



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

16<sup>th</sup> August 2021

*Jean Contrevent,*

**RE: NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL - VETERINARY & SPS AGREEMENT.**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the Northern Ireland Protocol. I have read your comments with interest.

Let me be clear at the outset that the Government's commitment to the *Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement* is unshakeable and resolute.

Unfortunately, however, the Northern Ireland Protocol is not working in its current form. It is not delivering on core objectives: to minimise disruption to everyday lives; respect Northern Ireland's integral place in the UK's internal market; and preserve the delicate balance in the *Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement* in all its dimensions - East-West as well as North-South.

The EU's inflexible approach to customs checks and processes required by the Protocol is having a significant impact on the everyday lives of people in Northern Ireland, with reduced choices for consumers and increased costs for businesses. This is not sustainable and has already increased community tensions.

The Government has tried to operate the Protocol in good faith, but the problems are significant and growing. There is political turbulence, societal difficulties, and trade diversion.

Ministers have proposed three solutions that seek to address the unique circumstances in Northern Ireland. The first is to ensure that full customs processes are only applied to goods genuinely destined for the EU. The second is to allow goods meeting both UK and EU standards to circulate freely in Northern Ireland, and the third is to remove the role of the European Court of Justice in governing the Protocol.

I fully understand that the Government agreed the Protocol with the EU in 2019 and that it was the UK's decision to leave the EU. This does not mean, however, that talks should not take place when it is clear a deeply unsatisfactory situation in Northern Ireland has emerged.

On the issue you specifically raise, Ministers have previously proposed a Veterinary and SPS Agreement with the EU based on equivalence. Under this arrangement, the UK and the EU would agree to recognise each other's legislation as achieving the same animal and plant health standards, even if the detail of the legislation meant that these standards could be reached in different ways.



The EU has so far refused to countenance an agreement of this sort. The European Commission has instead proposed an agreement based on dynamic alignment in which the UK would operate the EU's rules. I do not believe that this would be fair or acceptable. It would compromise our sovereignty over our own laws, and leave the UK stuck in the regulatory orbit of the EU's institutions.

It is clear that there are serious and important issues to be resolved in relation to the Northern Ireland Protocol and I hope that the EU will work with the Government on its proposals to find permanent solutions to those challenges. The disruption to the lives of the people in Northern Ireland cannot continue.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**