

Letter

Finding Solutions and Enacting Opportunities: The Protocol

We the undersigned call for on-going discussions between the UK and EU to deliver mutually agreed solutions that resolve economic, political and societal tensions caused by Brexit and the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol.

On-going discussions are critical to resolution and restoring commitments to the Good Friday Agreement and the totality of relationships embedded in North-South and East-West relations. Support for the peace process cannot be rhetorical and must stretch into its protection and development. The past two decades witnessed a significant decline in violence paralleled by improved economic conditions and new sectors of economic activity. Disruption to those conditions undermines the next generation of economic growth critical to sustaining peace. We encourage discussions framed by:

- **Proportionality:** The East-West movement of goods is critical to consumption and production in Northern Ireland. Friction and barriers to the movement of goods has impeded normal trade capacity and added to inflationary dynamics. Therefore, we call upon the UK and EU to deliver proportionate outcomes that aid the peace process through resolving the East-West trade relationship. Business representatives, who are critically aware of emerging tensions, have advanced pragmatic solutions regarding unique circumstances that should be considered in the next round of discussions.
- **Structured Engagement:** Most of the electorate, from **both** main communities, opposed checks on goods North-South and East-West. Furthermore, the people of Northern Ireland and Ireland wish for outcomes that are fair and over which they have influence. Civic society wishes to diffuse tensions through advancing and supporting participative democracy, evidenced debate and solution seeking. To do so the UK and EU must enable structured, transparent and meaningful engagement with civic society.
- **Opportunities:** Despite various views and interpretations regarding the Protocol there are many investors, business leaders, trade unions, community groups and NGOs across Northern Ireland, GB and Ireland who are keen to develop potential trade, social economy and business opportunities offered by the Protocol. Such opportunities will sustain peace underpinned by shared prosperity, sustainable economic growth and the ability to meet the global challenges of environmental stability and security. Those opportunities will

only evolve when accompanied by strategic leadership and proportionate decision-making by the EU and UK.

Stability required for East-West and North-South relationships requires the EU and UK, along with the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, to work to deliver balanced, bespoke and reasonable solutions. An incapacity to deliver clarity, precision, and balance, along with adherence and flexibility will maintain political, economic and societal instabilities.

The re-establishment of trust between the UK and EU is not only central to dialogue but also imperative to the peace process. We call upon the UK and EU to deliver responses that prioritise the most fundamental right to live secure and prosperous lives.

Lord Alderdice, Craig Barr, Paul Bartholomew (VC Ulster University), Amanda Biega, Professor Mark Boyle, Peter Bunting, Gareth Burns, Cooperation Ireland, David Cooke, Professor Colin Coulter (NUIM), Louise Coyle (NI Rural Women's Network), Garvin Crawford (Intradependence Group), Alison Grundle (WemakeNI), Dr Patrick Doherty OBE (Harcourt Developments Limited Dublin), Brian Donaldson (NI Civic Voice), Seamus Farrell, Mick Fealty, George Fleming (Chairman Fleming Agri Products), Eleanor Gaw, Dr Roz Goldie, Professor Siobhan Garrigan (TCD), John Hanna, Maureen Hetherington, Helen Henderson, Conor Houston, Heron Bros, Institute of Directors, Margaret Inglis, Eileen Kelly, Maura Kelly, Richard Kennedy (CEO Devenish), Gavin Killeen (MD Nuprint), Helen Quigley, Roger McCallum, Seamus McAleavey (NICVA), Willie McCarter, Ken McCue, Angela McGowan (CBI (NI)), Ann McGregor (Northern Ireland Chamber of Community & Industry), Jennifer McKeever (MD Airporter), Professor Chris Macabe, Brendan Mackin, Dr Rev. Gary Mason, Jane Morrice (former MLA), Professor Duncan Morrow (Ulster University), Professor John O'Brennan (NUIM), Professor Liam Ó Cinnéide, Garvan O'Doherty (Garvan O'Doherty Group), Phil Orr MRIA, Dr Russell Orr (DMU), Colette A Quinn, Dylan Quinn (We Deserve Better), Owen Reidy (NI Committee ICTU), Danielle Roberts (Here NI), Glyn Roberts (Retail NI), Rev Dr Bill Shaw OBE, Michele Shirlow MBE, Professor Peter Shirlow FAcSS, Moira Stevenson, Pdraig Yeates, Brian Walker, Margy Washbrook, James Wilson, Terry Wright.