



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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November 19, 2016

Call issued for talks on Lough Foyle ownership

The British and Irish Governments must work together to resolve a long-running dispute over Lough Foyle, Ireland's Foreign Affairs Minister has said.

Claims over the vast estuary between Co Londonderry and Co Donegal have been made since partition.

After the Good Friday Agreement the cross-border Loughs Agency was handed responsibility for the waters, a key strategic naval base during the Second World War.

But in the wake of the UK's vote to leave the European Union, Northern Ireland Secretary of State James Brokenshire has reasserted London's claim over it.

However, addressing the contentious issue after a meeting of the North South Ministerial Committee in Armagh, Charlie Flanagan said: "I don't accept the claims that the whole of Lough Foyle is under the jurisdiction of the UK Government. However, rather than dwell on the negatives, I think it is important that we look forward and see how best this issue might be resolved."

He added that officials from his department had been in contact with civil servants from the Secretary of State's office in a bid to thrash out a resolution.

"I believe it is important that we work towards solutions and both myself and my department are committed to reaching a successful conclusion on this outstanding issue which has been the subject of disagreement for many decades."

Meanwhile, First Minister Arlene Foster said a barrier on the seas would contradict the efforts to avoid a hard border on land.

"Obviously, if there's no hard border going to be on land we don't really want to see a hard border on Lough Foyle either.

"There has been a dispute over Lough Foyle and it is important that we find a solution that everyone can agree on," she said.

Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness added: "Here, here Arlene. No hard border on the land; no border on the sea. This has been a debating point which hopefully can be resolved by some form of negotiation between the Irish Government and the British Government."

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

November 19, 2016

North South forum hailed as Europe tops agenda

MINISTERS from both sides of the border have described the latest round of Brexit discussions as their best yet.

The UK's forthcoming EU departure topped the agenda at a meeting of the North South Ministerial Committee (NSMC). Irish Foreign Minister Charlie Flanagan joined Stormont's First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness in Armagh yesterday.

Afterwards Taoiseach Enda Kenny described the talks as "constructive", adding there had been a "great deal of common ground".

"We have had a very constructive and a very good meeting - actually one of the best meetings that I have attended," he said.

"One point that we all stressed at this meeting was that it is really important, from an island of Ireland perspective, that there be that strength of solidarity in respect of those common interests. So, when discussions do start, and I as Taoiseach will be sitting on the European side of these arguments, we will be able to work to get the best deal possible for the island of Ireland north and south.

"That was a common consensus of the outcome of the meeting today which I very much value."

As well as highlighting the unique circumstances in Ireland including the land border, peace process and peace funds, the Taoiseach cautioned that Europe would not allow the UK to "cherry pick" specific deals.

"If the UK want access to the single market, they must come with that freedom of movement of people and that is a challenge and an issue that the British Government has got to focus on," he said.

The North South Ministerial Council was set up under the Good Friday Agreement peace deal and generally meets in plenary session just twice a year. Mrs Foster, who earlier this week had dismissed suggestions of a frosty relationship with Dublin, described the meeting as being useful.

"The Taoiseach has been very good to share some of the discussions that are going on at a European level in terms of the Republic of Ireland's government and we are very grateful to hear that," she said.

"We shared our position in terms of Northern Ireland, and indeed in terms of the discussions that are going on a UK basis as well.

"So, it was a very useful meeting. We await to see what happens in terms of the Supreme Court and we'll take it from there."

The DUP leader said she was not surprised that attitudes from some European leaders had hardened in the wake of the referendum result.

"You can all take up positions before negotiations start, but then you have to start the negotiation," she added.

"And that's where we will be after Article 50 has been triggered."

Meanwhile, Mr McGuinness revealed the NSMC had agreed to set up a high level working group of civil servants to prepare for Brexit. He said the apparent confusion emanating from Westminster on the issue meant "everything is on the table".

"Today's meeting was of critical importance and I think huge progress was made," the Sinn Fein MLA said yesterday.

Mr Flanagan hailed the meeting as the most engaging, important and significant of his twoyear tenure as the Republic's Foreign Minister.

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Source: The Belfast Telegraph

November 25, 2016

Taoiseach attends British Irish Council; Brexit the focus

Devolved leaders will stress the need for unfettered access to the European Single Market at a summit meeting with UK government ministers set to be dominated by Brexit.

Ahead of the British Irish Council (BIC) summit near Cardiff in Wales, which Taoiseach Enda Kenny is attending, Welsh First Minister Carwyn Jones called for firm commitments on free trade.

Mr Jones, who is hosting the event, said single market access had become even more important amid the prospect of protectionist policies in a Donald Trump White House.

"This is a changing world and these are tumultuous times," he said. "But our focus on retaining full and unfettered access to the single market is unwavering.

"Today I will once again call on the UK Government to make this their absolute priority in forthcoming Brexit negotiations.

"Let me be clear, a situation where the UK faces barriers and tariffs to trading with the European market would be disastrous for our economy and I will not support any settlement that undermines our exports."

Mr Jones will be joined by Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, Northern Ireland's First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness and the Taoiseach Enda Kenny, at the BIC summit.

Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns, Northern Ireland Secretary James Brokenshire and Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department for Exiting the European Union Robin Walker will be among UK Government representatives attending.

Ahead of the event, the Scottish Government said the UK must not be "driven-off a hard Brexit cliff edge".

External Affairs Secretary Fiona Hyslop said: "A hard Brexit outside the Single Market, is the biggest threat to the economic prosperity of Scotland and all the UK.

"Despite repeated calls from the Scottish Government and other administrations who are understandably equally concerned; the UK Government is still failing to provide any transparency on their plans with only a few weeks of 2016 left.

"There is currently no confidence in the UK Government's ability to fight for the benefits that the single market brings, including free movement of people, and all signs appear to be pointing to the fact they will choose to throw these away.

"We must not be forced into a race to the bottom in terms of standards and employment protection."

Commenting on the potential implications of the US presidential election, Mr Jones added: "President-elect Trump was elected on the promise to make America Great Again.

"He has made no secret of his overriding priority to get the best deal for America and I am totally unconvinced we will see a free trade deal that will do anything other than benefit the US.

"Indeed, access to the US market may become more, not less difficult. It is therefore even more important to secure the quality of our access to the European market of 500 million people.

"We stand at a major crossroads for Wales and the United Kingdom, and decisions taken now will determine our future for decades ahead."

The BIC was established as part of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

Its aim is to promote links between the UK's devolved regions, the Republic, the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey.

Its membership comprises representatives from the Irish Government; UK Government; Scottish Government; Northern Ireland Executive; Welsh Government; Isle of Man Government; Government of Jersey and Government of Guernsey.

The chief ministers of the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey - Howard Quayle, Ian Gorst and Gavin St Pier - will attend Friday's summit along with ministerial colleagues from their respective administrations.

Mr Kenny and Ms Sturgeon will use the summit to hold separate bilateral talks, a spokesman for the Dublin government said.

During the main discussions, the Taoiseach is expected to give an overview of Ireland's preparedness for Brexit as well as a briefing on Ireland's all-island Brexit forum - which has been snubbed by unionists - and the outcome of the North South Ministerial Council.

Ahead of the summit, a spokeswoman for the UK Government said: "We are determined to make sure that the UK remains the best place in Europe to run and grow a business.

"The UK will continue to be a global leader of free trade and we want to see British companies having the maximum freedom to trade with and operate in the Single Market.

"The Government will continue to work closely with British businesses as we approach the negotiations so that together we can make a success out of Brexit."

Source: Breakingnews.ie