



The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

# MEDIA WATCH

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**18 August 2017 – 25 August 2017**

**22 August 2017**

## Call for Stormont to approve North-South interconnector plan; Court in Republic paves way for work to begin on southern side

Business body CBI Northern Ireland has called for "urgent clarity" and for plans to be approved for the northern side of the North South Interconnector project.

It comes after opponents of the Tyrone to Meath high-power electricity line failed in a High Court bid to have planning permission for the project in the Republic overturned.

The interconnector is waiting on approval from the Planning Appeals Commission. System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) - which is overseeing the project in Northern Ireland - has said it expects a decision on it before the end of September.

CBI Northern Ireland's regional director Angela McGowan said: "While this represents an important step forward, we now need urgent clarity on the northern section of this economically vital interconnector project.

"We would encourage the Planning Appeals Commission and the Department for Infrastructure to reach a positive decision on the planning application as soon as possible."

In a survey on infrastructure by CBI, 87% of businesses asked in the province - both from within and outside its membership - said the delivery of the interconnector was a top priority for the regional economy.

When completed, the £200m North South Interconnector will allow electricity to move more freely across the border.

Ann McGregor, chief executive of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomed the High Court decision in the Republic.

"Given that planning permission for the southern section of the North South Interconnector was granted by An Bord Pleanala last December, we must now receive a positive decision from the Northern Ireland Planning Inquiry held back in February this year," she said.

Approval for the project was given by Irish planning authority An Bord Pleanala in December 2016, but was appealed against by the North East Pylon Pressure Campaign which contended that the high-power electrical cables should be placed underground.

Speaking in May, former Ulster Unionist MP Danny Kinahan warned that without the North South Interconnector power bills could be set to soar, with a potential power shortage by the time Northern Ireland's centenary rolls around in 2021.

Eight years on and North-South Interconnector project approval still not given

**Source: The Belfast Telegraph**

**23 August 2017**

## Lack of deal could make cross-border custody and business battles messier

Cross-border divorce and child custody battles and business disputes could become messier and lengthier unless Britain can secure agreement to maintain judicial cooperation arrangements with the EU after Brexit.

In a paper published ahead of the third round of formal Brexit talks in Brussels next week, the UK government says that it is "vital" for millions of families, businesses and consumers for Britain and the EU to agree "coherent common rules" for civil cases following withdrawal.

The UK is seeking a new arrangement that would "mirror closely" the sophisticated EU system for deciding which country's court should hear a civil, commercial or family dispute raising cross-border issues, whose laws should apply and how any decision should be enforced.

If Britain leaves without a deal, UK citizens could find themselves forced to fall back on international rules set out in agreements such as the Hague Convention, which officials acknowledge are slower and less effective than the EU system.

And rival sides in a dispute could end up launching court cases in the UK and another EU state without agreement on which ruling is definitive.

The problem could affect Britons involved in divorce, custody and child maintenance battles with EU-born spouses, companies suing continental suppliers or consumers seeking compensation for faulty European goods.

The European Commission has so far set out proposals only for dealing with cases already under way at the time of Brexit, and Brexit secretary David Davis is now pressing for early discussion on the

arrangements for cooperation after the UK leaves the direct jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice.

Announcing plans to seek "new close and comprehensive arrangements" for civil judicial cooperation with the EU, reflecting "closely" the existing rules, the UK government paper states: "We have a shared interest with the EU in ensuring these new arrangements are thorough and effective.

"In particular, citizens and businesses need to have continuing confidence as they interact across borders about which country's courts would deal with any dispute, which laws would apply and to know that judgments and orders obtained will be recognised and enforced in neighbouring countries as is the case now."

The paper states that the present EU arrangements deliver "predictability and certainty" and play "an important role" in enabling businesses to trade with confidence across borders, providing legal certainty in cross-border transactions and avoiding delays and excessive costs in family cases.

"The best way to ensure legal certainty for both UK and EU citizens and businesses as we leave the EU is to facilitate a smooth transition to a new relationship in civil judicial cooperation," it says.

In order to allow citizens and businesses on both sides to plan ahead, both the UK and EU would benefit from "an interim period that allowed for a smooth and orderly move from our current partnership to our future partnership".

The paper makes clear that the UK intends to apply for membership as an individual country of international judicial agreements in which it already participates through its EU membership, including the Hague Conventions and the Lugano Convention.

**Source: The Irish News**

**24 August 2017**

## **CBI warns of damage to digital economy if Brexit hits data flow**

THE UK's multi-billion pound digital economy is "at risk of isolation" as a result of Brexit unless the Government secures a transition agreement avoiding interruptions to the flow of data, businesses have warned.

The warning from the CBI came as ministers acknowledged that any disruption to cross-border data flows as a result of the UK's planned withdrawal from the EU could be "costly" for both Britain and Europe.

In the latest of a series of papers published ahead of the third round of Brexit talks in Brussels next week, the Government will set out proposals to ensure personal data can continue to be safely and effectively exchanged without imposing financial burdens on firms and consumers. But trade body TechUK said it was unclear whether the Government's proposals would provide the legal framework

needed for data transfers, and warned that securing the right arrangement could take 18 months or more.

The Government position paper being published today will say the UK's £119bn digital economy is reliant on the free flow of data, adding: "Any disruption to these cross-border data flows could be costly to both Britain and the EU."

The document will set out plans for a "unique approach" to ensure continued close co-operation between public authorities, law enforcement agencies and data protection regulators in the UK and EU. Any solution must allow data to be shared in a "safe and properly regulated" way while protecting privacy and offering stability and confidence to businesses, authorities and individuals, it will say. Digital Minister Matt Hancock said: "In the modern world, data flows increasingly underpin trade, business and all relationships. We want the secure flow of data to be unhindered in the future as we leave the EU.

"So a strong future data relationship between the UK and EU, based on aligned data protection rules, is in our mutual interest.

"Our goal is to combine strong privacy rules with a relationship that allows flexibility, to give consumers and businesses certainty in their use of data."

The CBI welcomed the Government paper as a "step forward" but warned failure to secure a deal could harm a sector which could be worth £240bn.

The organisation's director of innovation Tom Thackray said: "The strong alignment between British and European data standards opens the door to crafting a robust framework that enables the uninterrupted flow of data.

"In the short-term, a seamless transition deal is necessary to protect the free flow of information and provide legal certainty to businesses and consumers."

**Source: The Belfast Telegraph**