Centre for
Cross Border Cooperation

Briefing Paper on North-South cooperation, the Windsor Framework and the re-set of EU-UK relations

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About the Centre for Cross Border Cooperation

The Centre for Cross Border Cooperation,[1] based in Armagh, Northern Ireland, has a strong reputation as an authoritative advocate for cross-border cooperation and as a valued source of research, information and support for collaboration across borders on the island of Ireland, Europe and beyond. The Centre empowers citizens and builds capacity and capability for cooperation across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries on the island of Ireland and further afield. This mission is achieved through research, expertise, partnership and experience in a wide range of cross-border practices and concerns.

Introduction

The second EU-UK Summit is set to take place in Brussels on 20 November 2026. The press release published by the European Council on 12 October describes how it will be used to 'take stock of the progress made in the bilateral relationship since the first 2025 EU-UK summit in London, including on their defence and security partnership, energy, agrifood rules, climate, people-to-people contacts, and migration and law enforcement'. It also notes that it will be 'an occasion to discuss the next steps in bilateral relations'. Published on the same day, the press release from the UK Prime Minister's office stated that 'The Prime Minister will use the summit to push for deals to cut costs and red tape for British farmers and businesses, support industry and boost growth in every part of the country'. It also quotes the Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, saying 'A threadbare Brexit deal has damaged our economy', and that he wants to use the summit 'to take practical steps that pay off for the British public, cutting costs for our farmers, food producers and families'.

This Briefing Paper considers what the ongoing re-set of relations between the UK Government and the European Union might mean for cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland and for the Windsor Framework. Could an improving relationship between London and Brussels provide a more secure context for North-South cooperation, and could agreements between the two parties mean that certain elements of the Windsor Framework are superseded? Importantly, it proposes a review of the extent to which the Windsor Framework is maintaining the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation based on the 2017 mapping exercise of North-South cooperation.

[1] The Centre was established in September 1999 as the Centre for Cross Border Studies but began trading under the name Centre for Cross Border Cooperation in September 2024 when it celebrated its 25th anniversary.

The Windsor Framework: The beginning of the EU-UK re-set?

Although the first EU-UK Summit took place in London in May 2025 under the premiership of Sir Keir Starmer, it could be argued that the agreement reached in February 2023 on the Windsor Framework marked a turning-point in EU-UK relations. Prior to this, and even after the turmoil that eventually led to the 2019 Withdrawal Agreement, relations between the UK Government and the EU were in a generally poor state. As noted in the Centre's report *10 years on from the Brexit referendum*, relations were often soured by UK Government moves to go against what it had agreed with the EU, mainly in relation to the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland that was part of the Withdrawal Agreement. Perhaps one of the moments that most illustrated this was when in September 2020 the then Secretary of State, Brandon Lewis, was asked in the House of Commons whether legislation the Government was introducing (the UK Internal Market Bill) would breach international legal obligations the UK had entered into with the EU. His answer was 'yes, this does break international law in a very specific and limited way'. The legislation would have meant the UK unilaterally disapplying EU law from aspects of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, contrary to what had been agreed in the Withdrawal Agreement.

When Rishi Sunak became Prime Minister, efforts to rebuild trust with the EU eventually led to the agreement on the Windsor Framework and to his Government's abandoning of another piece of proposed legislation (the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill) that would have contradicted the Withdrawal Agreement. As the Centre for Cross Border Cooperation noted in a Briefing Paper published in April 2023, the agreement on the Windsor Framework marked 'a significant and positive change in UK-EU relations' (p.4). This change is reflected in the Political Declaration by the European Commission and the Government of the United Kingdom that accompanied the Windsor Framework, which concluded:

> The new way forward on the Windsor Framework marks a turning point in how both the United Kingdom and the European Union will work together collaboratively and constructively. It also reflects the full commitment of both to protect the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement of 10 April 1998 and its subsequent implementation agreements and arrangements (p.4).

This 2023 agreement, which included a joint declaration stating that 'the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland [...] should now be known as the "Windsor Framework"', was very much focused on Northern Ireland. It made a number of changes to the operation of the Protocol in relation to matters such as customs and the movement of goods, VAT and excise. It also introduced new measures, including giving the Northern Ireland Assembly (which was not functioning at the time) the ability to vote on any new EU legislation that

would amend or replace EU laws included in the Protocol,[2] and it committed to enhanced engagement with Northern Ireland stakeholders.[3] However, the Windsor Framework agreement made no changes to the original Protocol in terms of what it said in relation to cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland.

