



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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Taoiseach will urge May to give a 'clear' border message

TAOISEACH Leo Varadkar will tomorrow urge British Prime Minister Theresa May to produce a "clear and reassuring message" on how a border can be avoided in Northern Ireland in the aftermath of Brexit.

In her Brexit speech last Friday, Mrs May said the UK would not accept any physical infrastructure at the border but gave few details of how this will be achieved.

The Taoiseach "cautiously" welcomed the speech which focused on Britain's offer of a two-year transition period for leaving the EU. Tomorrow, Mr Varadkar will travel to Downing Street for a bilateral meeting with Mrs May.

A senior government source said the North and the border "will feature strongly" in the Taoiseach's discussion with the prime minister.

"The Taoiseach is expected to indicate to the prime minister that, in order to demonstrate that sufficient progress has been made on Irish issues, there must be a clear and reassuring message about how the border will be avoided," the source said.

The Government is adamant there should be no border between the North and South after Brexit but such a scenario is deemed near impossible if Britain remains outside the EU customs union.

Mrs May is under pressure from her own party to take a tough stance with the EU and push for a hard Brexit which would leave Britain outside the customs union.

The Taoiseach will also use the Downing Street meeting to discuss the ongoing stalemate between Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party on restoring the power-sharing executive.

Mr Varadkar will insist Ireland will not support a return of direct rule from London.

Deadlock on restoring the Assembly has rumbled on for almost a year after Sinn Fein collapsed the institutions over the 'cash for ash' controversy.

Source: The Sunday Independent

25 September 2017

Environmentalists warn of plant and animal extinctions on both sides of border

Plant and animal species could become extinct in both parts of Ireland because of Brexit, environmentalists warned.

A fifth are already threatened and a hard environmental border could undermine common standards and water down protection of those most at risk, campaigners added.

Lobby groups from Northern Ireland and the Republic visited Brussels on Monday to voice concern.

Chairman of Northern Ireland Environment Link, Patrick Casement, said: "Our small island forms a single and unique unit in terms of our natural environment and our plant and animal species do not recognise the existence of a border.

"Many of these species are currently at risk of extinction on the island of Ireland and any dilution of protection will place them in further danger.

"Any future divergence or lowering of standards on either side of the border would be bad for the environment, bad for citizens, and also bad for business."

More than 650 pieces of EU legislation aid environmental protection in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The north/south green coalition said the island has benefited hugely from this common set of environmental standards.

They created a more coordinated and consistent approach to addressing cross-border environmental issues like the conservation of species and habitats on an all-island basis, the lobbyists added.

Coordinator of Ireland's Environmental Pillar, Michael Ewing, said: "It is only by avoiding a hard environmental border that we can ensure our joint efforts to protect and enhance the environment for the benefit of all is not undermined."

Negotiations and discussions have been focused solely on the economy, with little mention of the potential negative impact on natural heritage, he warned.

"Our time in Brussels gives us the perfect chance to highlight the challenges Brexit brings for environmental protection and to articulate how these issues can be averted through

continued cross-border cooperation and the maintenance of high environmental standards both North and South."

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

26 September 2017

Donegal dependence on frequent Border crossings revealed

WITH the UK and EU grappling to find a solution to the Border post-Brexit, a new report sets out the extent of the movement and links between the two parts of this island, and between Ireland and Britain.

The study shows that an estimated 110 million Border crossings take place between Northern Ireland and the Republic annually.

In May alone, there were, on average, an estimated 118,000 vehicle crossings on a daily basis.

The vast majority of these were private vehicles - not commercial vans or trucks, according to the study published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The report was produced in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

It is the fourth report in a series being published in response to what the ONS said was an increased user need for data about the people who may be most likely to be affected by the UK's decision to leave the EU.

"The connection between the UK and Ireland is unique in this series, as it goes beyond both countries being members of the European Union," the report stated.

"The UK and Ireland have benefited from a common travel area since 1922 and those born in Northern Ireland have rights to take up both Irish and British citizenship. Ireland is also unique amongst EU countries in that it shares a land Border with the UK. These and other reasons make the future relationship between Northern Ireland, Ireland, Great Britain and the European Union one of the top priorities for Brexit negotiations."

The future of the Border is one of the thorniest problems in the Brexit process.

While Dublin, London and Brussels agree that there should be no return to a hard Border, the UK - on which the onus rests to come up with a solution, according to the EU - has yet to produce anything definitive.

The ONS report highlights, in particular, the extent to which people criss-cross the Border on a daily basis to work or to study. It cites the 2016 census by the CSO, which recorded 9,336 people who cross the Border to their place of work or study. Workers accounted for 75pc of these.

Donegal accounted for the largest number of cross-Border commuters, with 5,600 commuters, 76pc of whom travelled to Derry.

Data published in a joint report by Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council show that there are more than 326,000 journeys made per week across the Border crossings at Derry/Bridgend, Muff village to Derry and Strabane and Lifford.

The ONS report states that, based on the 2011 census from Northern Ireland, it was estimated that 6,100 commuters living in the North commute to work in the south. Newry, Mourne and Down local government district accounted for the largest numbers, with 43pc of the total from there going, as expected, across to Co Louth.

Those total numbers are also regarded as being conservative. Data published by the Centre for Cross Border Studies show the numbers of cross-Border commuters are much greater. It suggests between 23,000 and 30,000 people are cross-Border workers.

"At present, businesses on both sides of the Border have the ability to draw from a labour pool that encompasses both jurisdictions, and can include not only Irish and UK citizens, but also other EU citizens resident on the island of Ireland," it said, in a report published late last year.

Source: The Irish Independent