



The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

# MEDIA WATCH

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**03/02/2017 - 10/02/2017**

**February 3, 2017**

## **Brexit plan reiterates UK and Ireland's 'unique relationship'**

THE UK and Irish Republic are described as "inescapably intertwined" in the Government's newly-published Brexit plan.

The White Paper on Brexit says the "unique relationship" shared by the two countries warrants special recognition in the forthcoming negotiations between the UK and the Europe Union.

A detailed section arguing for the retention of "as seamless and frictionless a border" as possible will give a boost to the Irish Government, which is coming under increasing pressure to reveal the detail of its own Brexit strategy.

The document states the Common Travel Area should be retained on the basis that it is linked back to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922.

It also notes that Irish citizens have had a special place in Britain long before both countries joined the EU in 1973.

"Since well before the establishment of the EU, Irish citizens have had a special status within the UK, rooted in the Ireland Act 1949 and reflected in the British Nationality Acts.

"This status provides Irish citizens in the UK with additional rights beyond those associated with common membership of the EU," the White Paper says.

According to the 77-page nationings document, there are "hundreds of thousands of Irish nationals residing in the UK and of UK nationals residing in Ireland". "There are also close ties and family connections, particularly across the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland," it adds.

Citing the historic visit of the Queen to the Republic in 2011, and President Michael D Higgins reciprocal visit to the UK in 2014, the paper adds: "The relationship between the two countries has never been better, or more settled than today, thanks to the strong political commitment from both Governments to deepen and broaden our modern partnership."

On the potential for customs posts between Northern Ireland and the Republic, the White Paper states cross-border movement "is an important part of this economic integration".

"Over 14,000 people regularly commute across the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland for work or study," it says. And it says that both the British and Irish Governments have already agreed on a desire to protect the "reciprocal treatment of each other's nationals once the UK has left the EU".

"In particular, in recognition of their importance in the Belfast Agreement, the people of Northern Ireland will continue to be able to identify themselves as British or Irish, or both, and to hold citizenship accordingly."

DUP MP Nigel Dodds said he welcomed the emphasis in the White Paper on strengthening the Union. "I'm also glad that the Government took the time to restate the obvious - that Brexit would have no impact on the Common Travel Area, or the unique relationship between British and Irish citizens.

"This long pre-dated EU membership and will happily outlast it. Then there's the border. In long and shameful careers of bending the truth to suit their needs, even Tony Blair and John Major seldom stooped lower than the irresponsible and misleading scare stories they peddled during the referendum about what Brexit would mean for the border."

UUP MP Danny Kinahan also welcomed the result of the vote, but added: "While there will be a thirst for even greater detail from the PM, what is missing is any direction from Stormont."

**Source:** The Belfast Telegraph

**February 3, 2017**

## Clarity over border needed

The British government's much-anticipated white paper setting out its strategy for leaving the EU is disappointingly vague on the practical implications for Northern Ireland and by extension, the Republic.

The 77-page document was published yesterday after the Tories secured a comfortable majority in favour of legislation to pave the way for Article 50 to be triggered.

However, the paper was heavy on aspiration but light on specific detail, particularly in terms of how border arrangements will work on this island.

In the white paper, the British government says it wants to see as "seamless and frictionless" a border as possible between north and south, but what that will mean in day to day terms is still far from clear.

Certainly, the desire not to go back to the borders of the past is a mantra that has been much repeated by [Theresa May](#) and others but it is the borders of the future that we need certainty on.

The white paper confirms the key fundamental of the Leave campaign, that Britain will regain full control of the number of people entering the UK from the EU and free movement will no longer apply.

But how will that square with the thousands of people from the Republic, which remains part of the EU, who travel regularly to Northern Ireland and indeed to Britain?

Then there is the issue of trade, with the UK signalling it will leave the customs union either completely or partially.

How will that work in terms of the significant cross-border business that is conducted on a daily basis?

Michael Lux, former head of the European Commission's customs procedures, told Westminster's Northern Ireland Affairs Committee there would have to be a customs border if the north was no longer in the EU.

This is a profoundly worrying issue for people on this island and British government platitudes are simply not good enough.

**Source:** The Irish News

**February 5, 2017**

## Post-Brexit hard border would be 'disaster' for Ireland, former minister warns

A post-Brexit hard border would be a "disaster" for Ireland, former Irish minister for foreign affairs Dermot Ahern has warned.

Mr Ahern told RTE's The Week In Politics he believes "one way or another" there is going to be some sort of hard border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

He said such a border "would be terrible for us".

"There will be a hard border of some sort and there will have to be checks, particularly on the southern side. That would be a disaster for us," the retired Louth TD said.

Mr Ahern added: "Whoever decided to put that referendum before the people in Britain didn't think out the implications for Ireland, both north and south.

"I think our Government are in a difficult position given that this has been foisted upon them against their will.

"Obviously they have to try and ameliorate the situation for our people. One way or the other, I think it is particularly bad news for border areas."

Meanwhile Garda Commissioner Noirín O'Sullivan has moved to reassure the public that Irish police will maintain their close working relationship with police in Northern Ireland and UK security services to tackle **CROSS border crime**, post Brexit.

"Obviously we have a very unique and very close working relationship with the PSNI and the UK security services. Those relationships will continue," Ms O'Sullivan said during an organised crime briefing recently.

She added: "I have met the Chief Constable of the PSNI and my counterparts in the UK in terms of making sure there will not be an impact. We are determined that nothing will really impact.

"We have to be mindful of whatever happens within the EU administration, the impact that it is going to have on European arrest warrants and operating systems for example.

"By way of reassurance to the public we will continue our relationship with the PSNI."

The Northern Ireland Police Federation, the body that represents rank and file officers, recently warned that a Brexit hard border would place police officers "in the terrorist firing line".

Head of the Federation Mark Lindsay said physical border posts would make officers easy targets for terrorists and harm relations between the police and communities.

British Prime Minister [Theresa May](#) ▼ has insisted that both the British and Irish governments want to see a "seamless, frictionless border".

**Source:** The Belfast Telegraph

**February 7, 2017**

## Northern Ireland remains most exposed region in the UK

Make no mistake, whether you supported the UK remaining in or leaving the EU, Brexit presents a significant challenge.

Northern Ireland is the most exposed region in the UK with a unique position in the Brexit story. We share a land border with the EU and an estimated 25,000 people cross the border each day for work. The possibility of border controls does not bode well for residents or businesses, particularly in locations close to the border. While Prime Minister [Theresa May](#) ▼ has assured us that there will be no return to the borders of the past, the reality is that some form of control will be necessary.

In the short-term, until such times as a deal is put to Parliament in early 2019, we have to endure the impact of ongoing uncertainty and this has already affected decision-making.

In the property industry, and particularly in the investment sector, we have noted a reduced supply of opportunities to the market which is undoubtedly as a consequence of investors deciding to abandon or postpone potential disposals. This is understandable given the uncertainty could impact on the price and indeed liquidity.

However, it is not all bad news in the investment market. There has been a return of 'a flight to quality' behaviour of investors as also noted during the recession. This means that when the market is in a bad place, or in times of uncertainty, investors buy good quality property. This impacts on a particular product in the market, with the good quality property opportunities not only holding their value but, in many cases, seeing a notable boost.

In recent months, we have noticed the spike in demand for this type of product and the result has been good for the sellers who are exceeding their expectations by achieving prices beyond their guide.

In Q4 2016, I agreed the sale of a number of good quality investment properties, also comfortably exceeding their guide prices. I predict that this trend will continue for the next few years and those investors who are sitting on such assets can take advantage.

For well-located investment properties, particularly in the small lot range up to £2m that benefit from long-term income from a strong tenant, there is always strong local demand but this will undoubtedly be amplified for the foreseeable future. Therein lies an opportunity for potential sellers.

Local appetite for property will continue but satisfying our clients' requirements will be more challenging given the likelihood of a reduced supply-chain.

The ongoing uncertainty will result in more cautious decision-making, the most cautious of decisions being not to invest at all. We are in for a bumpy ride but everyone I talk to in business is up for the challenge.

Robust and trustworthy advice is always valuable but, for the foreseeable future, it is not just valuable, it is vital.

Neil McShane is a director in the Capital Markets division at commercial property consultancy Lambert Smith Hampton. Neil is also a Fellow member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and has over 15 years of experience in the property industry

**Source:** The Belfast Telegraph