



**POLITICAL
INTELLIGENCE**

Guide to the Windsor Framework

Overview, next steps and reaction

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Introduction

On 27 February 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced a new agreement to resolve disagreement about the post-Brexit arrangements for Northern Ireland. The Windsor Framework aims to restore the smooth flow of trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, safeguard the province's place within the UK, and give people of Northern Ireland greater control over the rules that apply to them, while simultaneously protecting the EU's single market. In practice, the new arrangements, which will replace the disputed Northern Ireland Protocol (NIP), part of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, will include new green and red customs lanes for goods entering Northern Ireland from Britain, and a so-called Stormont Brake to enable Northern Ireland politicians to object to future EU legislation that affects the region. The deal also promises to cut red tape on the movement of pets, medicines, and food to Northern Ireland from Britain. However, while the agreement has been welcomed as a big step towards improved relations between the UK and EU, the main unionist party in Northern Ireland has said it does not go far enough. The Framework is also subject to further legislative and practical measures to bring its new arrangements into force.

This Dods Political Intelligence report provides a guide to the Windsor Framework, including the key elements of the agreement and how they differ from the NIP, expected next steps, a range of initial political and stakeholder reaction, and analysis on the implications for UK-EU relations.



Overview

The [Windsor Framework](#) aims to resolve problems arising from the NIP, arguably the most contentious part of the 2019 [EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement](#). The NIP, which was championed by former prime minister Boris Johnson, set out the post-Brexit arrangements for the region which ensured there was no hard border with the Republic of Ireland that would threaten the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. In practice the NIP created a de facto goods border in the Irish Sea instead, which triggered trade friction between Britain and Northern Ireland, the collapse of Northern Ireland's power-sharing government, and soured relations between the UK and EU.

At the joint news conference with von der Leyen to announce the Windsor Framework on 27 February 2023, Sunak said the agreement in principle [marked a turning point for the people of Northern Ireland](#) and took three steps forward from that of the NIP as it “delivers smooth flowing trade within the whole United Kingdom; protects Northern Ireland's place in our Union; and safeguards sovereignty for the people of Northern Ireland”. Von der Leyen said, it “provides for long-lasting solutions that both of us are confident will work for all people and businesses in Northern Ireland.”

1) Restoring smooth flow of trade within the UK internal market

While the NIP maintained tariff free trade from Britain to Northern Ireland, it required goods to be treated as if they were crossing an international border, including multiple declarations, checks and in some cases rules of origin requirements to protect the EU single market. This angered many Unionists, who felt it separated them from the rest of the UK. To remedy this, the Framework would establish a green customs lane for goods destined for the

Northern Ireland market and red lane for goods going to the Republic or wider EU market. This dual system would be underpinned by new data-sharing arrangements, “using commercial data and technology to monitor trade flows, rather than relying on international customs procedures [such as under the NIP] that were inappropriate for UK internal market movements”.

Green lane goods would be treated as internal UK movement and be free from excessive paperwork, checks, and require a single, digitised certificate per truck movement, rather than multiple forms per load. There would also be no customs checks, except for risk-based and intelligence-led operations targeting criminality, and no post-arrival declarations. The simplified process for goods movement will be supported by the existing Trader Support Service (TSS), though specific details are yet to be finalised. By contrast, red lane goods would face usual third country processes and requirements. In the future, a tariff reimbursement scheme would also be established for goods that did not ultimately end up in the EU, a key priority for businesses and trade organisations. For goods moving from Northern Ireland to GB the Framework would remove requirements for export declarations for businesses, needed under the NIP.

To support access to the green lane, the Framework also expands the number of businesses that can be classed as internal UK traders and move goods classed as “not at risk” of entering the EU in 3 ways: businesses won't need a physical presence in Northern Ireland to be classed as internal traders of the UK; the turnover threshold for moving goods under the scheme increased to £2m from £500,000; and firms above that threshold would be eligible to move goods for use in certain sectors, such as animal feed, healthcare, construction and

not-for-profit sectors. On the Northern Irish side, Northern Ireland will be able to use a “dual-regulatory system” to trade freely with the EU.

