

The EU Reset:
How the Reset is both
'using' and betraying
our United Kingdom

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THE UNITED KINGDOM
SOVEREIGNTY
FOUNDATION



Freedom & Democracy

Foreword

I am delighted that on the day we launch the United Kingdom Sovereignty Foundation to publish this short pamphlet.

Its importance arises from the fact that it sums up in a few pages the essence of the challenge that we face in relation to the Government's proposed 'EU Reset' and the fact that we can only get out of our current predicament by standing by the sovereignty of our whole country, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

On the eve of the Second Reading of the Representation of the People's Bill, which the Government says it is bringing because of its commitment to democracy, we need to hold them to account and to respect the biggest democratic vote in the history of our nation, which was not that Great Britain leave the EU but that the UK leave the EU. Until we find the courage to defend democracy we will discover, as this pamphlet eloquently demonstrates that you cannot provide Brexit to only part of the UK and then expect to keep it, or ever fully enjoy its benefits in any part of the country. Similarly, you cannot defend democracy and settle for Brexit arrangements that partition the country so that nearly 2 million UK citizens are disenfranchised through dynamic alignment in 300 areas of law.

If it was wrong to just delay local elections for a year in some parts of England, how much worse betrayal is it to strip the people of Northern Ireland of having any vote at all in a legislature making laws to which they are subject in many different areas?

I have made clear since the General election of 2024 in the columns of the Telegraph my absolute opposition to the Government's EU reset strategy and in respect of Northern Ireland, I voted against the Windsor framework, and had a substantial row with Prime Minister Sunak, over his refusal to appear in front of my European Scrutiny Committee to explain the intentions and the unconstitutional nature, of the Windsor framework.

Brexit was about restoring the sovereignty of the United Kingdom and yet we have agreed to terms that disrespect our sovereignty more than when we were in the EU. The imposition of a customs border and international SPS border disrespects the territorial integrity of the UK, a basic attribute of sovereignty, in a way that we never countenanced when we were members.

As this pamphlet demonstrates, these wrongs are completely central to the reset and the alleged justification for it, which now seeks to export the disenfranchisement of UK citizens in Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK through dynamic alignment.

Sir Bill Cash CH

Chairman and Founder of the United Kingdom Sovereignty Foundation

Former Chairman of the European Scrutiny Select Committee and Shadow Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs and Shadow Attorney General.

The EU Reset: How the Reset is Using and Betraying our United Kingdom

In the first of a series of two pamphlets Jim Allister KC, Member of Parliament for North Antrim and Leader of the TUV, sets out the existential challenge posed by Kier Stamer's EU Reset Strategy to Brexit and explains how Labour are cynically using Northern Ireland to sabotage Brexit across the whole UK. In the second pamphlet Mr Allister will consider what to do about.

It is not possible to understand the EU Reset, and the problems associated with it, unless we see it in the context of preceding events.

When viewed from this vantage point we can appreciate how the Prime Minister is playing the British people for fools and in a way that will rob us of the self-respect required to sustain the motive force that we need to be a successful nation in the world today.

In all this, I am particularly troubled about the way in which he is using Northern Ireland to pump prime his reset strategy for Great Britain.

What is going on?

The current Government does not contain a single minister who voted for Brexit and while it has recognised (certainly in 2024 and for much of 2025) that it would not be prudent to try and undo Brexit head on, much of the Labour establishment has since 24 June 2016 been desperate to do everything it can to draw the whole UK back into the EU's centre of gravity. Ultimately, at some point in the future, they would love to rejoin. In this Northern Ireland has become central to their strategy.

Government EU Reset Strategy – Using Northern Ireland

It is important to appreciate that it was the intention of the Johnson government to leave the EU with no deal and to thereby preserve the territorial integrity of the UK. The principal reason why this did not happen is because Hilary Benn, Labour's Chief Brexit Saboteur, persuaded the deeply unpatriotic Parliament of 2017-2019 to tie the Government's hands behind its back and take 'no deal' off the table. Had it not been for Benn, the UK Government could have gone to Brussels and set out a reasonable offer that maintained the territorial integrity of the UK and told the EU it was that or no deal.

Given Benn's central role in preventing no deal and instead securing an arrangement whereby part of the UK effectively remained in the EU, his appointment as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland makes complete sense. Northern Ireland is central to the Government's EU strategy. The fact that part of the UK remains subject to EU law is politically invaluable, allowing the Government to argue that Great Britain must align its laws with those of Northern Ireland to avoid divergence. In effect, Northern Ireland has become a proxy for the EU within the UK.

