

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

03/03/2017 - 10/03/2017



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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



Tuesday 7 March 2017

Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport

Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to recognise the driving licences of other EU countries; and his further plans to develop a system whereby holders of EU licences can be punished for driving offences here

Shane Ross: I am pleased to advise the Deputy that there is already mutual recognition of driving licences across the EU, and a licence from another Member State can be exchanged for an Irish one if the holder takes up residence here. There is no cross-border mechanism at present for the mutual recognition of penalties for road traffic offences for such licence holders. However, the Road Traffic Act 2016 provides for mutual recognition of disqualified drivers between Ireland and the UK. I expect that actual recognition of driving disqualifications of UK residents and persons holding UK driving licences who have been disqualified here for relevant road traffic offences and vice versa will

commence by June 2017. By that time all the necessary administrative arrangements including the necessary parliamentary procedures in the UK should be in place so that the consequences of relevant serious driving offences worthy of driving disqualification will follow the offender back to their own jurisdiction.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-03-07a.2072&s=cross-border+2017-03-03..2017-03-10#g2074.r>

Tuesday 7 March 2017

Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Brexit Issues

Joan Burton asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the role she will have in the Government's post-Brexit strategy, in view of her responsibility for regional affairs and the potential negative impact of Brexit on the Border area; if she has a specific unit in her Department to deal with the impact of Brexit on the Border region; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Heather Humphreys: I am acutely aware of the challenges arising from Brexit for Rural Ireland and for the border area in particular. I hosted a productive public forum on Brexit in Monaghan last November which was attended by a range of interests from the Border region. I also hosted a Sectoral Dialogue on Brexit in Cavan on 6th February which was attended by over 100 stakeholders from across the arts, culture, film, heritage, Irish language, regional and rural affairs sectors. This Sectoral Dialogue meeting focused on the impacts of Brexit on the sectors served by my Department, with particular attention being given to the impacts on Rural and Border communities. This event was part of the ongoing engagement with civil society initiated through the series of All-Island Civic Dialogues hosted by the Taoiseach.

The actions set out in Realising our Rural Potential, the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development launched in January, will also assist in supporting rural communities, including those in border areas, to meet the challenges posed by Brexit and to position themselves to avail of the opportunities which also may arise. The Action Plan contains over 270 actions to be delivered by a range of Government Departments, State agencies and other bodies and sets out to support sustainable communities, support enterprise and employment, maximise our rural and recreation potential, foster culture and creativity, and improve rural connectivity.

The plan sets out a number of actions which will address the effects of Brexit in particular. For example, a specific piece of research will be commissioned on the impact of Brexit on rural areas, and particularly rural areas in the Border region. Also, InterTradeIreland will fund the development of a programme of initiatives to increase the awareness and capacity of SMEs to deal with the practical consequences of Brexit for cross border trade.

The Government has put in place a number of structural and other arrangements to address issues relating to Brexit. These include an inter-Departmental Group that was formed in April 2016. My Department has been represented on the Inter-Departmental Group since its establishment. In addition, a Working Group, chaired at Assistant Secretary level and composed of officials from across the Department was established within my Department to deal with Brexit issues. This Working Group is supported by the Department's EU Coordination Unit which is also responsible for managing those issues relating to Brexit that fall within my Department's remit. These arrangements are being kept under review and will be enhanced if required in the coming period.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-03-07a.1058&s=cross-border+2017-03-03..2017-03-10#g1060.r>

Wednesday 8 March 2017

Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government

Cross-Border Co-operation

Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government to set out the status of PEACE IV funding; if it is expected that Brexit will have any implications on PEACE funding and the way it is administered; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Simon Coveney: My Department has policy responsibility for, and provides funding under, two themes under the PEACE IV Programme. These themes are Shared Spaces and Services and Building Positive Relations at Local Level. Progress under these themes, and the roll-out of the programme generally, is proceeding as expected. I anticipate a successful implementation of the PEACE IV Programme and, at this stage, I don't expect Brexit to impact significantly on the funding or administration arrangements under either theme for which my Department has responsibility.

To this end, arrangements have been agreed between Ireland and the UK, which seek to mitigate the impact of Brexit on programme funding agreements and secure funding arrangements for programme beneficiaries that allow them to plan for the future with confidence. These arrangements have facilitated full implementation of the programmes to proceed on a firmer basis than would have been possible otherwise.

Accordingly, I anticipate a full spend under the programme, with approximately €270 million invested in actions that promote positive relations between people from different communities and backgrounds, across both Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. This investment includes some €9 million and €32 million from Ireland and the UK respectively, with a matching contribution of €229 million from the EU.

Source <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-03-08a.384&s=cross-border+2017-03-03..2017-03-10>

