

**The Rt Hon. the Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee DBE
Chair, Intertrade UK**

The Rt Hon. Hilary Benn MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

27 March 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of Intertrade UK to bring to your immediate attention two specific, practical examples of how the Windsor Framework is failing consumers in Northern Ireland.

A consumer recently contacted me regarding the supply of routine veterinary medicines, specifically flea and worming treatments. For two years, they had a monthly subscription with a national UK retailer, Pets at Home, which was abruptly cancelled in December 2025. As a result, this individual is now forced to purchase alternative products locally at more than double the original price - an increase from £12.00 to £28.00. This is a direct consequence of ongoing uncertainty surrounding veterinary medicine supplies. It is fundamentally unfair that a UK citizen is being penalised financially for simply living in Northern Ireland.

This issue is further compounded by the experiences of those trying to purchase essential household goods. I have been informed of a case where a parent residing in England attempted to buy a tumble dryer for their daughter in Londonderry through Currys. Despite being a major national retailer, the online system refused the order as soon as a Northern Ireland address was entered, with the item showing as "out of stock" only for that region. When the consumer telephoned the company, they were explicitly told that an EU ruling prevented them from completing the order. Even when the daughter visited the physical store in Londonderry, she found limited stock and was told the retailer was unable to order the specific model available elsewhere in the UK.

One official estimate (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2025) is that 9,000 tumble dryers were sold from GB to Northern Ireland from 2021-24. The current problems have occurred despite an assessment coming from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero that a change in regulations would not impede that level of GB to Northern Ireland trade – (17 July 2025, "Household Tumble Dryers Option Assessment":<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6877ba177ea2091686363833/household-tumble-dryers-standards-options-assessment.pdf>).

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee DBE
Chair, Intertrade UK

Such friction leads to a genuine and growing grievance that Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom is being undermined by administrative and regulatory hurdles.

I would welcome your reflections on how the Government intends to address these ongoing barriers to everyday trade within our borders.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee DBE
Chair, Intertrade UK