It is important to recall what the original Protocol contained in terms of North-South cooperation. In fact, there are 11 references to North-South cooperation in the Protocol/Windsor Framework. The introductory remarks (the recitals) to the Protocol/Windsor Framework set out the UK and EU's joint understanding of its context and purpose. Among them, the UK and EU jointly recognise 'that cooperation between Northern Ireland and Ireland is a central part of the 1998 Agreement and is essential for achieving reconciliation and the normalisation of relationships on the island of Ireland'. In another the parties jointly highlight how 'the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Union gives rise to substantial challenges to the maintenance and development of North-South cooperation'. Another recital sets out their joint acknowledgement of 'the need for this Protocol to be implemented so as to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation'.

Among the articles that make up the Protocol/Windsor Framework, Article 1(3) states that 'This Protocol sets out arrangements necessary to address the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland, to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation, to avoid a hard border and to protect the 1998 Agreement in all its dimensions'. Article 11, which is entitled "Other areas of North-South cooperation", declares that 'this Protocol shall be implemented and applied so as to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation'. As noted earlier, the Windsor Framework agreement didn't make any changes to the Protocol in terms of what it said in relation to North-South cooperation post-Brexit.

The first UK-EU Summit: A Common Understanding

With the change from a Conservative to a Labour government in the UK in 2024 came a renewed effort to improve relations with the European Union. Intensive dialogues between the two sides led to the first UK-EU Summit in May 2025, bringing together the UK Prime Minister, the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Council. What had been agreed at the summit was set out in three documents: a Joint Statement, the Security and Defence Partnership, and a Common Understanding. The second paragraph of the Joint Statement reads:

> Reaffirming our shared values and our commitment to deeper cooperation against the backdrop of an evolving and complex global geopolitical landscape,

[2] This is the Stormont Brake mechanism, which is examined in the Centre's April 2023 Briefing Paper (pp.7-10).
[3] See pp.12-15 in the April 2023 Briefing Paper, and also the Centre's June 2023 Briefing Paper on Civic Engagement in the Windsor Framework.

> we agreed a new Strategic Partnership between the UK and EU. We agreed this would build on the stable foundation for our relationship set by the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Windsor Framework, and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and reaffirmed our commitment to their full, timely and faithful implementation.

It's important to note that the *new* Strategic Partnership is built on what had already been agreed between the UK and the EU, including the Windsor Framework, and that the Joint Statement is explicit on how those previous agreements will be fully and faithfully implemented. In other words, failure to implement what has already been agreed would impact on taking this new Strategic Partnership forward. This is underlined in the Common Understanding, where the UK and EU state: 'In order to strengthen the bilateral relationship, we stress the pivotal importance of the two main agreements that underpin our relationship: the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Windsor Framework, and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement'.

The Common Understanding sets out the areas where the UK and EU aim to deepen their cooperation. Those areas are: security, defence and development; putting people at the centre of the EU-UK relationship; strengthening the EU and UK economies while protecting the planet and its resources; internal security and judicial cooperation; and irregular migration. Under each of these areas the Common Understanding also set out what the UK and EU saw as the specific priorities for cooperation. Crucially, however, it is important to understand that whilst the successful pursuit of these priorities may in some instances be beneficial to North-South cooperation and of relevance to Northern Ireland, their scope is much wider than that. The focus of the first UK-EU Summit and of the Common Understanding is not Northern Ireland or its relationship with Ireland; it is the wider relationship between the UK as a whole and the entire European Union. Nevertheless, it's worth highlighting just some aspects of the Common Understanding that may be of some relevance to the Windsor Framework and, therefore, to Northern Ireland and, in some cases, to North-South cooperation.

