Northern Ireland Office

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Erskine House
20-32 Chichester St
Belfast
BT1 4GF

E: correspondence@nio.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/nio
Follow us on Twitter @NIOgov

Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE KC, Chair of the Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

By email: *hlniscrutiny@parliament.uk*

26 January 2026

Our reference: MC/26/62

Dear Lord Carlile,

Thank you for your letter of 21 November regarding the report of the Independent Monitoring Panel on the first reporting period for the UK Internal Market Guarantee. I am also replying on behalf of the Minister for the Cabinet Office, to whom the letter was addressed in addition.

I wrote separately to inform the Committee on the publication of the Government's response to Lord Murphy's Independent Review of the Windsor Framework on 16 December. That response covered the Government's response also to the Independent Monitoring Panel's recommendations and those from Intertrade UK.

Regarding your questions about the methodology of the Panel's report, these are rightfully questions for the Panel itself, which is independent of Government. The Panel has chosen to provide headline statistics within its first report and it is for it to determine how it wishes to report in the second monitoring period. That report sets out that 96% of freight movements between Great Britain and Northern Ireland took place within the UK internal market system.

From the Government's perspective, I would emphasise that goods consignments may differ in their size and volume, and the mode and vehicle (or vehicles) of transport. Each freight movement could refer to multiple consignments within a single movement, meaning that they can vary significantly. Given the Guarantee must be measured across freight movements from GB to NI, which may take place by air or sea, and cover a broad variety of goods, using an alternative unit of measurement such as vehicular movements or declarations would seem to offer a less reliable means of measurement and comparison across monitoring periods.

Regarding the question of why traders were not able to avail of the new simplified processes, it may help if I explain that these facilitations were introduced on 1 May 2025. The panel was reviewing data from January to June 2025. It was therefore not possible for some traders in the earlier part of the first monitoring period to benefit from these facilitations.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Your Sincerely,

THE RT HON HILARY BENN MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND