



**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**

By email only

28 January 2025

Dear Mr Hedges MS,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee of Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament. As you will be aware, there is intensifying debate in Ireland about the prospects for a “border poll” – as provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 s 1 and sch 1 – read with the relevant provisions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

These discussions involve much more, of course, than the mechanics of concurrent referendums on the island of Ireland. Given the level of engagement on this aspect of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and the practical significance for everyone across these islands, I write to ask if your Committee might consider an evidence session to explore the subject. Whatever view is taken on the future of Northern Ireland, there is merit in the current focus on responsible preparatory work for all possible outcomes. However, it remains underexplored, and it is my view that this gap must be addressed. In particular, what are the implications for Wales of the accelerating constitutional conversations about a united Ireland? What are the lessons from the Welsh experience for Ireland? What might Wales learn from the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement? These are only some of the questions that may be of interest to your Committee.

You will know, for example, that in Ireland in July 2024 the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement recommended that preparation commence immediately, among other suggestions. My own view, as an academic working in this area of constitutional law, is that your Committee could offer a forum for serious consideration of the matter in Wales and make a valuable contribution to these deliberations. My primary concern, as indicated above, is that this has not had the detailed attention it merits beyond the island of Ireland, including in Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament. That is surprising given the implications for these islands. With increasing public debate in Ireland on the potential for a “border poll” this decade, it may well be an appropriate time for your Committee to explore the topic.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request and please let me know if any additional clarification would be helpful.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Colin Harvey  
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