Perhaps one of the most important joint commitments made in the Common Understanding that resulted from the first UK-EU Summit was to 'work towards establishing a Common Sanitary and Phytosanitary Area by way of a European Union-United Kingdom Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement' (paragraph 24). Its importance is made clear in the document itself, which states:

> Regarding its territorial scope, the SPS Agreement should cover the European Union and the United Kingdom in respect of Great Britain. This would result in the vast majority of movements of animals, animal products, plants, and plant products between Great Britain and the European Union being undertaken without the certificates or controls that are currently required by the rules within the scope of the SPS Agreement for such movements. These same benefits would

> be extended to the movements between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, through the interplay of the Windsor Framework and the SPS Agreement, so long as the SPS Agreement is fully implemented. The continued application of the Windsor Framework would provide for Northern Ireland maintaining its privileged unique dual access to both the European Union Single Market and the United Kingdom internal market (paragraph 25).

It's important to recall that unionist opposition in Northern Ireland to the Protocol led to the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) initially boycotting meetings of the North South Ministerial Council in 2021, before the DUP's Paul Givan resigned as First Minister in February 2022, triggering the collapse of the Executive and the Assembly. That opposition was – and generally continues to be – due to unionists' concerns that by keeping Northern Ireland within the EU's Single Market for goods, the Protocol had created an unacceptable separation between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, which remained outside of it. This meant that the movement of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland became subject to customs controls and bureaucracy and, despite the Windsor Framework having eased some of this, many unionists oppose what they see as a border down the Irish Sea that undermines Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom.

An SPS agreement, therefore, would remove this border in terms of the movement of animals, animal products, plants, and plant products between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and, potentially, allay some of unionists' concerns. This could, in turn, reduce the risk of the Protocol/Windsor Framework becoming again an issue of political controversy capable of collapsing the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, which would not only mean the North South Ministerial Council could not meet, but it would also mean wider North-South cooperation operating in an unfavourable political context.[4] However, although reaching an SPS agreement would be a positive outcome, its potential impact on North-South cooperation would only be tangential at most.

Of the other joint commitments agreed in the first UK-EU Summit and set out in the Common Understanding, perhaps those related to law enforcement and judicial cooperation could facilitate cooperation between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána. There could also be some benefits for North-South cooperation activities arising from the joint commitments on putting people at the centre of the EU-UK relationship. For example, their recognition of 'the value of travel and cultural and artistic exchanges, including the activities of touring artists', and that they 'will continue

[4] The importance of the political context for civic society organisations and local authorities on the island of Ireland involved in North-South and East-West cooperation can be seen in the quarterly surveys the Centre for Cross Border Cooperation undertook between 2021 and 2025. The Centre published a report in 2026 that offers an overview of the results obtained over this five-year period, but reports on the surveys were also published between 2022 and 2025 (which can be found in the reports section of the Centre's website), as well as Research Briefings for each quarterly survey (which can be accessed in the Briefing Papers section of the website).

their efforts to support travel and cultural exchange' (paragraph 15 of the Common Understanding), could remove some of the obstacles to North-South cooperation in the arts sector where this involved non-Irish artists from the EU. Similarly, their commitments to 'work towards the association of the United Kingdom to the European Union Erasmus+ programme' (paragraph 14) and a youth experience scheme that would 'facilitate the participation of young people from the European Union and the United Kingdom in various activities, such as work, studies, au-pairing, volunteering, or simply travelling, for a limited period of time' (paragraph 13), could support the involvement of non-Irish EU citizens in North-South cooperation projects. However, if these commitments are actually fulfilled, it could be argued that although they may be welcomed, they will only have a minimal impact on the overall North-South cooperation landscape.

The second UK-EU Summit: Looking ahead

Just as was the case with the first UK-EU Summit, the focus of the upcoming second Summit will not be Northern Ireland or its relationship with Ireland; it will be the wider relationship between the UK as a whole and the entire European Union. As the two sides use the occasion to take stock of the progress made since the first Summit, they will be able to note fulfilment of the commitment to the UK rejoining the Erasmus+ programme, which was confirmed by the signing of a legal text on 15 April 2026. In terms of other commitments, it is hoped that the second Summit will be able to announce success on reaching an SPS agreement, linking the UK's and EU's Emission Trading Systems, and a youth mobility scheme.

However, as mentioned earlier, and provided both sides agree that sufficient progress has been made on the commitments from the first Summit (which is not guaranteed),[5] the 20 November Summit is also expected to discuss next steps in the UK-EU relationship. Again, although the potential deepening of the relationship will not be focused on Northern Ireland or North-South cooperation, it could nevertheless have implications for both. This would particularly be the case if there were to be greater certainty regarding alignment between the UK's and EU's regulatory frameworks.

