



THE RT HON THERESA MAY MP
Member of Parliament for Maidenhead

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Simon Hoare MP
Northern Ireland Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

26th April 2021

Dear Simon,

Thank you for your letter dated 17th March regarding the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee inquiry, 'Citizenship and Passport processes in Northern Ireland'.

I understand you are keen to explore the workings and outcome of this review, but I am afraid I can only offer limited insight as this was an internal review conducted by the Home Office and Northern Ireland Office which was not concluded until after my premiership.

Nevertheless, I have provided the written evidence below on why I felt the review, which I announced in a speech in Belfast in February 2019, was necessary.

Central to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement is the birth right to identify and be accepted as British, Irish or both, and to hold both British and Irish citizenship. However, it was brought to my attention, including through the case of Emma DeSouza, that in practice people were encountering difficulties in securing their rights as Irish citizens to bring family members to live in Northern Ireland. It was primarily because of these identified problems that I asked the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to review the issue.

The Brexit negotiations were also ongoing at this time and brought added complexity to the issue of citizenship as the Northern Ireland Act 1998 was written without the need to deal explicitly with matters that European Union citizenship conferred on those who identified as Irish and lived in Northern Ireland in the event that the UK was no longer a member of the European Union.

I have always been clear that leaving the European Union should not impact on the citizenship rights of those in Northern Ireland which is why I made a 'no diminution of rights' commitment with the EU during the first phase of the Brexit negotiations in December 2017.

I hope this background is helpful for your exploration of this issue. If you have any further questions on this matter, I would be happy to provide a further written submission should it be helpful to the work of your committee.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP