

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

10/02/2017 - 17/02/2017



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly was dissolved at 00:01 on Thursday 26 January 2017.

The elections will take place on Thursday 2 March 2017.



Wednesday 15 February 2017

Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

Declan Breathnach asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the outcome for roaming charges between Ireland and the UK post-Brexit ([details supplied](#)); if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this is a serious issue for persons living in the Border regions in which mobile operator service providers automatically switch over and back; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Denis Naughten: The EU Roaming Regulations aim to abolish retail roaming charges within the EU on 15 June 2017, subject to Fair Use Policy. At that point in time, the UK will still be a member of the EU and will thus be required to abide by EU law in place at that time.

It is not yet possible to say what impact Brexit will have on cross border roaming charges. This will be largely dependent on the future relationship between the EU and UK. I can assure the Deputy however that my Department will continue to engage with the key stakeholders on this matter, and

will use the structures put in place by Government for managing Brexit, to ensure that any progress made at EU level in reducing roaming charges applies also in any new relationship with the UK.

Source:<https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-02-15a.645&s=cross-border+2010-02-17..2017-02-17#g650.r>

Thursday 16 February 2017

Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for a report on her recent meeting with the UK Home Secretary and for her to make a statement on the matter.

Mary Mitchell O'Connor: I met with the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd MP, last Monday, 6 February in London. Discussions between the Home Secretary and myself focused on the ongoing co-operation between Ireland and the United Kingdom on criminal justice and security matters. These meetings form part of the regular engagement my Department has with our counterparts in the UK to support ongoing co-operation on these important issues.

As the Deputy knows, formal negotiations have not yet begun following the UK's decision to leave the EU. Any discussions with our UK counterparts will take full account of that, but there is a range of issues that is important for us to discuss. I want to continue the excellent co-operation. I highlighted how important it was, for example, that we had co-operation on the European arrest warrant and other EU justice and home affairs legal instruments. We need to continue the level of co-operation we have at present after the UK exits the EU. The precise mechanisms by which we will be able to do that are not clear at present, but I wanted to highlight how well that has worked. We do not want to go back to the old ways of doing it.

We also spoke about the common travel area, its importance to the people of both Ireland and the UK and how vital it is in the context of Northern Ireland. When I was in London, I also had a separate meeting with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, James Brokenshire, MP. Our discussion was very much focused on the common travel area, its importance in the context of the peace process and the need for all parties to re-engage in the political process in Northern Ireland.

My meeting with the Home Secretary was very helpful, focusing primarily on the criminal justice issues. There is a huge amount of EU legislation and both Irish and UK legislation that will be impacted. My Department has been examining this over the last number of months. It has done very extensive work on examining the implications for this legislation given the Brexit context.

Fiona O'Loughlin: I acknowledge the ongoing co-operation that exists between her and the UK Home Secretary. The common travel area and the rights of Irish people North and South of the border to free movement on the island of Ireland are hugely important.

There has to be concern about the rights of Irish citizens that are living in the UK as well. I do accept that the mechanisms are not in place yet with regard to Brexit. However, from looking at the recent White Paper on Brexit from the UK Government, I would have some concerns. For example, the priority given to the strong and historic ties with Ireland and to maintaining the common travel area is a good thing. However, there is a contradiction where it specifically says "while protecting the integrity of the UK's immigration system". The UK pledge to maintain the travel area comes with a strong qualifier. It may even be a disqualifier.

Mary Mitchell O'Connor: It has long been the case that as part of the common travel area arrangements, Ireland and the United Kingdom co-operate very closely on jointly securing the external border of the common travel area. We will continue to co-operate and strengthen that co-operation in the future. The common travel area has been in existence since Irish Independence. It allows freedom of travel between the two jurisdictions. It is a unique arrangement. It is extremely important that we get that across to other member states because Ireland remains an extremely committed member of the European Union. I met with Mr. Barnier to discuss that and to go into the detail of how it operates. We have a huge amount of co-operation and we do not see that changing.

I welcome the publication of the British White Paper, which provides further details on the issues addressed by the Prime Minister in May. The Deputy raises a particular point about that speech. I would say that the analysis of the issues raised and the assessment of their potential implications for Ireland is continuing. I believe the specific section on Ireland-UK relations reflects the strong ties between our two countries; it is specifically noted.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/debates/?id=2017-02-16a.302&s=border+2010-02-10..2017-02-17#g307>