In a statement to the House of Commons on 12 October 2026, the UK Prime Minister linked the achievement of immediate priorities for the second Summit to the future of the UK-EU relationship. He said:

> I believe that our chances of doing so will be enhanced by being open to a discussion about our relationship with the EU in the longer term. If we are serious about promoting growth, controlling immigration, upholding our values and security, it is a conversation that we must have. Sticking with the status quo is not good enough for Britain. Worse, it would be a major dereliction of duty to turn

[5] See, for example, report on how the EU's "Made in Europe" law had delayed the Summit.

> away. We need to take a calm, clear-eyed, rational look at the world as it is today, to consider what is best for our country.

He added: 'Our immediate priority is securing a successful outcome at the summit, and I believe we should then set up a serious dialogue about the different options for our relationship in the long term'. Although Andy Burnham didn't provide any details of what the options might be,[6] but noting that 'At every stage, the British public will be the boss', there is nevertheless the possibility that the future of the UK-EU relationship will lead to the UK as a whole – and not just Northern Ireland – aligning with EU regulations.

Brexit gave the UK the ability to diverge from the EU rules it had been obliged to abide by as a Member State, except where it concerned Northern Ireland and the range of EU laws listed in the Protocol/Windsor Framework. The vast majority of those laws relate to Northern Ireland's unique position within the EU's Single Market for goods, although some also relate to specific areas of human rights and equality law. However, as the Centre's report on its quarterly surveys on North-South and East-West cooperation noted, the UK's post-Brexit ability to diverge from EU laws in other areas provoked uncertainty:

> Uncertainty is an undercurrent in many of the comments provided by respondents on the issues they discussed in North-South meetings from 2021 to 2025. This could be uncertainty regarding the future of funding for North-South cooperation or resulting from political instability. However, it was also derived from the possibility of divergence between the UK and the EU in terms of regulations, and how that might impact on North-South cooperation (p.20).

The report also highlighted how this issue was raised by those involved in cooperation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain:

> Among the other challenges to East-West cooperation respondents noted on a regular basis was the potential for policy divergence, not just between the UK and the EU, but also between the UK central government and the UK's devolved nations. In this regard, there was also a concern that the UK Government would increasingly develop policies, including relating to funding programmes, that would touch on matters that were devolved to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and that wouldn't be relevant to their needs (p.40).

The possibility, therefore, that the second UK-EU Summit would begin a process of greater regulatory alignment between the UK and EU could eventually ease the uncertainty felt by those involved in North-South cooperation. However, even if the Summit were to indicate that this is a possible direction of travel, it is likely to be a long

[6] As reported by the BBC on 25 October 2026, interviewed by *The Sunday Times* the Prime Minister has included a return to the free movement of people between the UK and the EU, which is one of the fundamental elements of being part of the EU's Single Market.

process and one that will be contested by those in the UK who would interpret it as going against one of the guiding principles behind the decision to leave the EU.

Beyond the Summit: Resetting the interpretation of the Windsor Framework and North-South cooperation

Regardless of whether or not the second UK-EU Summit signals an intent for greater regulatory alignment between the UK and EU, the ongoing reset of UK-EU relations needs to review how they are interpreting Article 11 of the Windsor Framework and its commitment to maintaining the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation. In its 2025 submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's inquiry on the operation of the Windsor Framework, the Centre for Cross Border Cooperation was of the view that:

> Most of the attention paid to the operation of the Windsor Framework (previously the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland) has been on the implementation of its trade-focused elements. [...] For those involved in North-South and/or East-West cooperation insufficient regard has been given to the extent to which the Windsor Framework has served to safeguard that cooperation (p.3).

When it comes to the focus given to the trade-related elements of the Protocol/Windsor Framework by the UK Government and the EU in their interpretation of Article 11, the issue arises from how this Article begins:

> **Consistent with the arrangements set out in Articles 5 to 10**, and in full respect of Union law, this Protocol shall be implemented and applied so as to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation [...] [emphasis added].

In maintaining the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation the Protocol's implementation and application can't, therefore, contradict the arrangements set out in Articles 5 to 10. Crucially, however, with the exception of Article 9 (Single electricity market), none of these articles sets out arrangements specifically aimed at maintaining the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation. Instead, they focus primarily on various aspects of the movement of goods between Northern Ireland and the EU and between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. For those involved in North-South cooperation, the movement of goods doesn't represent the greatest challenge to that cooperation.