Agri-food and parcels

The Framework will enable agri-foods to enter Northern Ireland from GB via the green lane, or Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme, from autumn 2023 after consultation. That promises to enable supermarkets, wholesalers, hospitality and catering companies and those providing food to public services to once again provide the same agri-foods in the region as they do in the rest of the UK. Under the NIP, agri-food goods moving from GB to Northern Ireland would have faced full EU third country checks and controls after the grace period, which was only available to members of the Scheme for Temporary Agri-food Movements to Northern Ireland (STAMNI).

With the new proposal, all 1,500 members of the STAMNI protocol would be automatically enrolled, while the rest would need a simple online form. Traders will only need to complete a single, digitised certificate per lorry movement, providing routine commercial data, rather than multiple certificates per load, thereby cutting number of ID checks on lorries to around 5 percent by 2025 from 100 percent under protocol. EU laws will be replaced with UK public health, marketing and organics standards for retail goods remaining in the UK, thereby protecting internal UK trade even where food health standards diverge. The ban on chilled meat preparations from GB, such as sausages, will be lifted completely.

In a similar way, the Framework will also remove the NIP’s EU customs requirements for parcels, both personal and business-to-business, moving from GB to Northern Ireland from October 2024. Instead, the UK has agreed that authorised parcel

operators will share data to monitor and manage any risks of smuggling into the EU market.

2) Safeguarding Northern Ireland’s place in the Union

The Framework also seeks to address NIP trade requirements in specific areas that had fueled concerns they were driving the two jurisdictions apart, a key concern for the unionist community. The Framework seeks to ease protocol requirements on a range of activities disapplying the majority of EU law and oversight of the European Court of Justice (ECJ):

Plants, Seeds and Used Agricultural and Forestry Machinery

The Framework aims to remove many NIP requirements for certification and checks for movement of plants, seeds and used agricultural and forestry machinery from GB to Northern Ireland, freeing the province’s significant agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries from related costs and administration. This would allow businesses to sell seed potatoes and the most commercially important native British trees across the whole UK. The UK government says the plant passport scheme membership fee costs will be cut to £123 per year from £153 per consignment, which is required for intra-UK movements. The new scheme will come into force in Autumn 2023 along with the lifting of the ban on seed potatoes and high-risk plants.

Pets

The Framework also removes extensive NIP requirements, such as rabies vaccinations and health certificates, for the movement of pets from Britain to Northern Ireland from autumn 2023. For pet owners visiting Northern Ireland from Britain the only requirement will be confirmation via an online form or travel booking that the animal is microchipped and will not enter the EU, creating a virtually invisible

experience for microchipped pets to move between Northern Ireland and GB. There will be no new requirements for Northern Ireland pet owners, so they can travel freely into GB or enter Ireland and the rest of the EU with an existing EU pet passport.

The Framework also establishes a grace period allowing the removal of authorisation and movement conditions for UK-approved veterinary medicines to be used in Northern Ireland until the end of 2025, with a view to allowing them to be used in the province without additional requirements.

VAT and excise

The Framework means the UK would control value-added tax (VAT) and excise rules on goods in Northern Ireland, preventing new EU VAT rules from applying as they had under the NIP. This had become a key concern during the energy crisis, as Northern Ireland was unable to enjoy GB VAT reduction on domestic installation of insulation and other energy measures. Further to this, alcohol tax changes announced in the Budget on 15 March, would be incompatible with EU rules, so would not have been available in Northern Ireland under the NIP.

The Framework also contains more flexibility by [establishing new categories for rates](#) that can be applied for VAT purposes where goods are consumed in Northern Ireland, “achieved by detailed reference to the limited range of contexts rather than a blanket adoption of EU law” such as under the NIP.

Medicines

The Framework makes provision for the UK’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to manage approval of medicines in Northern Ireland as it does for the rest of the UK, rather than the EU’s European Medicines Agency (EMA) as was the case under the NIP. This means that medicine suppliers could have a single

licence for the whole UK, and medicines would be available via the green lane in Northern Ireland at the same time and in the same packaging, reducing labelling concerns and added costs. Although the EU had [proposed a change to EU rules in April 2022](#) to ensure the long-term supply of medicines to Northern Ireland at the same time as the UK, this was a “bridging solution” while the EMA made their final decision.

This was one of the two major wins that von der Leyen highlighted in the press conference announcing the Framework. The Command Paper also says the Framework “safeguards frictionless access to the EU market” for pharmaceutical and medical technology companies based in Northern Ireland through the “dual regulatory system”.

