

Details of the Negotiation Process

Ireland's key 'asks' from the EU/UK negotiations are:

- continued free access to the UK market, without tariffs and with minimal additional customs and administrative procedures;
- minimisation of the risk from UK trade agreements with third countries; and
- maintenance of existing reciprocal access to fishing waters and resources.

EU/UK negotiations

- Following the March 2018 European Council meeting, a Draft Withdrawal Agreement was submitted to the UK authorities for negotiation. A final EU/UK negotiated Agreement was approved by the EU 27 on Nov 25th 2018, having already been approved by the UK Cabinet and Prime Minister. A joint Political Declaration was also approved on that date.
- The Withdrawal Agreement was due to be placed before the UK Parliament for ratification on December 11th but the vote was postponed while Prime Minister May sought additional clarification at the December European Council Meeting of 13/14 December.
- The Conclusions of the December European Council meeting were:
 - *the Union stands by the agreement and intends to proceed with its ratification;*
 - *it is not open for renegotiation; and*

➤ *that, if the backstop were to be triggered, it would apply temporarily, unless and until it is superseded by a subsequent agreement that ensures that a hard border is avoided.*

- The vote in the UK Parliament is now tentatively fixed for week beginning January 14th 2019.
- The Agreement is currently being placed before the European Parliament for approval in their ratification process, which should be completed by mid February.
- The Agreement covers all elements of the UK's withdrawal from the EU - namely citizens' rights, the financial settlement, a transition period, governance, Protocols on Ireland/Northern Ireland, Gibraltar and Cyprus, as well as a range of other separation issues.
- On Ireland/Northern Ireland, the EU and the UK negotiators have agreed provisions on how to avoid a hard border on the island (referred to as 'the backstop').
- The 'backstop' is being dealt with through the establishment of a single EU-UK customs territory plus the alignment of Northern Ireland into the Single Market rules to the extent required to avoid a hard border, the provisions of which will come into force from the end of the agreed transition period (i.e. 31 December 2020) and will remain in force until a EU-UK future trading relationship agreement is put in place.
- Once the UK exit the EU on March 29th 2019 both sets of negotiators will commence the process of drawing up that future trading relationship agreement based on the Joint Political Declaration.