The risk that it is only Articles 5 to 10 that are being seen as providing the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation was underlined in the UK Government's February 2026 response to the conclusions on North-South cooperation in a report by the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee. In reference to the Withdrawal Agreement and the maintenance of the conditions for North-South cooperation, the UK Government stated: 'The treaty obligation sets out that this obligation is specifically in relation to the implementation of Articles 5-10 of the Windsor Framework and the relevant annexes to it' (p.7). As noted earlier, neither Articles 5 to 10

nor the annexes related to them are of major relevance to North-South cooperation. Crucially, the focus on Articles 5 to 10 means that little or no attention is paid by either side when they introduce legislation that is not seen as directly relevant to the matters these articles cover even if, as the Centre for Cross Border Cooperation has noted on several occasions, it will potentially have a negative impact on the conditions for North-South cooperation.[7]

However, elsewhere in the Protocol/Windsor Framework, both the UK and the EU acknowledge the important role of North-South cooperation and how maintaining it in the post-Brexit context depends on factors not related to the movement of goods. In one of the recitals (the introductory remarks) the UK and EU jointly recognise 'that cooperation between Northern Ireland and Ireland is a central part of the 1998 Agreement and is essential for achieving reconciliation and the normalisation of relationships on the island of Ireland'. In another the parties jointly highlight how 'the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Union gives rise to substantial challenges to the maintenance and development of North-South cooperation'. Crucially, and recalling how UK-EU regulatory divergence is seen as a major challenge, one of the recitals highlights the fact that 'the Union and the United Kingdom [...] carried out a mapping exercise which shows that North-South cooperation relies to a significant extent on a common Union legal and policy framework'. The acknowledged reliance on a common legal and policy framework points to how post-Brexit divergence can occur in areas not directly relevant to Articles 5 to 10 of the Protocol/Windsor Framework, potentially undermining the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation.

There is a need, therefore, for both the UK and EU to provide explicit assurances that their joint commitment to maintain the conditions for North-South cooperation now and in the future is not limited to the implementation of Articles 5 to 10 of the Protocol/Windsor Framework. An important means of doing this, which would form part of the ongoing reset of UK-EU relations and comply with the second part of Article 11, is to revisit their 2017 mapping exercise of North-South cooperation and, in doing so, address a significant omission. This omission was acknowledged in technical notes published separately in 2018/19 by the UK Government and the European Commission, and it pertains to the fact that 'areas of informal and local/community level cooperation have not been captured by this exercise'.[8]

Revisiting the 2017 mapping exercise would not only provide an opportunity to involve those undertaking North-South cooperation at the community level, it would also inform

[7] See, for example, the Centre's views on the UK's Data Protection Digital Information Bill in its 2024 response to a House of Lords inquiry, and its 2025 Briefing Papers on the UK's Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme, the EU's proposed "Defence of Democracy" directive, and its proposal to discontinue seasonal time changes.

[8] European Commission, "Mapping of North-South cooperation & Implementation Bodies, Report and key findings of the exercise" (21 June 2019), p.4. Similarly, the UK's Department for Exiting the European Union's "Technical Explanatory Note: North-South Cooperation Mapping Exercise" (7 December 2018) stated: 'areas of informal, local and community level cooperation may not have been captured by this exercise' (p.5).

the undertaking of one of the responsibilities of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee,[9] as set out in Article 11(2) of the Protocol/Windsor Framework:

> The Joint Committee shall keep under constant review the extent to which the implementation and application of this Protocol maintains the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation. The Joint Committee may make appropriate recommendations to the Union and the United Kingdom in this respect, including on a recommendation from the Specialised Committee.[10]

In order for the Joint Committee to properly assess the extent to which the Protocol/Windsor Framework is maintaining the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation, and to ensure that Article 11 is not being interpreted in a manner that undermines its overarching purpose (and one of the core purposes of the Protocol/Windsor Framework), its revisiting of the mapping exercise should be based on the UK Government's 2017 scoping document on North-South cooperation.[11]

Bearing in mind the acknowledged omission from the mapping exercise of cooperation undertaken at the informal and local/community level, this scoping document nevertheless lists 142 areas of North-South cooperation. For each of those areas, the scoping document identifies the extent to which it's underpinned by EU legal and policy frameworks, as well as by the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. **Crucially, many of these EU legal and policy frameworks are not directly relevant to Articles 5 to 10 of the Protocol/Windsor Framework or any of its annexes**.

