

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

17/03/2017 - 24/03/2017



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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



Tuesday 21 March 2017

Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

Brexit Issues

Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the way the mobile phone and broadband task force plans to deal with the impact that Brexit will have on coverage and roaming charges for persons in border communities.

Denis Naughten: I am critically aware of the frustration currently being experienced across Ireland, including in border communities, where mobile networks are not always delivering the services people expect. Recognising this frustration I specifically included in the Programme for Government a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Task Force. In July 2016, I established this Task Force together with Minister Humphreys to identify immediate solutions to broadband and mobile phone

coverage deficits in this jurisdiction. To that end the recommendations of the Taskforce that were published in December, irrespective of Brexit, will assist in improving the quality of service and coverage that all customers, including those in border communities, will receive.

In order to maintain momentum, I, together with my colleague Minister Humphreys, have established an Implementation Group, which met for the first time on 8 March. This group will drive and monitor the implementation of the actions in the Task Force report, bringing together all key stakeholders identified in the Task Force report with responsibility for delivery of actions. This group will formally report every 90 days on progress made on all actions to both myself and Minister Humphreys. I am expecting the first such quarterly report in April, following the end of this quarter.

In relation to roaming, 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. The UK Government White Paper on Brexit sets out that the UK wishes to ensure that the UK telecoms companies can continue to trade as freely and competitively as possible with the EU. I can assure the Deputy however that my Department will continue to engage with the key stakeholders on this matter both domestically and at EU level.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-03-21a.41&s=cross-border+2010-03-17..2017-03-24#g43.r>

Wednesday 22 March 2017

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

Cross-Border Co-operation

Kevin O’Keeffe asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his Department’s main initiatives relating to cross-Border co-operation with Northern Ireland with regard to issues pertaining to sport; the plans which have been put in place to both maintain and enhance sporting links with Northern Ireland in view of the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union; and the number of meetings he has held with his Northern Ireland counterpart with regards to issues relating exclusively to sport.

Shane Ross: I am very aware of the importance of cross border cooperation with Northern Ireland in the area of sport, particularly in a context where 45 of our National Governing Bodies of Sport operate on an all-island basis. My officials meet on a regular basis with their counterparts in Northern Ireland, with meetings involving extensive dialogue on topics of mutual interest pertaining to sport. This level of engagement will continue, as it is an important way to further enhance cross-border links and to facilitate continued cooperation across the range of sport-related matters, including any that may arise following on from the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union. I understand that

Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland also enjoy a close working relationship, and my officials will keep abreast of relevant initiatives in cross-border cooperation led by those two bodies, in the context of the Department's regular liaison meetings with Sport Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, Sport is a matter for the Minister and Department for Communities while Transport and Tourism are matters for the Minister and Department for Economy. While I have met with my Northern Irish counterpart with regards to issues relating exclusively to sport, I did not have an opportunity for any formal discussions.

Source:<https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-03-22a.60&s=cross-border+2010-03-17..2017-03-24>

Thursday 23 March 2017

Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Brexit Issues

Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the additional supports put in place to date to assist businesses that are heavily or totally dependent on Northern Ireland or the British market for an export market in view of the uncertainty that has arisen due to Brexit and currency fluctuations; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Mary Mitchell O'Connor: In Budget 2017, I secured additional monies, both current and capital, to support Enterprise Ireland's strategic response to Brexit, including 39 targeted posts, both at home and abroad to support its clients across all markets.

There are 1,500 Enterprise Ireland (EI) client companies recording exports to the UK. They employ 100,000 people across the country and have exports of over €7 billion. Enterprise Ireland is particularly working with companies in the UK market who are most exposed in areas such as engineering, food, construction and timber to maintain their market share.

Over €1bn of EI exports go to Northern Ireland and I am very conscious of the challenges that may be faced by companies operating in close proximity to the border.

EI will continue to provide various targeted supports and programmes to assist client companies. These include management capability, leadership, marketing/sales, innovation and R&D. EI will also deliver a suite of supports that help clients reduce supply-chain costs and drive efficiencies and cost reductions as a means of improving operating margins, thereby increasing competitiveness.

InterTrade Ireland (ITI) will have an important role to play in protecting cross border trade following Brexit. We will continue to support the work of ITI as it takes steps to help clients deal with the uncertain business climate ahead.

Source <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-03-23a.28&s=cross-border+2010-03-17..2017-03-24#g36.r>