Disingenuously Defending the Irish Sea Border

In this context Labour has had to take care to ensure that while politically, they need to acknowledge something of the difficulties associated with the Irish Sea Border, they must ultimately firmly defend it. When concerns are expressed about the impact of the Irish Sea border, Hilary Benn makes two points for the Government. First, that the Windsor Framework is a great improvement on the Northern Ireland Protocol and, second, and more importantly, that he always argued against Brexit and does not pretend for one moment that we would not be better off without the Windsor Framework. His point, however, is that we voted for Brexit and the Government, as a democratic government, is here to honour the vote which means delivering the Windsor Framework. This response, made in all seriousness with the furrowed brow of a troubled countenance, affecting, or at least trying to affect, a heartfelt concern, is profoundly disingenuous.

In the first instance, the Protocol with which Benn contrasts the Windsor Framework is, to the extent it differs from the Windsor Framework, entirely illusory. The full Protocol was always unimplementable and in that sense the threat that it posed was theoretical and never realised as a matter of practice. In this the ‘enhancements’ made to the Protocol resulting in the Windsor Framework are significant not for saving us from the excesses of a real threat but rather for saving the real threat, such that it causes maximum difficulty, short of provoking the breakdown in supply chains that would arise from the application of the full Protocol. This must be avoided because it would destroy the Protocol and the Irish Sea Border.

In the second instance, the Benn argument, ‘Don’t complain about the Windsor Framework, you voted for it because you voted for Brexit’, is absurd. The Windsor Framework does not give effect to Brexit but prevents it in relation to Northern Ireland. There are two critical aspects of this which must be appreciated:

First, not one person living in the UK voted for what the Windsor Framework border has created. The 17.4 million people who voted for Brexit voted yes to the proposition, not that their part of the UK should leave the EU, but that the United Kingdom should leave the EU. Nearly ten years on that still has not been delivered because the Windsor Framework ensures that only part of the UK has left, and that part of it effectively remains in the EU, subject to EU law.

Second, far from being impossible for the UK to leave the EU, this was the default outcome of Brexit. The only reason why Brexit has been frustrated by the imposition of the Windsor Framework border is that our government did a deal with the EU to divide the UK in two.

Skilfully Using the Irish Sea Border

Maintaining their defence of the border, no matter how problematic, is vital for the Government because of its centrality to their strategy of sabotaging Brexit across the whole UK.

Although the use of Northern Ireland to justify GB alignment with the EU has been evident since soon after Labour came to power, it has become more explicit since preparations for the EU-UK summit in May 2025. While justification for the reset extends way beyond Northern Ireland, it is crucial to understand the extent to which a Northern Ireland rationale effectively provided cover for the first steps in this project, pump-priming a strategy to undermine Brexit for the whole UK. The centrality of this justification was very helpfully demonstrated by a witness before the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee in April 2025, Joël Reland who was clear that while the reset was not just about responding to challenges arising from the Irish Sea Border, that the capacity of the reset to provide ‘solutions’ to the Irish Sea border was absolutely central to the pitching and justification of the reset in the first instance.

He observed: *‘...the two most significant policy issues being briefed around this 19 May summit are an SPS deal and emissions trading. What links those is that they both have a potentially significant benefit to facilitate the Windsor Framework and GBNI trade. It is no surprise that the EU is more open to flexibility of increased UK access to its markets and systems, in those areas that are so integrally linked to Northern Ireland.’*

In both these cases the Government is carefully using the hugely dislocating and disruptive implications of applying, first, an SPS border and then, a Carbon Tax border across an integrated economy (which are far, far greater than the consequences of applying such borders between national economies), to dramatically increase the pressure on the rest of the UK to realign with the EU. In this the conduct of the Government suggests that they are particularly fearful of the disruption that would flow from the imposition of the EU Carbon Border tax in relation to Northern Ireland which we can only assume has been postponed in order to provide time for the development of a shared UK-EU emissions trading scheme so our division by a carbon border can be avoided.

Undermining the United Kingdom

The Government’s approach places the dignity and self-respect of the UK on the altar of their desire to realign with the EU and hasten the day when rejoining might become a possibility. This is evident on two bases:

First, their approach takes us for fools because it involves the further substantial sabotaging of the Brexit vote of 2016 to the point of making it absurd in Great Britain as it has already been made absurd in Northern Ireland. The reason why the UK has always struggled with European integration, from May 1950 onwards, as numerous academics have demonstrated, not least Prof Vernon Bogdanor, is that the imposition of EU laws, even in the context of the UK having a voice in the Council of Ministers and in the European Parliament, was alien to us. One specific difficulty was the democratic deficit which meant that while we had representation in the EU legislature, we could be overruled through majority voting. In this the principal rationale for Brexit was to take back control and make our own laws and in a context where we could not be overruled by others. However, the proposed SPS and ETS deal takes the problem that negatively informed our relationship with the EU when we were members and makes it much, much worse because it involves simply subjecting ourselves to EU SPS and ETS laws without having any voice at all, as already is the case in many areas in Northern Ireland.

