



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Baroness Merron
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Women's Health and Mental Health*

*39 Victoria Street
London
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11 February 2026

Dear Lord Carlile,

Thank you for your letter of 24th April 2025 regarding the UK wide Tobacco and Vapes Bill and its compatibility with the Windsor Framework for Northern Ireland. You requested a response before Report.

The Bill has completed Committee stage in the House of Lords, and Report Stage will commence on the 24 February. The Bill represents the most substantial public health intervention in a generation - seeking to break the cycle of addiction and disadvantage and to put the UK on a path to becoming smoke-free.

You asked about the Bill's compatibility with the Windsor Framework and the risk of legal challenge. The Government's position is clear: the Bill will apply in Northern Ireland and is compatible with both domestic and international obligations. This includes obligations under the Windsor Framework Agreement. I stated this during Committee stage in the House of Lords.

You asked whether we have engaged with the EU on this matter. While we engage with the EU on a wide range of issues relating to the Windsor Framework, this engagement is confidential and we do not comment on the details of conversations with the EU. However, you may be aware that a notification has been submitted in August 2025 on the EU's Technical Regulations Information System (TRIS), as the Bill contains certain measures affecting products on the Northern Ireland market covered by EU Directive 2015/1535.

The TRIS notification is a standard requirement under the Windsor Framework and does not constitute an approval process. As part of the TRIS process, several EU Member States had submitted detailed opinions, extending the notification standstill period until 18 February 2026. The Government intends to respond on these detailed opinions by 18 February and remains confident that the Bill will complete its passage within this parliamentary session.

Finally, you may wish to note that the Northern Ireland Assembly granted legislative consent for the Bill on 10 February 2025. This is a significant achievement and reflects the continued UK-wide support for this important Bill.

All good wishes,

Gillian

BARONESS MERRON