

# CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

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30 June 2017 – 7 July 2017



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

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



Tuesday 4 July 2017

Department of Health

Brexit Issues

Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the provisions being made by his Department to preserve and protect access to shared facilities in Northern Ireland for persons here and vice versa in view of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

**Simon Harris:** The Government has made clear that Northern Ireland is one of its main priorities in relation to Brexit. This includes protecting all the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement, maintaining EU support for the Peace Process, having an invisible border on the island and supporting continued North-South co-operation.

The acknowledgement of Ireland's unique circumstances by both the EU and the UK has been the result of a major Government campaign of engagement with EU partners and the EU institutions to

ensure our specific concerns were fully recognised. Our ongoing engagement with EU partners has shown that there is good understanding of our unique concerns, notably regarding the Peace Process and the Common Travel Area (CTA) and reciprocal rights.

Both the Irish and British Governments have indicated their intention to maintain the CTA after the UK withdraws from the EU. The CTA pre-dates Ireland and the UK joining the EU and is not dependent on EU membership. The CTA is particularly important in the context of the Northern Ireland Peace Process and relations on the island of Ireland. It facilitates the vast numbers of people who commute across the border and to and from Great Britain for work, business, trade, education, family, health or other reasons.

There is close cooperation between Ireland and Northern Ireland in the area of health. This cooperation occurs both within the framework of our common EU membership and on a bilateral basis, including at service-to-service level. A key priority of the Department of Health in addressing the implications of Brexit is to ensure continuity of health services and to preserve and protect current co-operation arrangements on a cross-border, all-island and Ireland-UK basis. This is being pursued on both a bilateral and EU-wide basis as appropriate. Of course, Ireland will be part of the EU27 team and looks forward to working with our fellow Member States in delivering the best possible result for Ireland and for the EU.

My Department and its agencies have been conducting detailed analysis on the potential impacts of Brexit. Ensuring continuity in cross-border health services has been identified as a priority and forms part of wider contingency planning being undertaken to address the implications of Brexit in the area of health. I would like to assure the Deputy that I am fully committed to preserving and protecting cross-border health co-operation and access to shared services.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-07-04a.944&s=cross-border#g946.r>

**Tuesday 4 July 2017**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**North-South Ministerial Council**

Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the North-South Ministerial Council.

**Simon Coveney:** The North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) has played a key role in developing consultation, cooperation, and action on the island of Ireland on matters of mutual interest and within the competence of the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. My Department works closely with the Department of the Taoiseach in regard to NSMC matters and the Taoiseach co-chairs the NSMC Plenary meetings with the Northern Ireland First Minister and deputy First Minister.

However, in the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and specifically a First and deputy First Minister the North South Ministerial Council cannot meet.

As the formal means for bilateral discussions between the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, the NSMC has a crucial role to play in the Brexit discussions and the negotiations ahead. The most recent NSMC Plenary meetings on 4 July 2016 in Dublin Castle and on 18 November 2016 in Armagh saw the Government and the Executive agree on a number of important common principles for dealing with Brexit on an all-island basis, scoping out the sectoral implications of Brexit for Ireland, North and South, and agreeing to work together to optimise North-South planning in the phases preceding and following Brexit. It was agreed that this work would be taken forward through continuing bilateral discussions within the NSMC at sectoral level, as well as through a high-level working group comprising senior officials from the Government and from the Northern Ireland Executive Office.

At the Plenary meeting of the NSMC on 18 November 2016 in Armagh the Council considered an update by a group of Senior Officials from relevant Departments, North and South, on the progress being made on implementing the commitments set out in Section E of the Fresh Start Agreement, to provide support and funding for North-South infrastructure projects. The review is ongoing and a further report will be presented at a future Plenary meeting. The Senior Officials have since met in February 2017 and again in early June to consider progress on all of the Section E commitments.

The Council also received an update in relation to the North West Gateway Initiative. Ministers welcomed the establishment by Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership which will aim to work with central government North and South to ensure the North West region can reach its full potential.

The NSMC Plenary meeting was advised that Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council had finalised the necessary arrangements for oversight and delivery of the North West Strategic Growth Plan and the associated €5m North West Development Fund which was established under the Fresh Start Agreement. I am pleased that the Irish Government has played a leading role in this regard – contributing €2.5 million to the Fund. The Inaugural meeting of the North West Strategic Partnership was subsequently held on 7 December 2016 and attended by senior officials from Departments, North and South, and I welcome that the second meeting of the Partnership was held last week.

The Government remains engaged with the political parties in Northern Ireland. I am hopeful that meetings of the North South Ministerial Council will soon recommence to enable further important engagement on progressing all-island cooperation in general and in particular addressing the challenges of Brexit.

**Source:** <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-07-04a.630&s=north-south+2017-06-30..2017-07-07>