Second, this approach takes us for fools because it distorts the negative effect of being outside the EU by focusing on the cost of the application of an artificial border that should not exist, which has a far more costly and far more disruptive effect than having borders with other EU countries. The Irish Sea border involves dividing a fully integrated economy, that of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland into two and uses the pain arising from imposing a border across an integrated economy to make people think that this is a cost of Brexit which should be ameliorated by aligning more closely with the EU once again. The truth, however, is that far from being a cost arising from Brexit, the dislocation caused by the Irish Sea border is a cost arising from the obstruction of Brexit in relation to the UK as a whole.

Where have we got to?

Although the Government was keen to start SPS-ETS negotiations quickly, progress has been slow. Notwithstanding the agreement in May 2025, the EU Commission then had to make a formal proposal to the Council of Ministers that it commence negotiations with the UK on an ETS and SPS agreement which was not published until July. Then in early November, with no agreement in sight, unnamed EU officials were deployed to the Financial Times to explain that it was highly unlikely the Council of Ministers would agree to start negotiations until the UK was better upholding the Irish Sea Border. However, the Prime Minister eventually managed to speak to the President of the Commission on the phone on 12 November and on 13th the Council of Ministers finally agreed to the EU Commission proposal that it could commence negotiations with the UK on the SPS and ETS deals.

In the more secure context of the Commission having mandated the commencement of SPS and ETS negotiations with the UK, the Prime Minister began 2026 telling Laura Kuenssberg, on 4 January, that he is now interested in pursuing alignment with EU law in other areas as well when ‘in the national interest.’ He said:

‘What I’m saying is, there are other areas where we should consider whether it’s in our interest to do the same and align with the single market. Now, that needs to be considered on an issue-by-issue, sector-by-sector basis, but we’ve already done it with food and agriculture and that will be implemented this year.’

Then two days later, on 6 January, an official anonymously briefed Politicos about an impending EU Reset Bill.

‘... a bill is due to be introduced to parliament this spring or summer, establishing a legal framework for U.K.-EU alignment. These potential areas include food standards, animal welfare, pesticide use, the EU’s electricity market and carbon emissions trading, according to the official, who was granted anonymity to speak freely about the plans.’

It is hard to under-state the importance of this development. Three points are particularly striking:

First, to the extent that this legislation is for the purpose of introducing the SPS and ETS deal, it sounds like the UK legislation to give effect to the deal will be published before the deal with the EU is agreed. This suggests a certain desperation on the part of the UK and desire to persuade the EU during the negotiations that we are serious. The problem is that it is also likely to suggest that we are desperate, a point that won’t be lost of the EU negotiators.

Second, to the extent that, in the words of Politicos, the Bill is for the purpose of ‘establishing a legal framework for UK-EU alignment’, and food and electricity are just obvious examples within the SPS and ETS agreements,

it is entirely possible that the Bill will have a much bigger potential remit than SPS and ETS dynamic alignment. It may afford ministers powers to dynamically align other areas of UK law to that of the EU.

Third, to the extent that this bill will be published before any deal can be agreed with the EU on SPS and ETS, let alone other areas that might subsequently take the Prime Minister's fancy, the bill will almost certainly just provide a shell, making provision for legislation moving us into dynamic alignment in specific areas to be made at a later date by ministers through secondary legislation. In that sense the bill will almost certainly deliver a double whammy in undermining the voice of Parliament. First, it will make provision for dynamically aligning our laws with Brussels, rendering us rule takers with no voice. Second, this will likely be introduced through statutory instruments.

Giving ministers powers to dynamically align ourselves with EU laws in any area if they believe it is in the 'National Interest' would involve the UK adopting the most obsequious of penitential postures in repentance for the sin of Brexit. It does not simply result in our embracing a set of EU laws as they stand today, but in submitting in advance to whatever changes the European legislature might wish to make to them going forward, even though we will have no voice in the bodies making those laws: the European Commission, European Parliament and European Commission.

The Government's Justification and What it Tells Us

After the civil servant gave their anonymous interview to *Politicos*, the UK Government provided a quote. The point they wanted to make was:

"The UK-EU Reset is improving our diplomatic, economic and security cooperation and will be worth £9 billion to the UK economy by 2040. We will legislate to deliver on this, and further details of the bill will be announced in due course."

This makes it clear that from the Government's perspective the prime public justification for making these changes is economic and the prospect of more wealth creation. This is, however, both to completely misunderstand and insult the United Kingdom.

In the first instance, this is just the reverse application of project fear. When we were in the EU the argument against Brexit was that the UK should not leave because doing so would result in an economic catastrophe. Now we have left, the same argument can be applied but more positively. Moving back into the EU's centre of gravity will bring economic benefits. The truth, however, is that project fear never materialised. The UK economy is actually performing quite strongly outside the EU and markedly better than many EU economies. In this context, not having lost anything very much, if at all, by leaving, the notion that we would now fall for a reverse project fear is a real misjudgement.

In the second instance, this approach disparages the values of those who voted for Brexit to an even greater degree than when we were in the EU. Notwithstanding the failings of project fear in a context where we made it clear we wanted to be able to make our own laws without the risk of being overruled by others, and without being denied the opportunity to call decision makers over us to account, the Prime Minister now deploys the same tactics in reverse and when the price of doing so is not simply having a weak voice in the development of the legislation in question, in the sense that we can be overruled by others, but having no voice whatsoever. This is the result of embracing dynamic alignment as a non-member state with no seat in the Council of Ministers or the European Parliament. We have been forced to swallow this bitter pill in Northern Ireland and have no desire for the rest of the UK to be subject to the same indignity.

In the third instance, we need to be wise to what is really going on. One might be forgiven for thinking that the UK Government is telling the EU, 'If the rest of the UK now submits, as Northern Ireland has already been compelled to submit, to EU SPS law, we can have our territorial integrity as the UK in relation to SPS restored, so we are treated as one, as when we were in the EU.' That, however, is not something the EU is prepared to countenance. Their power over the UK depends on our having permitted them to divide us and they will not want to relinquish the leverage they enjoy in any way. In this context what getting rid of the border means is not removing the border but removing the feeling of the border by means of perfectly aligning SPS law and

policy, each side of the divide. The border, however, remains present, the aligned laws resting on different foundations. Furthermore, while the UK Government has been keen to pump prime their GB reset with the thought that this is necessary to help Northern Ireland, and those in GB who trade with NI, it is disingenuous because it does nothing to remove the chief expression of our division, the customs border that continues to declare that Northern Ireland is foreign in relation to GB.

Being Played

In conclusion two points must be made:

First, it is deeply troubling to see how problems arising from not allowing Northern Ireland to leave the EU have been deployed to pump prime a strategy for the purpose of justifying the sabotaging of Brexit across the whole UK. This is a huge concern for Northern Ireland unionist politicians who believe that the four component parts of our union create something that is more than the sum of our parts, wherein the wellbeing of one is interdependent on that of the others. In this context we have no desire to see Northern Ireland exploited to sabotage Brexit across the whole United Kingdom, as it has already been sabotaged across our part of the country.

Second, it is vital to understand how none of these arrangements is obviously in the national interest. Rather than addressing the problem that Brexit was supposed to correct, the reason why the UK was always an 'awkward partner' in European integration, these changes will make that problem many times worse for England, Wales and Scotland, as is already the case in Northern Ireland. They will simply result in the imposition of laws on the us by a foreign Parliament, laws we don't make and can't change.

The Need for people to come together from across the UK to Save Brexit

The reset amounts to imposing an NI-like settlement on GB, submitting in advance to the laws of a foreign Parliament, laws you don't make and can't change. Having agreed to this in one part of the UK, there is a certain logic to suggesting that it would not be inappropriate in the rest of the country, especially if it has the added benefit of ameliorating to some degree the destructive effects of the border rather than creating one. But it would be a terrible mistake to embrace such an approach in GB, as it has already been a terrible mistaken in NI.

The truth is that for so long as we allow the EU to disrespect the territorial integrity of the UK, through their 'divide and rule' tactics of cutting us in two through a customs border, which they control, it will never be possible to secure a credible and sustainable Brexit in any part of the UK. The only way to achieve this end is for the people of England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland to come together and tell the EU that the citizenship of the UK is indivisible. It is not something that can be made a means to an end, and traded by the state in relation to one part of the country for the perceived economic benefit of another part of the country. In my next article I will set out how we should rise to this challenge.

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Jim Allister KC MP

Jim Allister KC has been the Member of Parliament for North Antrim since the general election in July 2024. Prior to his election to Westminster, Jim served North Antrim in the Northern Ireland Assembly from 2011 and was previously an MEP representing Northern Ireland (2004-09).

Jim founded the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) Party in 2007 and has been its leader since then.

He graduated from Queen's University Belfast with a Bachelor of Laws degree with honours in constitutional law and was called to the Bar of Northern Ireland in 1976. He has a successful career specializing in criminal law and has been involved in various political and legal matters throughout his career. In 2001, he was called to the Inner Bar as Queen's Counsel.

Jim is known as a strong advocate for the Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and has therefore vigorously opposed the Northern Ireland Protocol, an arrangement which disregards the democratic will of the people.

He lives near Kells with his wife Ruth and has three adult children.

Dr Dan Boucher

Dan serves as Jim's Senior Researcher. He has a PhD in sovereignty and international relations and has written widely for the Belfast Newsletter, Briefings for Britain, Conservative Post, Comment Central, Brexit Central, Conservative Home etc.

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