



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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Irish border towns braced for Brexit chill;
After Prime Minister Theresa May revealed plans for the UK exit from the EU, Nicola Anderson meets retailers in the south to get their reaction to a possible hard border

"The smugglers will be back," warns Paddy Malone of Dundalk Chamber of Commerce.

These have been lean years for criminals, since the addition of a colourless diesel marker currently hampering the smuggling of fuel.

Gossip around the town is that the IRA is offering 'a million' to the scientist who can come up with a way of getting rid of it.

But only criminals see the silver lining in the prospect of a hard border returning, with the shadowy opportunities it may usher forth.

It was a week which saw Prime Minister Theresa May claim that she wishes to maintain the Common Travel Area between Northern Ireland and the Republic, and Taoiseach Enda Kenny firmly reiterating his government's commitment to maintaining the freedom of movement of people and goods.

But amid all the discourse and discussion, communities along the border are weighing up their prospects and wondering how their future will look. Signs on the roadsides read: "No EU frontier in Ireland. No hard border. Respect the remain vote. Border communities against Brexit."

Dundalk is mounting its own defences, fighting back against the weak sterling with a successful Shop Local drive.

But Mr Malone sees the possibility of a hard border as a disaster which, amongst many things, would hamper the proper future marketing of the 'Ancient East' which should rightly take in both sides of the border, he believes.

"Carlingford Lough is the setting of the Chronicles of Narnia - but it's not being sold on this basis," he says.

"You can't even find a tourist map that shows both North and South of the scenic lake, because the authorities on either side only market their own side."

At the Mother Fruckers truck stop at Killean, Co Louth, just at the border, I talk to Newry man Dermot O'Connor in his cab.

His father was a lorry driver too and, as a child, Dermot remembers the half day it could take to clear customs. "It scared the life out of me with the soldiers and the guns," he recalls.

Dermot drives mostly household goods from both sides across the border, often clocking up 14 hours a day.

If the border goes back up, the North will be left behind, he believes, adding: "London doesn't care about us - we're second class citizens."

It's a favourable situation for Jim Mone, who has an oil company in Castleblayney, Co Monaghan. Four cars, all with UK plates, sit on his forecourt, being filled up. The price difference for the fill of a large truck could be as much as €150 a time, he reveals.

He's not overly concerned about a hard border: "There is far more uncertainty here than in Belfast or Dublin and always has been."

But Sarah Mulholland of family firm Mulholland Shoes says trade is quiet. "Two shops in the town are closing," she says.

But there are also business owners who are taking courage, among them repair store owner, Seamus Feeney: "If the border goes up, there's always a way around it."

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

January 23, 2017

27 lives saved by cross-border cardiology service

A cross-border cardiology service has been credited with saving the lives of 27 patients from Co Donegal in its first nine months.

The agreement that enables heart attack victims living in the north west to access a specialist procedure at Altnagelvin hospital in Londonderry started in May last year.

The first of its kind cardiology deal between health authorities on both sides of the border envisages around 50 to 60 patients from Co Donegal access life-saving care in Derry.

The accord covers people living within 90 minutes of Altnagelvin, ensuring they do not need to be transported longer distances to other hospitals in the Irish Republic, such as in Galway.

Once patients undergo the heart procedure in Derry they are transferred to Letterkenny or Sligo hospitals.

The agreement was struck by the Western Health & Social Care Trust (WHST) in Northern Ireland and the Saolta University Health Care Group in the Republic.

A similar agreement enables patients in Donegal to undergo radiotherapy treatment in Derry.

Donie Cronin from Donegal was one of those patients who received cardiac care in Altnagelvin.

"I am very grateful for this life saving patient service and to all involved in my care," he said.

"Thankfully I am doing really well now".

Stormont Health Minister Michelle O'Neill said: "I would like to congratulate the team at the Western Trust and Saolta for their work in developing this fantastic service.

"This clearly demonstrates the life-saving benefit of all-Ireland approaches to healthcare in meeting patients' needs and improving access to vital services."

Dr Albert McNeill, clinical lead for WHSCT, said: "Receiving this treatment as soon as possible improves patient survival and reduces the long term heart damage caused by heart attacks.

"The clinical service is a good example of how health care organisations and professionals across jurisdictions can work together for the benefit of patients."

Dr Jim Crowley, clinical lead for Saolta, said "The cross-border cardiology service between Saolta and the Western Health and Social Care Trust is working extremely well.

"Patients from County Donegal who suffer a heart attack receive emergency potentially life-saving coronary intervention treatment at Altnagelvin Hospital."

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

January 27, 2017

Business - Cross-border move for pharmaceutical giant

Craigavon pharmaceutical giant Almac is opening a massive new operation in Dundalk and creating 100 jobs - but has stressed its commitment to retaining its headquarters in Craigavon.

The group, established nearly two decades ago by the late Sir Allen McClay, says the move will give it continued access to the European single market and adds to the footprint it is setting down in regions outside Northern Ireland.

And despite the announcement coming as Britain prepares its exit strategy from the EU, and therefore raises the spectre of it looking to decamp from the north, a spokesman for Almac insisted: "Our base will always, always, be in Craigavon."

Almac already has a facility in the Republic, in Athlone, part of a global operation which sees it employ around 4,000 people, the majority of whom (2,400) are in Craigavon.

Chief executive Alan Armstrong said: "This investment in Dundalk is a further example of Almac's ambitious global expansion plans and will deliver up to an additional 100 new jobs within the first two years.

"It comes in addition to our recent announcement of a £27 million investment at our global headquarters site in Craigavon, where we are constructing a new laboratory and adding office facilities, our US operations and our European facility in Athlone.

"These investments will see an increase of Almac's global headcount to over 5,000 by the end of 2017 and is evidence of our commitment to provide best-in-class products and services to our clients across the world."

The multi-million pound investment in a 32,000 sq ft plant Dundalk has been supported by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation through Ireland's inward investment promotion agency IDA Ireland.

It will be utilised by Almac Pharma Services and Almac Clinical Services, both of which are already registered to operate in the Republic.

The Republic's minister for jobs, enterprise and innovation Mary Mitchell O'Connor said: "This is an exciting project for Dundalk and builds on the strong cluster of multinational companies who have successfully located in the town in recent years and who have found it a great base from which to promote their sales into other EU member states.

"Ireland's expertise in the pharma sector is unrivalled, with virtually all the major international players having operations here, thus generating synergies and opportunities for new companies investing with us."

Source: The Irish News