Authenticating Emblem of the People of United Ulster

A DISCUSSION PAPER

Foreign Investment, Land Ownership, Business Control, Employment Localization and the Public Interest

From the People of United Ulster

Date: 14 August 2026

This document is issued under the authenticating emblem of the People of United Ulster.

Population of United Ulster (confirmed figures):
• Northern Ireland (6 counties): ~1.93 million
• Republic of Ireland Ulster counties (3 counties): ~333,000
• **Full nine-county United Ulster: ~2.26 million**

This document sets out our collective analysis of unrestricted external capital acquisition of land, businesses and productive assets, the related problem of foreign dominance of small retail and service outlets through formal ownership or informal control, the consequences for local employment and intergenerational continuity in the nine counties of United Ulster, and the principles and concrete framework we put forward. It draws on the sovereign ownership model of Thailand and the employment-localization and anti-concealment model of Saudi Arabia, adapting both to the constitutional realities of British and Irish law.

1. Who We Are and Why We Speak

We are the people of United Ulster — the historic nine counties that form one continuous territory: the six counties of Northern Ireland and the three Ulster counties of the Republic of Ireland.

The population of this territory stands as follows: Northern Ireland (6 counties) ~1.93 million; Republic of Ireland Ulster counties (3 counties) ~333,000; Full nine-county United Ulster ~2.26 million.

We live with the realities of the Common Travel Area, an open land border, dual legal systems, and the daily consequences of decisions made in London, Dublin and Belfast. We have watched debates on foreign ownership and foreign staffing of everyday businesses become polarised between those who treat any concern for local control as illegitimate and those who offer only resentment. Neither approach serves us.

A serious society must examine incentives, costs and consequences. This paper sets out what we have observed, what the experience of other jurisdictions shows, and the principles we believe should guide policy. We do not claim to speak for every person in United Ulster. We do claim the right, as citizens and residents of this place, to insist on clarity and honesty about who owns the land, who controls the businesses, and who holds the jobs in the everyday economy of this territory of approximately 2.26 million people.

2. Two Different Models of External Capital and Labour

There are, in essence, two ways a territory of this scale can structure the entry of capital and labour from larger and richer economies.

Model One (sovereign-control and localization)

External investors may participate, but majority ownership and freehold control of land and of many categories of business remain with the local population (the Thai model). In addition, designated occupations — especially in retail, sales, and small-shop management — are reserved or heavily quota-restricted for local workers (the Saudi Nitaqat / Saudization model). Arrangements in which a local person or company lends a commercial registration, name or licence while a foreigner effectively runs the business and retains the profits (known in Saudi Arabia as *tasattur* or commercial concealment) are strictly prohibited and heavily penalised. The host community retains decisive ownership, intergenerational control of assets, and priority access to the jobs that serve the local market.

Model Two (unrestricted open-market model)

Capital from larger economies arrives without ownership ceilings. Freehold land, entire businesses and housing stock can be acquired outright. At the same time, small neighbourhood shops, grocery outlets, mobile-phone kiosks, clothing and fabric stalls, and similar low-end retail become heavily staffed or effectively controlled by third-country workers, sometimes through informal or concealed arrangements. Local sellers and landlords receive higher short-term prices or rents. Over time, ownership concentrates externally, everyday retail is dominated by non-local labour, and the developmental and employment benefits that should remain inside the territory are reduced. A territory of approximately 2.26 million people faces continuous competition from far larger pools of capital and labour.

These are not abstract theories. Model One is practised in Thailand through the Foreign Business Act (a company is foreign once foreign ownership reaches 50 per cent; many activities require Thai majority ownership; foreigners cannot own land freehold except in narrow promoted cases; condominiums are limited to a 49 per cent foreign quota) and in Saudi Arabia through successive waves of Saudization (Nitaqat), occupation bans or high localization quotas in retail and sales roles, and aggressive anti-*tasattur* enforcement carrying prison terms, multi-million-riyal fines, asset seizure, business closure and deportation. Model Two is the present default across most of the United Kingdom and Ireland for third-country capital and labour in the sectors that matter to ordinary daily life.

3. What the Current Approach Produces in United Ulster

Under present United Kingdom and Irish rules, third-country nationals and foreign-controlled companies can generally acquire freehold land and majority or 100 per cent ownership of most businesses on the same terms as local persons, subject only to limited national-security screening and ordinary company and planning law. In parallel, there are few effective barriers to third-country staffing or effective control of small retail and service outlets.

The result is a structural asymmetry. United Ulster has a combined population of approximately 2.26 million (Northern Ireland ~1.93 million; the three Republic of Ireland Ulster counties ~333,000). It is not a high-export, high-capital jurisdiction. Larger economies possess far greater purchasing power and labour mobility. When land, commercial property and operating businesses are placed on an open market without local-ownership thresholds, external capital can systematically outbid local buyers. When small retail and service roles remain open without localization requirements, the same asymmetry appears in everyday employment and shop-level control. Family succession becomes harder. Rental and ownership income is more likely to leave the territory. Everyday retail can become dominated by non-local staffing patterns that reduce opportunities for local workers and weaken community continuity.

We do not claim that every external investment or every third-country worker is harmful. Many create employment and bring skills. We do claim that the absence of ownership thresholds and employment-localization rules creates a predictable long-term transfer of control and opportunity away from the resident population of a territory of 2.26 million people.

4. The Cost to the Local Community and to Intergenerational Continuity

Land, businesses and the everyday retail economy are not merely commodities. In a territory of this size they are the physical and social base of community continuity. When freehold and majority control pass to external owners, and when the jobs that serve the local market are filled predominantly by non-local labour — whether through open employment or through concealed arrangements — the ability of the next generation of Ulster people to own the place their grandparents built and to work in the shops and services of their own communities is diminished.

Saudi experience illustrates the parallel problem clearly. Long-standing concentration of small *baqalas*, vegetable stalls, mobile-phone shops and similar outlets under expatriate staffing or effective control produced persistent public frustration. That frustration centred on economics, legality and localization failures. The response was systematic: occupation-by-occupation Saudization quotas, bans on foreign workers in large lists of retail roles, size and licensing rules that pushed informal small shops toward larger formal formats, and a sustained anti-*tasattur* campaign with severe penalties. The effect has been to close non-compliant outlets, force restructuring, and shift employment toward Saudi nationals in the targeted sectors.

United Ulster faces a comparable structural risk under an open regime. Without deliberate localization and anti-concealment rules, the same pattern of external dominance of small retail and service activity can embed itself across a population of 2.26 million.

5. The Cost to United Ulster under Dual Jurisdiction

United Ulster experiences these pressures under two legal systems and an open border. Decisions taken in London affect the six counties (population ~1.93 million); decisions taken in Dublin affect the three counties (population ~333,000). Capital and labour can move freely across the land border. Unilateral openness on one side becomes a pressure on both.

Housing is already under strain in many districts. Agricultural land values are high. Family farms face succession difficulties. Commercial property and certain service businesses attract external buyers. Small retail and everyday service roles remain largely open to third-country staffing. The people who live with the consequences across the full 2.26 million population are entitled to examine whether the current balance between openness and local control is sustainable.

6. Principles for a Better Framework

We do not call for the end of external investment or of legitimate third-country labour. We call for rules that are coherent, enforceable and honest about trade-offs. Drawing on the ownership logic of Thailand’s Foreign Business Act and Land Code, and on the employment-localization and anti-concealment logic of Saudi Nitaqat and anti-*tasattur* policy, we set out the following principles:

First, for third-country nationals and foreign-controlled entities, majority ownership (51 per cent or more) of companies engaged in land-holding, property development, agriculture, certain services and other designated activities should require local control — defined as ownership by British or Irish citizens with a genuine and continuing connection to United Ulster, or by companies that are themselves majority so controlled.

Second, freehold ownership of land by pure third-country nationals or foreign-majority companies should be restricted. Long-term leases, superficies and other limited real rights remain available. Limited exceptions may be granted for projects of clear public benefit under a promotion mechanism analogous to Thailand’s Board of Investment.

Third, condominium or apartment freehold for third-country persons should be subject to a clear quota (for example, no more than 49 per cent of the saleable area in any development).

Fourth, designated occupations in retail, sales, small-shop management and related customer-facing roles should be subject to progressive Ulsterization quotas (the direct analogue of Saudization / Nitaqat). High or full localization should apply to neighbourhood grocery, convenience, mobile-phone, clothing and similar low-end retail roles that serve the everyday local market.

Fifth, any arrangement in which a British or Irish citizen or local company lends a commercial registration, trading name, licence or formal ownership while a third-country national effectively controls the business and retains the profits (the analogue of Saudi *tasattur*) is prohibited. Severe civil and, where appropriate, criminal penalties, business closure, recovery of profits and removal of the third-country party shall apply.

Sixth, British and Irish citizens, and companies majority controlled by them, continue to enjoy full ownership and employment rights under the Common Travel Area and existing law. The tighter rules apply to third-country capital and labour.

Seventh, the United Kingdom and Ireland should strengthen practical coordination on ownership thresholds, land registration, investment screening, employment-localization compliance and anti-concealment enforcement for third-country capital and labour so that the open land border does not become a route for regulatory arbitrage.

These principles do not ban external capital or legitimate labour. They raise the threshold so that majority control of land and designated businesses, and priority access to the jobs that serve the local market, remain predominantly with the people of a territory of 2.26 million.

7. What We Ask

We ask politicians in London, Dublin and Belfast to stop treating the discussion of local ownership thresholds and employment localization as morally forbidden. The people of United Ulster — across Northern Ireland (~1.93 million) and the three Republic of Ireland counties (~333,000) — live with the results. We are entitled to examine incentives and outcomes.

We ask for an investment, land-tenure and employment framework that is robust, transparent and fair in both directions — fair to the communities that host capital and labour, and fair to the long-term continuity of the territory itself. Fairness is not served by a system that systematically transfers freehold, majority control and everyday retail employment from a population of 2.26 million to larger external capital and labour pools.

We ask for honesty about the cumulative effect of unrestricted acquisition and unrestricted foreign staffing of small retail, and for the courage to design rules that protect local ownership and local employment without denying legitimate economic engagement.

We are the people of United Ulster. We share this place. We share the consequences of policy. We will continue to insist that questions of who owns the land, who controls the businesses, and who holds the jobs in the everyday economy of this territory of 2.26 million people be treated as matters of practical governance and mutual responsibility, not as tests of ideological purity.

The choice is not between openness and isolation. It is between policies that acknowledge the structural vulnerability of a territory of this size and policies that pretend the vulnerability does not exist. We choose the former.

End of Discussion Paper

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POLICY FRAMEWORK

Foreign Investment, Company Ownership, Land Tenure and Employment Localization Systems

Presented by the People of United Ulster

Applicable across the nine counties of United Ulster
(Northern Ireland — United Kingdom; and the Ulster counties of the Republic of Ireland)

High-Level Strategic Policy Advice — For Senior Government, Ministers and Cross-Border Bodies

Date: 14 August 2026

This framework is put forward by the People of United Ulster as a concrete expression of the principles set out in the preceding Discussion Paper. It is designed to operate within the existing constitutional settlement while delivering coherent, enforceable rules on foreign ownership of companies and land, and on employment localization and anti-concealment in designated retail and service sectors. It draws on the core architecture of Thailand's Foreign Business Act B.E. 2542 and Land Code, and on Saudi Arabia's Nitaqat (Saudization) system and anti-*tasattur* enforcement, adapted to British and Irish law and the Common Travel Area. It is issued under the same authenticating emblem.

Population context: Northern Ireland (6 counties) ~1.93 million; Republic of Ireland Ulster counties (3 counties) ~333,000; Full nine-county United Ulster ~2.26 million.

1. Strategic Context and Governing Reality

United Ulster is not a single sovereign jurisdiction. It comprises six counties forming Northern Ireland (part of the United Kingdom) and three counties forming part of the Republic of Ireland. Any coherent policy must therefore operate within the existing constitutional settlement, the Common Travel Area, the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and post-Brexit arrangements. Unilateral creation of a single ownership or employment regime is neither legally feasible nor politically viable. The correct approach is structured coordination between the two sovereign governments, with devolved input from the Northern Ireland Executive where competence exists.

The objective is to design systems that:

- Maintain the integrity of the Common Travel Area for British and Irish citizens.
- Ensure that third-country capital entering United Ulster does so on terms that preserve majority local control of land and of designated business categories.
- Ensure that designated everyday retail and service occupations are progressively localized (Ulsterized).
- Prohibit and effectively punish concealment arrangements in which a local person or company fronts for third-country control and profit.
- Protect the long-term ownership and employment base of a territory of approximately 2.26 million people.
- Avoid creating incentives for forum-shopping or regulatory arbitrage across the open land border.
- Provide clear, enforceable rules that investors, employers, land registries and public authorities can apply with certainty.

2. Core Design Principles

1. Sovereignty with Coordination — Each state retains exclusive competence over its company law, land law, labour law and investment screening. Coordination occurs through formal intergovernmental mechanisms.

2. Local Majority Control as the Default for Designated Activities — For third-country investors, companies engaged in land-holding, property development, agriculture and other listed activities must be majority owned (51 per cent or more) by qualifying local persons or entities.

3. Restriction on Foreign Freehold Land — Pure third-country nationals and foreign-majority companies may not acquire freehold land except under limited, promoted exceptions. Long-term leases and other limited rights remain available.

4. Quota for Residential Freehold Units — Foreign ownership of condominium or apartment freehold is capped (suggested maximum 49 per cent of saleable area in any development).

5. Ulsterization of Designated Occupations — Progressive localization quotas (the direct analogue of Saudi Nitaqat) apply to retail sales, small-shop management, customer-facing roles in neighbourhood grocery, convenience, mobile-phone, clothing and similar everyday retail.

6. Absolute Prohibition of Concealment (Tasattur-style Arrangements) — Any arrangement in which a British or Irish citizen or local company provides the formal registration, name or licence while a third-country national effectively controls the business and retains the profits is unlawful.

7. CTA Protection — British and Irish citizens, and companies majority controlled by them, continue to enjoy full ownership and employment rights. The tighter rules apply to third-country capital and labour.

8. Transparency of Ultimate Beneficial Ownership — All relevant acquisitions and sponsorships require clear disclosure of ultimate beneficial owners.

9. Promotion Mechanism for Beneficial Projects — A coordinated promotion board may grant limited exceptions (higher foreign ownership, project-specific land rights, or temporary relaxation of localization quotas) where the investment demonstrably serves the public interest of United Ulster.

10. Digital Interoperability — Where legally permissible, data-sharing between UK and Irish authorities on company ownership, land transactions, employment compliance and anti-concealment enforcement should be strengthened.

3. Company Ownership Architecture

3.1 Definition of “Foreign” for Policy Purposes

A company is treated as foreign-controlled when 50 per cent or more of its shares or voting rights are held, directly or indirectly, by third-country nationals or foreign juristic persons (adapted from the Thai Foreign Business Act definition).

3.2 Restricted Categories

Both jurisdictions should maintain published lists of activities in which foreign-controlled companies may not hold majority ownership without specific permission. Priority categories include ownership or dealing in land, property development, real-estate trading, agriculture, and designated retail and service activities.

3.3 Qualifying Local Ownership

“Local” for the purpose of the 51 per cent threshold means British or Irish citizens with a genuine and continuing residential or economic connection to the nine counties of United Ulster, or companies that are themselves majority so controlled.

3.4 Promotion Route

A joint or parallel promotion mechanism (modelled on Thailand’s Board of Investment) may authorise majority or 100 per cent foreign ownership, or limited land rights, for projects that meet clear public-benefit criteria.

4. Land Tenure Policy

4.1 Freehold Restriction

Third-country nationals and foreign-majority companies may not acquire freehold title to land in the nine counties except under a specific promotion approval for a defined project or, in the case of condominium/apartment units, within the foreign-ownership quota.

4.2 Available Alternatives

Long-term registered leases, superficies and other limited real rights remain fully available.

4.3 Condominium Quota

In any single residential development, freehold units held by third-country persons shall not exceed 49 per cent of the total saleable area.

4.4 Enforcement

Land registries in both jurisdictions should be empowered to refuse registration of freehold transfers that breach the rules. Ultimate beneficial ownership disclosure is required at the point of acquisition.

5. Employment Localization (Ulsterization) and Anti-Concealment

5.1 Designated Occupations

Both jurisdictions should maintain and progressively expand published lists of occupations subject to Ulsterization quotas. Priority should be given to: sales and customer-facing roles in neighbourhood grocery, convenience and *baqala*-style outlets; mobile-phone, electronics and related small retail; clothing, fabric and similar low-end retail; management and supervisory roles in small retail premises serving the everyday local market. Quotas should rise over defined phases toward high or full localization in these categories, following the sequenced approach used in Saudi Nitaqat.

5.2 Anti-Concealment (Anti-Tasattur) Rules

It is unlawful for any British or Irish citizen or local company to provide a commercial registration, trading name, licence or formal ownership structure while a third-country national effectively controls day-to-day operations and retains the economic benefit. Penalties should include: substantial civil fines, recovery of profits, business closure, cancellation of commercial registration, restrictions on future sponsorship or licensing, and, where the facts support it, criminal sanctions and removal of the third-country party. Tip-off mechanisms and regular inspection regimes should be established, drawing on Saudi practice.

5.3 Retail Format and Licensing Measures

Where evidence shows persistent informal or concealed foreign control of micro-retail, both jurisdictions may introduce size, licensing and product-range rules (for example, restricting certain product categories to larger, formally licensed premises) in order to formalize the sector and make concealment more difficult, while protecting legitimate small local operators.

5.4 Sponsor and Employer Obligations

Employers and sponsors of third-country workers in designated sectors must demonstrate compliance with localization quotas and must not facilitate concealment arrangements. Breach attracts civil penalties and, in repeated or serious cases, loss of sponsorship privileges.

6. Operational Sequence (Recommended)

1. Third-country investor or foreign-controlled company proposes acquisition, new incorporation or staffing of a designated retail/service outlet.

2. Application is assessed against restricted-activity lists, ownership thresholds, land rules and localization quotas.

3. Where the proposal falls within a restricted category, either local majority ownership is structured or a promotion application is submitted; localization compliance is verified.

4. Grant of permission (or registration of title or employment permission) is conditional on verified local majority control (or valid promotion approval), full beneficial-ownership disclosure, and satisfaction of Ulsterization requirements.

5. Ongoing compliance is monitored through inspection, digital checks and tip-offs; breach of ownership, localization or anti-concealment rules triggers curtailment, forced divestment, penalties or removal.

6. Cross-border movement of ownership interests or workers is subject to coordinated notification where the open land border is involved.

7. Cross-Border Coordination Mechanisms

Given the open land border and the Common Travel Area, the following high-level arrangements are recommended:

- Formal information-sharing protocols between the UK authorities (including the Northern Ireland Executive where relevant) and the Irish authorities on third-country ownership of land and companies, employment localization compliance, and anti-concealment enforcement.
- Joint or parallel guidance for investors, employers and legal practitioners operating on both sides of the border.
- Coordinated promotion criteria and localization phase schedules so that a project or staffing arrangement approved on one side does not create an unintended loophole on the other.
- Regular intergovernmental review of thresholds, restricted lists, quota levels and enforcement data to prevent regulatory arbitrage.

These mechanisms must respect data-protection law, the Belfast Agreement, and the distinct constitutional positions of each state.

8. Expected Strategic Outcomes

- Majority control of land and of designated business categories remains predominantly with persons and companies connected to United Ulster.
- Designated everyday retail and service occupations are progressively Ulsterized.
- Concealment arrangements are detected, punished and deterred.

• Third-country capital and labour continue to enter, but on terms that do not extinguish local ownership or local employment priority in the everyday economy of a territory of 2.26 million people.

• The Common Travel Area continues to function fully for British and Irish citizens.

• Public confidence in the long-term continuity of local ownership and local employment is strengthened.

• Policy remains predictable for legitimate investors and workers while remaining enforceable.

Recommendation

This framework should be developed further through formal intergovernmental channels — the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and relevant North-South bodies — with technical input from the relevant UK and Irish departments responsible for company law, land registration, investment screening, labour regulation and the Northern Ireland Executive. Detailed legislative and operational drafting would follow once political agreement on the high-level principles is secured.

The document is put forward by the People of United Ulster and issued under our authenticating emblem. It respects the constitutional realities of the two jurisdictions while proposing a coherent, enforceable approach that combines the ownership protections long maintained by Thailand with the employment-localization and anti-concealment disciplines developed by Saudi Arabia, adapted to the specific circumstances of the nine counties whose combined population is approximately 2.26 million.

End of Document — Discussion Paper and Policy Framework

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