By using the UK's 2017 scoping document on North-South cooperation to review the extent to which the Protocol/Windsor Framework can maintain the necessary conditions for such cooperation, it will contribute to a shared understanding that those conditions are not solely dependent on the EU legal and policy frameworks underpinning Articles 5 to 10. A maximalist approach could result in the addition of an annex to the Protocol/Windsor Framework in relation to Article 11 that would list EU legal and policy frameworks relevant to North-South cooperation. A more conservative approach, on the other hand, could lead to a recognition that Article 11 cannot of itself guarantee the necessary conditions for North-South cooperation going forward, and that both the UK and EU need to introduce supporting measures. In terms of the UK Government, this

[9] Co-chaired by the UK Government and the European Commission, the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee oversees the implementation, application and interpretation of the Withdrawal Agreement (see, for example, the Northern Ireland Assembly's "Governance of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement and Windsor Framework").

[10] The Specialised Committee referred to here is the Specialised Committee on the Implementation of the Windsor Framework (previously the Specialised Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland) which, among the responsibilities set out for it in Article 14 of the Protocol/Windsor Framework, will 'facilitate the implementation and application of this Protocol' and 'make recommendations to the Joint Committee as regards the functioning of this Protocol'. The Specialised Committee is made up of UK and EU officials.

[11] It's important to note that in relation to the scoping document, the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee stated on 20 June 2019 that: 'The document has been provided to the Committee following a disclosure from the Cabinet Office subsequent to a Freedom of Information request, made by a member of the public'.

means assessing the potential impact on North-South cooperation – "border-proofing" – of proposed policies and legislation that would touch on the EU legal and policy frameworks highlighted by the review of the 2017 mapping exercise. Similarly, in terms of the EU, it would mean the European Commission communicating to the UK Government its intentions to modify or introduce new legislation under its legal and policy frameworks included in the mapping exercise of North-South cooperation. It would then be the responsibility of the UK Government to assess whether it or, in the case of devolved matters, the Northern Ireland Assembly, would have to adopt measures that would avoid obstacles to North-South cooperation being created as a result of divergence.

Conclusion

The second UK-EU Summit may indeed signal a deepening of the UK-EU relationship that could, eventually, lead to some, many or all of the arrangements set out in the Protocol/Windsor Framework no longer being necessary. Article 13(8) of the Protocol/Windsor Framework actually makes provisions for this possibility:

> Any subsequent agreement between the Union and the United Kingdom shall indicate the parts of this Protocol which it supersedes. Once a subsequent agreement between the Union and the United Kingdom becomes applicable after the entry into force of the Withdrawal Agreement, this Protocol shall then, from the date of application of such subsequent agreement and in accordance with the provisions of that agreement setting out the effect of that agreement on this Protocol, not apply or shall cease to apply, as the case may be, in whole or in part.

If, as expected, this Summit is successful on reaching an SPS agreement, linking the UK's and EU's Emission Trading Systems, and establishing a UK-EU youth mobility scheme, it is unlikely to go beyond offering a broad vision of what the next steps in the bilateral relations will be. The detail will depend on how far the UK Government is willing to go and how much of what it proposes to do will have to await the results of the next general election.

In the meantime, as this Briefing Paper has argued, the UK Government and the EU need to make good their joint commitment to maintaining the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation. Although the deepening of the UK-EU relationship may lead to greater regulatory alignment and, therefore, the reduction of divergence undermining those conditions, the potential for divergence beyond what has already occurred since Brexit remains a reality. That is why both parties need to revisit the 2017 mapping exercise on North-South cooperation as part of a review of Article 11 of the Protocol/Windsor Framework, ensuring they understand much of that cooperation is not dependent on the laws regulating the movement of goods. Without this they can't properly live up to their joint recognition 'that cooperation between Northern Ireland and Ireland is a central part of the 1998 Agreement and is essential for achieving reconciliation and the normalisation of relationships on the island of Ireland'.