



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London.
SW1A 2AA.

28th February 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing further to our discussion in the House yesterday to pledge broad SNP support for the new refined Northern Ireland Protocol arrangements, where we can be helpful in calming tensions and resolving problems we shall be happy to work together. Peace in Northern Ireland is close to any Scottish person's heart, indeed it is grievously upsetting that it has been imperilled by the last few years and anything that helps resolve difficulties has our support. I was also struck in yesterday's discussion by the broad agreement on the merits for Northern Ireland of access to the EU Single Market.

I write to suggest that Scotland accede into the same arrangements.

As you stated in the chamber yesterday the protocol now allows trade to flow freely within our UK internal market and removes any sense of a border in the Irish sea, whilst at the same time acknowledging the value and importance that Northern Irish businesses have in accessing the European Union single market. As you rightly said, "Northern Ireland is in the unique position, not just in the United Kingdom but in the entire continent of Europe, of having privileged access to two markets."

Scotland voted Remain in the 2016 EU Referendum by a considerably bigger margin than Northern Ireland, across every counting area. Recent polls have suggested that over 70% of Scots would vote to remain in the EU trading bloc if there was another referendum. If we are all agreed to the advantages of single market membership, what is preventing Scotland from having access to this market on the same terms? This would help to grow the economy, ease trading difficulties with the EU and go some way to address the democratic deficit in Scotland that has been caused by the Brexit referendum and events since. This is not a new suggestion, indeed the Scottish Government suggested similar in the 2017 document "Scotland's Place in Europe". Those constructive suggestions did not progress at the time, but given events in Northern Ireland have proven your government is rather more solutions focussed than your predecessors, perhaps now is the time to revisit the question.

I look forward to your response.

Alyn Smith MP