



Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds MP
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The Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE KC
Chair, Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee
House of Lords
London, SW1A 0PW

12 June 2025

Dear Alex,

UK-EU PARTNERSHIP – SUMMIT AND JOINT COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

Thank you for your letter dated 22 May, concerning the news of the UK-EU Summit and its outcomes for Northern Ireland, to which I am responding alongside your letter of 7 May about the recent Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee.

I am glad that your recent correspondence recognises that the Summit will deliver particular, and indeed highly beneficial, outcomes for Northern Ireland. The new agreement on agrifood and plants with the EU will meaningfully smooth flows of trade, protect the UK's internal market, reduce costs for businesses and improve consumer choice in Northern Ireland.

The Common Understanding that we have reached with the EU is clear that the benefits of our new SPS agreement will extend to movements between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, because the same regulations under the agreement will be followed across the UK. This will make a transformatory difference for businesses trading within the UK internal market, giving them regulatory certainty and saving them hours of time and money by removing swathes of paperwork and numerous health certificates, checks, and processes. The Common Understanding is also clear, in recognising our continued commitment to the Windsor Framework, that the facilitations under the Framework will continue to be protected.

Another UK-EU Summit outcome of significance, as recognised in your correspondence, is the news about the arrangements that the UK will take forward with the EU on emissions trading. The Government has always been clear in our intention to apply the UK's CBAM across the UK and this outcome is consistent with that objective. This confirmation that the UK's and EU's Emissions Trading Schemes will be linked will help avoid hikes in bills and prices and prevent UK industry paying EU CBAM charges on £7bn of trade, and provide further certainty to businesses trading with the EU.

Your correspondence inquires as to how the UK will engage with the EU on policy making under these arrangements. As the Common Understanding states, we have agreed that the UK should be involved at an early stage and contribute appropriately to the decision-shaping process of EU laws in relevant areas, and that the European Commission should consult the UK at an early stage of policy-making. We are committed to ensuring that UK Departments, the devolved governments, the UK Mission to the EU, and the Northern Ireland Executive Office continue to work together to determine a shared UK view on EU policy. I would also note that, in respect of disputes under any future SPS agreement, ETS linking agreement or an electricity agreement, these would be settled by an independent arbitration tribunal. The CJEU will have a role in assisting this independent arbitration tribunal where there are questions of interpretation of EU law; however, the panel and not the CJEU will be the final arbiter of such a dispute.

These steps that we have taken at the UK-EU Summit build on those that we took at the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee three weeks prior, in furtherance of the Government's commitment to the Windsor Framework and protecting the UK internal market. This includes the switching on of new simplified customs arrangements for freight and parcels from 1 May, and applying relevant regulatory measures to Northern Ireland's domestic framework where we are satisfied the UK internal market is protected so as to preserve its dual market access.

I should emphasise that the timing and planned business for the recent Joint Committee was settled in the course of the recess period and whilst the Government was agreeing the EU scrutiny arrangements for this Committee. This was also influenced by the timing of the Summit thereafter, which limited the available options for the Joint Committee to convene in person. The Government thus sought to provide the Committee with the relevant Explanatory Memoranda as quickly as possible following the recess period alongside its notification to Parliament of its intentions, in accordance with the procedure set down in law.

I recognise your request for greater opportunity for scrutiny and I want to reassure you that I take very seriously the role of Parliament, and your Committee, in scrutinising the work of the Government. I will continue to faithfully follow the scrutiny arrangements that we have now agreed with Parliament and provided for in law in respect of the Windsor Framework.

Looking ahead, it is now for the Government to take forward the development of a legal text with the European Commission to implement the outcomes of the UK-EU Summit. Whilst I would not want to prescribe an exact timeline for doing so here, and would want to accord courtesy to the EU's own internal processes, I can confirm to the Committee that the Government will do its utmost to take this process forward swiftly. Parliament will be kept updated on the negotiation and implementation of the new agreements in line with the agreed arrangements, with any necessary legislation brought forward in the usual way. Separately, I can confirm also that the Government will remain committed to safeguarding the supply of veterinary medicines in Northern Ireland ahead of the end of the grace period and that we will set out our approach to those issues specifically in due course.

I look forward to discussing these positive outcomes of the UK-EU Summit for Northern Ireland, and those from the Joint Committee, with you and the Northern Ireland Secretary on 25 June.

I am copying this letter to Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Lord Ricketts, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Tonia Antoniazzi MP, Chair of the Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, and Ciara Ferguson MLA, Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'N. Thomas-Symonds', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**RT HON NICK THOMAS SYMONDS MP
MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE
HIS MAJESTY'S PAYMASTER GENERAL**