

Ireland will not be sacrificed in Brexit deal, EU commissioner says

Margrethe Vestager asserts Europe is unwavering in its support for the backstop.



EU commissioner Margrethe Vestager says there is no guarantee removing the backstop element of the proposed deal will unlock the Westminster logjam. Photograph: Alan Betson

Ireland will not be sacrificed by the EU in its efforts to broker a Brexit deal with the UK, competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager has said.

Amid concerns the proposed backstop arrangement to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland may be watered down to facilitate the UK, Ms Vestager said the EU stood firmly behind Ireland on the issue.

“The good thing is the 100 per cent, never wavering, no hesitation solidarity with the Irish situation and the Irish people,” she told The Irish Times on a visit to Dublin.

She also claimed there was no guarantee that removing the backstop element of the proposed deal would unlock the current Westminster logjam. “Before they [UK MPs] voted on the full deal, they had a vote on leaving without the backstop and that was lost with an even greater majority against it,” Ms Vestager said. “It’s up to the British on where they go next,” she said.

The backstop element of the proposed withdrawal agreement has been a major sticking point for Brexiteers, who fear the EU will use it to extract concessions after the UK leaves.

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