern Ireland's voice in the context of the Windsor Framework. The arrangements for Northern Ireland now include a complex institutional architecture, which has evolved over a number of years and has been added to by the Government's recent announcements in the command paper 'Safeguarding the Union'. The Sub-Committee hoped its inquiry would bring clarity to the various mechanisms and bodies established under the Windsor Framework and explore how the voices of Northern Ireland stakeholders, policymakers and politicians could be heard most effectively.

The Sub-Committee feels very strongly about the importance of this inquiry and has asked me to write to you on their behalf drawing attention to the evidence taken so far.

On Wednesday 8 May the Sub-Committee heard evidence from Professor David Phinnemore from the Post-Brexit Governance Unit at Queen's University Belfast; Professor Simon Usherwood, Professor of Politics and International Studies at the Open University; and Anton Spisak, Associate Fellow at the Centre for European Reform.

In a second session we heard from Dr Sylvia de Mars, Reader in Transnational Public Law at Newcastle Law School; Martin Howe KC, Barrister at 8 New Square Chambers; and Professor Colin Murray, Professor of Law and Democracy at Newcastle Law School.

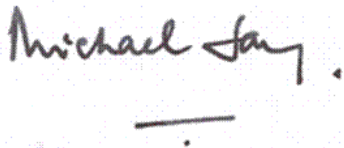
On Wednesday 22 May we heard from Robbie Butler MLA, Deputy Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party; Matthew O'Toole MLA, Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) Leader

of the Opposition in the Northern Ireland Assembly; and Dr Stephen Farry MP, Deputy Leader of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. We had hoped to hear from the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin later on in our inquiry but were unable to do so due to the timing of the election. We are grateful to all our witnesses for their assistance.

The Committee very much hopes that the next Government will look seriously at the matters which have been raised in evidence by our witnesses. The transcripts from the evidence sessions are available on the Committee's website.

I am copying this letter to Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; Sir William Cash MP, Chair of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee; Sir Robert Buckland MP, Chair of the Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee; Philip McGuigan MLA, Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee and Paula Bradshaw MLA, Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for the Executive Office.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Jay". Below the signature is a horizontal line with a small dot underneath it, serving as a separator or underline.

Lord Jay of Ewelme

Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Windsor Framework