

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

22 September 2017 – 29 September 2017



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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



Tuesday 26 September 2017

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for North-South harmonisation in relation to penalty points in the context of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Shane Ross: There is no cross-Border mechanism at present for the mutual recognition of penalty points between Ireland and Northern Ireland or any successful example of or framework for mutual recognition of penalty points between other jurisdictions in Europe.

A considerable amount of work has been done by my Department, involving my officials, the Department of Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, an Garda Síochána, the PSNI, the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland, the Courts Service both here and in Northern Ireland, and the Road Safety Authority.

That work identified a number of major issues which would need to be resolved before a system for the mutual recognition of penalty points could go ahead between Ireland and Northern Ireland, including the standardisation of penalty points awarded for various road traffic offences, resolving issues regarding summons service, and the need to ensure equality of treatment for drivers in both jurisdictions. This work would require primary legislation in both jurisdictions, and is currently undergoing legal advice for the best way to overcome the obstacles.

As the mutual recognition of penalty points, when implemented, would be by way of a bi-lateral agreement between the relevant authorities in Ireland and Northern Ireland (similar to the recently introduced bilateral Agreement between Ireland and the UK regarding mutual recognition of driving disqualifications), so there will be no impact from Brexit.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-09-26a.1182&s=cross-border+2017-09-22..2017-09-29+2017-09-22..2017-09-29#g1184.r>

Tuesday 26 September 2017

Brexit Issues

Bernard Durkan asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the degree to which his Department has noted negative or positive impacts from Brexit; the steps required to be taken to address such issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Paschal Donohoe: Clearly Brexit will pose significant challenges for Ireland. The Government is committed to addressing these challenges, mitigating the impacts and taking the best advantage of available opportunities. Last May, the Government published a document setting out in detail its approach to Brexit and the structures it had put in place to ensure a strategic and whole-of-Government response to it. This identified the key priority issues for the negotiations between the European Union and United Kingdom and also mapped out the wider domestic response.

The significance of the risks arising from Brexit is reflected in the Government's national risk assessment for 2017, which identifies areas where Brexit poses a specific risk, particularly to the economy. In my Department, this approach is reflected in our statement of strategy for the period from 2016 until 2019 and our risk register. The challenges posed by Brexit are kept under constant review. A dedicated Brexit EU North-South unit is responsible for co-ordinating the response to Brexit across the Department and plays a full role in the cross-Department structures that support the work of the Government.

The Government is using a highly consultative approach through the all-island civic dialogue process and other stakeholder events. This has enabled us to hear from stakeholders about the Brexit impacts they are experiencing.

Across Government, work is continuing on Ireland's wider response to both the challenges and opportunities posed by Brexit. This builds on ongoing research and analysis by all Departments.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/debates/?id=2017-09-26a.320&s=all-island+2017-09-22..2017-09-29+2017-09-22..2017-09-29#g323>

Wednesday 27 September 2017

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the way in which Waterways Ireland can support recreational opportunities in rural counties through the development of blueways and greenways; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Heather Humphreys: Waterways Ireland is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of 1,000 km of the inland navigable waterway system throughout the island, principally for recreational purposes. This is a significant recreational resource and Waterways Ireland has been proactive in the development of Blueways and Greenways as a means to attract new visitors and in response to the growth for recreational activities such as walking, canoeing and cycling.

Waterways Ireland with partners in Monaghan County Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and East Border Region Ltd. are currently in the development phase of constructing a 22km greenway between Smithborough in Co. Monaghan and Middletown in Co. Armagh along the route of the Ulster Canal. The project is funded by the INTERREG VA programme and will be one of the first cross-border Greenways in Ireland.

Blueways have been successfully in operation on the Shannon since October 2014 linking Drumshanbo with Carrick-on-Shannon. Waterways Ireland recently opened an iconic Blueways Boardwalk on Acres Lake at Drumshanbo which is already attracting large volumes of users. The Shannon-erne Blueway was opened in May 2016 linking Leitrim Village with Belturbet, Co Cavan, providing 70km of paddling journeys, 25km of walking trails and 8 km of cycling. Waterways Ireland, in conjunction with Local Authorities and other partners, are continuing to extend the Blueways offering on the Shannon and Shannon-erne.

On the Barrow navigation, Waterways Ireland have submitted planning proposals to upgrade the Barrow towpath. This will provide a 112km trail from Lowtown in Co. Kildare to St Mullins in Co Carlow.

Work on developing the Royal Canal towpath as a walking and cycling destination is expected to be completed by December 2018 when the 145km route can be marketed as one of the largest Greenways/Blueways in Europe.

On the Grand Canal 21km of towpath has been upgraded with a further 110km yet to be completed. Waterways Ireland are again working with Local Authorities, Leader Groups, the National Transport Authority and the National Trails Office to ensure planning and funding are progressed to upgrade all of the Grand Canal towpath.

Clearly, the development of greenways and blueways presents valuable opportunities for rural communities to attract more visitors. Their value lies not only in the recreational opportunities that they offer but also in their potential to stimulate local businesses and regenerate local areas. Greenways and blueways also provide an effective model for partnership between the private, community and voluntary sectors and relevant State bodies.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-09-27a.110&s=cross-border+2017-09-22..2017-09-29+2017-09-22..2017-09-29#g112.r>