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Dr Andrew Murrison  
Northern Ireland Affairs Committee  
Committee Office  
House of Commons  
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28 November 2017

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter of 31 October, outlining the engagement you and Northern Ireland Affairs Committee members had with businesses and communities based near the land border with Ireland. You expressed concern that there is a lack of information on, and misunderstanding around, this issue.

As the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU and I have made clear we must aim to avoid any physical infrastructure on the land border and it is welcome that the Commission has made a similar commitment which is an important step forward.

Since the general election I and my Ministerial colleagues have had a lot of valuable engagement with people, businesses and communities right across Northern Ireland. These include meetings with the Ulster Farmers Union, Northern Ireland Utility Regulator, the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce, cross-border waste management company Re-Gen Waste (on joint visit with Minister Robin Walker, DExEU), as well as sports clothing company O'Neills, and the System Operator for Northern Ireland Electricity.

The UK government is committed to listening and responding to the concerns of border communities. As a Government we will be doing everything we can to ensure that the people and businesses in the border region understand what we are doing to protect the current open border.

The principle of uninhibited free movement between Northern Ireland and Ireland carries symbolic significance in implementing the Belfast ('Good Friday') Agreement's commitment to the continued respect of the civil, political, social and cultural rights of the communities in Northern Ireland.

We are pleased that joint principles on the continuation of the Common Travel Area (CTA) and associated rights after the UK leaves the EU have been developed. This confirms that, as now, there will be no immigration controls on the land border.

We have outlined bold and imaginative ways of ensuring the border remains open for trade and the important agricultural industry in our August paper on Northern Ireland/Ireland.

The NIO has a wide ranging programme of engagement in Northern Ireland on EU Exit. The Department will continue to build on and expand this. My Ministerial colleague, Chloe Smith, has recently accepted an invitation to meet the eleven councils who comprise the Northern Ireland/Ireland border region, following their report **Brexit and the Border Corridor on the Island of Ireland: Risks, Opportunities and Issues to Consider**.

This will form part of a programme of intensive engagement by the UK Government with communities living in border areas and we will work closely with No10 and Department for Exiting the EU to ensure there is a coherence to the Government's message and a coordinated approach to explaining the Government's position.

Yours sincerely,



**RT HON JAMES BROKENSHERE MP**  
**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**