3) Safeguarding Northern Irish Sovereignty and addressing the democratic deficit

The Framework seeks to address concerns that the NIP’s provisions for safeguarding the European single market subjected the region to EU regulations that local lawmakers had no say over. The UK government says the Framework removes some 1,700 pages of EU law and with them, any ECJ oversight or interpretation. It narrows the range of EU rules applicable in Northern Ireland to less than 3 percent overall, with the remaining rules there solely in order to maintain the ability of Northern Ireland firms to sell their goods into the EU market. The UK and EU say in the political declaration “that the fundamental underpinning of this [Framework] arrangement is in international law, not EU law and the EU institutions”. However, von der Leyen said in the press conference, the ECJ would have the final say on single market issues.

The key component of this section of the agreement is the so-called ‘Stormont Brake’,

a new last resort mechanism to be used in exceptional circumstances which would enable the Northern Ireland Executive to object to EU laws taking effect in the province. To be activated, it would require the backing of at least 30 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from at least two political parties to register their objection. They must also demonstrate that the proposed new rules [would result in “a significant impact specific to everyday life”](#) and “that the notification is only being made in the most exceptional circumstances and as a last resort” as well as having exhausted other available consultation mechanisms. If the Brake is pulled, the UK government can stop the application of the relevant rules in Northern Ireland but there is also a commitment to further intensive discussions with the European Commission. Any dispute about the use of the Brake between the UK government and European Commission, would be subject to independent arbitration according to international not EU law. If the Brake is activated, resulting in the permanent disapplication of EU rules and therefore divergence between Northern Ireland and the Republic, the EU would be able to take “appropriate remedial measures”.

Next steps

The agreement in principle on the Windsor Framework paves the way for the UK and EU to proceed with the legislative steps to give effect to the agreement’s various measures, many of which are due to come into force in autumn 2023. EU ministers are scheduled to discuss the various aspects of the deal at a [General Affairs Council](#) on 21 March. The agreement in principle will then be presented for approval at a meeting of the UK-EU Joint Committee, expected to take place in coming weeks. Crucially, the agreement is accompanied by a mutual commitment to drop recent retaliatory actions which had soured bilateral relations. The UK government has said it will not proceed with the Northern Ireland Protocol

Bill introduced in mid-2022, which threatened to unilaterally change the parts of the protocol that the UK objected to. For its part, the EU will not proceed with seven separate legal actions it had launched against the UK on issues ranging from parcels to pets, “reflecting the shared desire for a positive bilateral relationship now and into the future.”

The House of Commons is scheduled to hold a vote on the ‘Stormont Brake’ mechanism on Wednesday 22 March but as it is being presented as a statutory instrument there will be no amendments. Other elements of the framework are classified as changes to the original protocol, so a vote on them is not necessary. Some Conservative MPs are unhappy that the Stormont Brake vote could be their only chance to have a say on the framework, according to reports. The DUP said in a statement that its MPs would vote against the statutory instrument, adding that the Stormont Brake did not deal with the fundamental issue which was the imposition of EU law by the Protocol. The party said it would continue to work with the government to resolve outstanding issues with the framework. However, Labour’s support for the framework suggests any related legislation will be passed by parliament.

Sunak had [told MPs there would be a vote](#) on the agreement in parliament before any ratification process, adding “we need to do that at the appropriate time in order to give people the time and space to consider the detail.” The Government [have also said they would propose consultations](#) with Northern Ireland parties, which would begin imminently. It remains to be seen what might happen if any of those parties make significant objections or if it prevents a resumption of the power-sharing devolved administration Northern Ireland. The implementation process of the agreement is expected to range from providing

guidance to traders on the new arrangements, to setting up the required infrastructure including to support data sharing on the movement of goods.

In terms of parliamentary scrutiny, the European Scrutiny Committee has asked Sunak to give evidence on the Framework and [said the government should seek parliamentary scrutiny](#) before proceeding with legislation. The Committee, which is chaired by veteran eurosceptic Conservative MP, Sir William Cash, has also requested a list of EU rules that will still apply to Northern Ireland if the deal is finalised. The House of Lords sub-committee on the protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland has also [launched an inquiry into the Windsor Framework](#), with a view to begin hearing oral evidence later in March and continue to gather evidence in April and May.

