



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

21 July 2017– 28 July 2017

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Brexit's impact on Belfast Agreement focus of talks

Addressing the impact of Brexit on the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic will require "flexible and imaginative solutions", David Davis acknowledged as Brussels said more work needed to be done on the issue.

The European Union's chief negotiator Michel Barnier said the UK Government had to clarify how the common travel area would be maintained and also raised concerns about the impact of Brexit on the Good Friday Agreement.

Brexit Secretary Mr Davis said the latest talks in Brussels had demonstrated that both sides in the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the EU were committed to the Agreement.

Mr Barnier said: "We agree that the important issue of the Good Friday Agreement between Ireland and the UK, in all its dimensions, requires more detailed discussions.

"In particular, more work needs to be done to protect North-South co-operation between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

"Today, that co-operation is embedded in the common framework of EU law and EU policies.

"We need to better understand how the UK intends ensuring the continuation of this co-operation after Brexit.

"We also agree that the UK should clarify in the next session how it intends maintaining the common travel area after leaving the EU." At a joint Press conference in Brussels at the conclusion of four days of talks, Mr Davis said: "Both sides remain committed to the Good Friday Agreement and achieving flexible and imaginative solutions to address unique circumstances around the border and particularly on the North-South dimension of the Agreement.

"These include the mechanisms we have discussed to preserve the common travel area and the rights associated with it, rights laid down, of course, in a British Act of Parliament as well as, in part at least, in the Amsterdam Treaty."

Mr Davis also insisted that the Conservative deal with the DUP at Westminster would not impact on its role in attempts to restore devolved government to Northern Ireland.

He said: "The British Government continues to take incredibly seriously its requirement for impartiality, irrespective of any deal of any sort."

Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said he was "satisfied with the direction of the discussions" but said more detailed work was needed on protecting North-South co-operation.

He said: "The specific question of the border was not part of this week's round of negotiations, and was never intended to be.

"However, the focus this week on protecting the gains of the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts is of course directly relevant to the crucial objective of avoiding a hard border.

"My officials and I will continue to work closely with Michel Barnier and his team to ensure that sufficient progress is made on the Irish-specific issues in phase one of the negotiations."

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

24 July 2017

Queen's University to be the hub for £9m tidal power project involving NI, Republic and Scotland

The EU is to spend almost €10 million (£8.9m) on researching renewable energy off both parts of Ireland and Scotland.

The work will focus on the use of tidal power at Strangford Lough and the north Antrim coast, ocean energy sites off western Scotland, and the potential for wave and tidal power generation in Donegal in the Republic.

A virtual centre of competence at Queen's University Belfast will host cross-border studies into bio and marine-based power, the Special EU Programmes body (SEUPB) said. Its chief executive officer Gina McIntyre stated: "The region has a low level of industry-relevant research and innovation within the renewable energy sector.

"The Bryden Centre project will help address this issue by creating a new centre of competence made up of dedicated PhD students creating high quality research with strong commercial potential."

Working with a number of cross-border bodies, including Scotland's University of Highlands and Islands, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Ulster University, the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute, Donegal County Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council, the project will create the largest amount of cross-border research in this area to date.

It will recruit 34 doctoral students and six post-doctoral research associates to produce relevant research with the potential to produce strong commercial benefit.

The EU is contributing more than (EURO)9.3m (£8.3m) while match-funding for the project has been provided by the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in the Republic.

As well as tidal power, it will also focus on renewables such as bio-energy, specifically heat, biogas and electricity which can be produced through the anaerobic digestion of agri-food waste.

Findings produced are intended to benefit many small and medium-sized businesses struggling to become more innovative within the renewable energy sector.

A massive tidal energy project on the seabed off Northern Ireland's north coast is planned for next year.

Cork-based DP Energy hopes to install a series of 100 megawatt (MW) turbines off Fair Head.

It would generate enough electricity to power the equivalent of 70,000 homes.

The proposed technology is a further development of that used in Strangford Lough in Co Down.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

28 July 2017

'Urgent clarity needed over ending of freedom of movement' - Momentous change confirmed for 2019

Business leaders have said they "urgently" need to know what will happen after freedom of movement between the EU and UK ends in March 2019.

The date for the momentous change was confirmed by the British government yesterday.

The Irish border has yet to be discussed at Brexit talks, despite fears that the UK's decision to leave Europe will mean the return of customs posts.

Immigration minister Brandon Lewis said yesterday that a new system would be put in place, with EU nationals expected to have to register to work.

However, nationalist politicians branded the government's Brexit process a "shambles".

Angela McGowan, director of the CBI Northern Ireland, said last night that EU workers strengthen local businesses, particularly in the agri-food and engineering sectors.

"Any new migration system should protect these benefits while restoring public confidence."

She added that an assessment of EU migration commissioned by the British government should include the views of firms in the north.

"Businesses urgently need to know what a new system will look like - during transition and afterwards," she said.

Declan Fearon of Border Communities Against Brexit said there are growing concerns that the British government's approach will lead to a hard border.

"There could be the closure of border roads - that's something that could happen because of the British government's decision on free movement of people," he said.

"The EU are adamant they cannot allow these genetically-modified foods and chlorinated chicken from the US into the 27 (EU states). How can this be done without border controls?"

"This would cause huge, huge difficulties. There are people who, during their ordinary working life, cross the border 10 times a day."

Sinn Fein MEP Martina Anderson said the Conservative government had provided "no detail about how they propose to tackle the disastrous impact of Brexit on our economy, on agriculture, on human rights, on the issue of the border, on the Good Friday Agreement or on the future of EU citizens who have made Ireland their home".

SDLP assembly member Claire Hanna said the "chaos and incompetence at the heart of the British government has been laid bare in the opening Brexit negotiations".

"They claim to be opposed to the borders of the past but haven't given any sense of what their vision for the borders of the future look like."

Alliance MLA Stephen Farry also described the free movement announcement as "another step in causing enormous damage to the UK economy and society".

Source: The Irish News

28 July 2017

'Onus on British to resolve Irish border issue for Brexit: Irish Foreign Affairs Minister Coveney;

Irish Foreign Affairs Minister Simon Coveney has said there is no proposal from the Irish Government to make the Irish Sea the border between Ireland and Britain saying UK officials needed to come up with an imaginative solution to the problem.

The minister was responding to reports in Friday's Times that the Irish Government had hardened its position over the border between the north and south of Ireland.

DUP will use Westminster influence to block Irish Sea border proposal: Nigel Dodds

Ireland leave EU? We're mad but not that mad: Ahern says no chance of 'insane' Irexit

Dublin pushes for post-Brexit Irish Sea border between Ireland and GB

Mr Coveney said there was no proposal from the Irish Government to have the border in the sea as opposed to along the land border with Northern Ireland.

Speaking to RTE he said the "onus" was on British officials to come up with an imaginative solution but they would not support a proposal which would see a hard border return on Ireland.

He said any solution should also not compromise the Good Friday Agreement or the consent principle.

"Friends should speak honestly to each other," he said.

"We have a border that is 500km long. There are 400 road crossings along that border.

"Anybody who suggests to me that we can solve this problem by putting cameras on this border ... I don't think that is the approach we can take."

The Irish Department of Foreign Affairs reiterated the Government's position on the issue of the border in Brexit negotiations was political and not a technical matter.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph