

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

09/12/2016 - 16/12/2016



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Northern Ireland Assembly in Recess



Tuesday 13 December 2016

Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach the status of the preparations on Brexit.

Enda Kenny: The Government has considered Brexit issues regularly since the UK referendum result, including on foot of ten separate Memoranda for Government. I am ensuring that a whole-of-Government response to Brexit is being developed, including through the Brexit Cabinet Committee which I established following the referendum result, which I chair and which will involve all Ministers as required. The issues involved concern all Ministers, Departments and Agencies and require a consistent and comprehensive whole-of-Government response.

The Cabinet Committee on Brexit has met on a number of occasions, most recently on 24 November, to continue overall coordination of our preparations for the negotiations on Brexit which will take place once the British Government submit their Article 50 notification. The Committee also considers the potential impact of Brexit for Ireland, as well as any economic opportunities that may arise. Separately, a special Government meeting was held on 16 November to consider Brexit issues

and, in particular, to prepare for an important plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council in Armagh on 18 November.

I have also restructured my Department to ensure that Brexit is treated as a crucial cross-cutting issue, including by creating a newly amalgamated International, EU and Northern Ireland Division, under a new Second Secretary General. The work of this Division includes supporting the Cabinet Committee on Brexit and the Cabinet Committee on European Affairs.

Work on Brexit is also supported by the Minister and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade who now have a greater role in EU matters overall, with a newly created EU Division and the existing Division dealing with Anglo Irish affairs both having important roles to play.

Across Government, relevant Departments, agencies and overseas missions are being strengthened to deal with Brexit.

Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he has taken to ensure implementation of Ireland's commitment within the Fresh Start agreement to improve cross-Border rail services.

Shane Ross: The Northern Rail Line plays an important role in linking communities North and South of the Border. I met with Northern Ireland's Infrastructure Minister, Chris Hazzard, on Monday the 12 December under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council. This provided an opportunity to further develop co-operation between our respective Departments on strategic transport priorities. The rail link between Belfast and Dublin was among the issues discussed. Iarnród Éireann and Translink have established a joint Enterprise Board chaired by the CEO's of both companies aimed at implementing improvements to the Enterprise cross border Dublin/Belfast service.

While the main emphasis of funding for the rail network in the Capital Plan is on the maintenance of the existing network to ensure it remains safe and fit for purpose, funding has been allocated for electrification of the Northern Line as far as Balbriggan. Funding has also been allocated for the completion of the City Centre Re-signalling Programme and the construction of a new Central Traffic Control Centre which will enable the DART expansion projects to progress as well as generally improving national rail movements including the Enterprise service. As the Deputy will be aware, the National Transport Authority (NTA) recently launched a public consultation process on the Rail Review report which was jointly prepared by NTA and Iarnród Éireann. The purpose of the consultation exercise is to open up a public discussion on the role of rail in Ireland and the funding of the rail network and services. The public consultation process will run until 18 January and the NTA will then prepare a report about the process which I intend to bring to Government. No decisions will be made on the future of the rail network until the public consultation process has concluded and been evaluated.

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