Dods Analysis

UK-EU relations

The Windsor Framework is undoubtedly a significant step forward in improving relations between the UK and EU and reflects particularly well on Sunak and von der Leyen for finding a solution to the seemingly intractable issue of Northern Ireland's post-Brexit arrangements. Their mutual goodwill and warmth, with the EU chief referring to "dear Rishi" during their news conference, is in marked contrast to the mood with Sunak's predecessors. Von der Leyen's statement that the deal was possible due to a constructive attitude bodes well for stronger UK-EU cooperation in other areas. The dropping of both the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill and EU legal action against the UK indicates a new impetus to work constructively and avoid further confrontation. That could pave the way for the UK to re-join Horizon Europe, the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation, although [Sunak has reportedly questioned its value](#). Experts have also said the framework could help the UK and EU to explore ways for working together on energy, foreign affairs, and defence, particularly in their approach to China.

However, this agreement marks the start of a process which includes a variety of legislative and practical steps, all of which hold challenges. There are also other areas of post-Brexit policy work which could erode some of the Framework goodwill, including the Retained EU Law Bill, which is at Report Stage in the House of Lords. There are concerns that a sunset clause in that legislation could cause problems with the way EU law operates in Northern Ireland. Baroness Jenny Chapman, Shadow Business, Trade and Cabinet Office Spokesperson, has said she was [concerned some provisions would be missed](#) which could "affect strand two

obligations [of the Good Friday Agreement] or affect level playing field [commitments with the EU]". Lapsing laws could also risk a potentially problematic divergence from the EU in areas like farming or safety standards of particular concern for the EU with the Stormont Brake. Sunak has said in Parliament that [the Retained EU Law Bill was "passing separately"](#) and the UK had protected against "trade and regulatory divergence" by opening "dialogue with businesses in Northern Ireland and also with the European Union".

UK-US Relations

The Framework should also please the White House and Biden in particular, who has emphasised his Irish heritage and repeatedly urged the UK to find a deal with the EU to avoid upsetting peace in Northern Ireland. Biden confirmed, during Sunak's 14 March visit to the US, that he will visit Northern Ireland and the Republic to mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. Sunak had promised the President he would resolve the protocol issue by the anniversary in April. Biden's visit could add impetus to Number 10's efforts to get Northern Ireland's power sharing arrangements working again. It could also support the UK's mission to leverage its comparative advantages in key areas when caught between the two power blocs of the US and the EU. The recent updated Integrated Review said Britain's "strength comes not only through size but specialisation".

CPTPP Ascension

The Framework may also help the UK's efforts to sign a deal with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a large trade agreement whose members include Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore and Vietnam, and which accounts for around 15 percent of global trade. Since the

UK formally applied for membership in February 2021, the members of CPTPP have reportedly been wary of its disagreement with the EU and impact that might have within the bloc. Joining the CPTPP would support the UK's post-Brexit drive to forge closer trade ties with fast-growing economies and open fresh opportunities for sectors where it has notable strengths, such as financial services. While specific sticking points remain, such as the UK's objections to hormone treated beef, the UK would be the first nation to join the CPTPP bloc from outside of the Indo-Pacific region, which is expected to house 65 percent of the world's middle-class consumers by 2050.

Reactions

The following section provides a range of commentary on the Windsor Framework from politicians and stakeholders, with links to original sources.

Political:

Steve Baker, Northern Ireland Office Minister and former ERG member, told Sky News: "In my view this [Framework] restores Northern Ireland's place in the Union". He added: "This is existential for eurosceptics, as it is for the DUP...I've said to them [ERG] I very much hope that when they've read the text themselves that they will also feel able in good faith to back this deal and move on...I think this is a win."

Keir Starmer, Labour leader, said in Parliament on 27 February: "I have made it clear for some time that if the Prime Minister were to get an agreement with the EU, and if that agreement were in the interest of this country and Northern Ireland, Labour would support it, and we will stick to our word... When the Prime Minister puts this deal forward for a vote, Labour will support it and vote for it."

Jeffrey Donaldson, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), said in a March 20 statement that the party's MPs would vote against the Stormont Brake statutory instrument, but would continue to work with the government to resolve outstanding issues with the Framework. "It is our party view that there remain key areas of concern which require further clarification, re-working and change as well as seeing further legal text...whilst representing real progress the "brake" does not deal with the fundamental issue which is the imposition of EU law by the Protocol." The DUP had set out [seven demands](#) that any new agreement must meet, including no border in the Irish Sea and giving the

people in Northern Ireland a say in the laws which govern them.

Sinn Féin Leader Mary Lou McDonald TD, said in a statement on 11 March: "With a deal done on the Protocol we believe that power-sharing can be restored in the coming weeks, ahead of the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. It is time for the DUP to get back on board and work alongside the other parties." In another statement, she said: "The Protocol represents hard-won protections for Ireland against the sharpest edge of the Tory Brexit...While all parties and sectors are now working through the details of the agreement, it appears that these vital protections have been preserved."

Conservative MP Mark Francois, chairman of the pro-Brexit European Research Group (ERG) of Tory parliamentarians, reportedly said he hopes the group will make a decision on the Framework within a couple of weeks following a detailed legal audit of the deal, Sky News reported on 28 February.

Stephen Farry, an Alliance Party MP, said in Parliament: "My party can give a broad welcome to this agreement. There are some positives in it that address a range of challenges that have been clear for some time. However, for us, the key test is the preservation of Northern Ireland's dual market access. In that regard, my party has massive concerns about this potential Stormont brake".

Stephen Flynn, leader of Scottish National Party (SNP) in the Commons, said in Parliament: "Broadly speaking...I am fully supportive of the agreement," but added, "this deal means that businesses in Northern Ireland have access to the single market, whereas businesses in Scotland do not...I regret that Scotland does not have those same opportunities." SNP lawmakers have also noted Sunak's [comments](#) that

"Northern Ireland is in the unbelievably special position...in having privileged access not just to the UK market...but also the EU single market."

Ed Davey, leader of the Liberal Democrats, told parliament: "The Liberal Democrats will now closely study this deal, but I welcome the spirit of partnership and compromise between the UK government and the European Union in the formation of the Windsor agreement."

Trade:

William Bain, Head of Trade Policy at the British Chamber of Commerce, said: "We will be closely considering the legal texts and their full implications, but this appears to be a positive step toward achieving this goal [of a considerable reduction in checks for goods moving across the Irish Sea]. The Green Lane proposal should offer a green light to future prosperity in Northern Ireland. But more broadly businesses in the UK will welcome the potential for stabilising relations with the EU. There is now the potential to move to a new phase of co-operation on trade, regulation, climate, migration and supply chain issues."

Guy Rainbird, Public Affairs Director at the Association of Investment Companies (AIC), said: "As well as the political implications, the economic dimension of the agreement is very significant. The future of the UK subsidy regime has been an important question which has now been settled in a way that puts the UK in control... HM Treasury can now unilaterally remove the 'sunset clause', previously imposed by the EU, which would have effectively ended the schemes in 2025."

Mike Hawes, Chief Executive of Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT): "The new agreement... is a welcome development if it allows for the streamlined flow of goods, including vehicles and automotive components, between Great

Britain, Northern Ireland and the EU single market. We must now build on this renewed trust and momentum to unlock all elements of the TCA."

Agri-Food:

The Agricultural Industries Confederation said: "A deal which seeks to improve the flow of trade by minimising customs check and administrative processes is an encouraging step forward, and we welcome the political will to address this issue."

Sainsbury's CEO Simon Roberts: "This means that our customers in Northern Ireland will once again be able to access the full range of products as customers in Great Britain."

Minette Batters, President of the National Farmers' Union (NFU), said: "We welcome progress on agreeing a long-term arrangement that ensures smooth trade in agri-food between Great Britain and Northern Ireland."

Plants, Seeds and Used Agricultural and Forestry Machinery:

Fran Barnes CEO of the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA), said: "We are pleased that common sense has prevailed in this agreement and much of what we have asked for has been listened to." She noted that "Unfortunately, much damage has already been done to the trade in plants between Great Britain and Northern Ireland as previously our members could trade freely and there has been significant loss of business. This is something which they will not get back overnight." She observed that "this agreement is likely to take some time to be operational - but we hope it can be introduced smoothly and swiftly. This is an important opportunity for a sector like ours that contributes so much to environmental targets in the UK and Europe."

Pets:

British Veterinary Association President

Malcolm Morley said: "On first reading, the 'new deal' for Northern Ireland looks positive for vets, farmers and agri-food businesses, as well as pet owners. Throughout the UK, the veterinary profession is managing with workforce shortages and so it's encouraging that new proposals seek to minimise the need for vet intervention as animals and goods move across the Irish Sea". She further said: "there is still more to do to ensure long-term access to vet medicines for Northern Ireland and we look forward to working with all parties to find a workable solution."

Dawn Howard, National Office of Animal Health Chief Executive, said:

"The Framework brings many positives, one specific being the new travel arrangements for pets moving between GB and NI. ...With animal disease knowing no borders, a collective approach to One Health and innovation, such as reopening Horizon funding access to UK projects and expertise, will benefit us all. And ensuring NI animals continue to be able to access the full range of veterinary medicines to prevent and treat disease is an important piece in protecting the health of the animals and people."

Medicines:

Richard Torbett, Chief Executive at the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) said:

"While we wait to see all the details, today's agreement appears to bring a return to a single UK market for medicines, providing the permanent solution that our members have been calling for. Pharmaceutical companies will now need the right amount of time to make all necessary changes."

Nuffield Trust Brexit Programme Lead Mark Dayan said:

"For over two years there has

been real fear and concern about whether Northern Ireland will still be able to access the 80 percent of its medicines for which it relies on supplies from Great Britain... this agreement together with earlier EU actions would resolve nearly every single source of concern... The downside is that Northern Ireland will no longer have access to medicines approved by the European Union."

From the EU:

Ireland Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin TD, said in a 27 February statement:

"I share the hope that today's announcement allows the EU and the UK to open a new chapter in their relationship...It is in Ireland's interests that the EU and the UK have a positive, forward-looking relationship".

Christophe Hansen MEP, EPP Group Spokesman on Trade, said in a statement:

"Though it still needs to clear many institutional hurdles, I welcome this hard-fought progress as a sign of hope that will allow two natural allies to cooperate more closely on pressing matters such as the war in Ukraine".

MEP Thijs Reuten, spokesperson on relations with the UK from the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, said in a statement:

"What we have on the table now is an agreement that protects the integrity of the EU single market, that avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland and that protects the Good Friday Agreement. It's finally time to make it work".

MEP Nathalie Loiseau, Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation to the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, said in a statement:

"We note the flexibility demonstrated by the EU and wish that this agreement can create long awaited stability for Northern Ireland and satisfactory

protection of the Single Market for businesses, workers and consumers”.

The European University Association (EUA) said in a statement: “In the past six years, uncertainty has been a major obstacle for cooperation between EU universities and their UK partners. The Windsor Framework should put an end to this uncertainty,”

Other:

Andrew McCormick, former Director General of International Relations in the Northern Ireland Executive Office (2018-2021): “The outcome takes us as close as possible to the very centre of the Brexit trilemma, achieving the avoidance of a hard land border between the two parts of Ireland, no material limits on the ability of the UK to operate outside the EU single market and customs union, and minimal checks and controls on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. If the benchmark is the Backstop, or the original Protocol, the Windsor Framework is much better, in both practical, constitutional and presentational terms...The Windsor Framework provides a very positive basis for moving forward and shows that detailed, practical engagement was and will remain the only way to address the complexity of the implications of Brexit for Northern Ireland.”

Charles Grant, Director of the Centre for European Reform: “The Windsor Framework will stick: there is a clear majority in parliament for it (and probably even among Conservative MPs). The DUP is a party that is used to saying no, and it may continue to boycott the Northern Irish executive for a while. But it cannot stop the deal and may in time become reconciled to it, just like it eventually accepted the Good Friday Agreement.”

Anton Spisak, Senior Fellow, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, said in a note: “If Sunak succeeds in pushing through his agreement, his prize will be better relations with Europe and the US...But most importantly, the value of this deal lies in bringing about legal certainty for businesses and investors, political stability and resolving most practical problems caused by Brexit for the people and communities of Northern Ireland”.

Dr Catriona Manville, AMRC Director of Research Policy, said: “The announcement of the Windsor framework opens the door to full UK membership of EU programmes, which would end two years of uncertainty for the UK research sector.”

Dr Tim Bradshaw, Chief Executive of the Russell Group, said: “ Now the major political roadblock to UK association has been removed, what the R&D sector needs to see is a clear signal from both the UK Government and EU that full UK participation in EU programmes remains the priority, so that talks can begin in parallel to Windsor framework implementation.”

About the authors

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