

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

29 September 2017 – 6 October 2017



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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



Wednesday 4 October 2017

Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Seán Sherlock asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the engagement he has held with his counterpart in the United Kingdom since June 2017 on the issue of cross-Border co-operation to ensure all island broadband capability.

Denis Naughten: There have been no meetings between officials from my Department and our Northern Ireland counterparts in relation to an all island broadband network. Achieving universal access to high speed broadband is a key target under the EU Digital Agenda for Europe which requires, inter alia, all Members States to publish National Broadband Plans to facilitate the achievement of high speed broadband access of at least 30Mbps to all citizens. The link to the Study on National Broadband Plans in the 28 EU-Member States is available at

The Irish Government committed to facilitating investment with policy and regulatory support and to funding a State intervention to provide high speed broadband to all premises in the State.

The 2012 National Broadband Plan (NBP) published in August 2012 outlined the Government's commitment to deliver high speed broadband to every citizen and business in Ireland, regardless of location. Delivery of High Speed Broadband is a specific priority under the Programme for Government and reflects European objectives.

Ireland's telecommunications market has been liberalised since 1999 and has developed into a well-regulated market, supporting a multiplicity of commercial operators providing services over a telecommunications network. The State is not a service provider and can only intervene, subject to EU competition rules, to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competitive market has failed to deliver such services.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-10-04a.110&s=cross-border+2017-09-29..2017-10-06#g115.q>

Wednesday 4 October 2017

Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Timmy Dooley asked ask the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to address concerns that Brexit will jeopardise ongoing co-operation between Northern Ireland and the State in the area of environmental management and protection; if he has engaged with his Northern Irish and UK counterparts on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Denis Naughten: North/South cooperation is a central part of the Good Friday Agreement. Under the Agreement, the North South Ministerial Council was established to develop consultation, cooperation and action on matters of mutual interest on an all-island and cross border basis.

Protecting the gains of the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts have been identified by both the EU and the UK as a priority to be addressed within the context of the Article 50 negotiations. The European Commission Taskforce, led by Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier, represents the EU27 in the Article 50 negotiations with the UK.

In its paper on Guiding Principles for the Dialogue on Ireland/Northern Ireland, the EU Commission Taskforce has recognised the central importance of North South cooperation and states that it should be protected across all relevant sectors.

While progress continues to be made, there is substantial work that remains to be done. Irish officials remain in close contact with Mr Barnier's team to progress this work. It is not possible at this stage to say with certainty what impact the UK leaving the EU will have on sectors including the environment. This will be largely dependent on the shape of the future relationship between the EU and UK.

Since the formation of the new UK Government, I met with Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Life Opportunities, on Monday 19th June, at the

Environment Council in Luxembourg. This is the latest in a number of bilateral meetings I have had with my UK counterparts.

In February this year I attended the EU Environment Council. I used this opportunity to hold bilateral discussions on the potential impacts of Brexit on the Irish and European energy sectors with the UK Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy, Mr Jesse Norman. I also held discussions with Simon Hamilton, Minister for the Economy in the Northern Ireland Executive, on the margins of the North South Ministerial Council in September last.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-10-04a.82&s=cross-border+2017-09-29..2017-10-06#g84.r>

Wednesday 4 October 2017

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on negotiations in Northern Ireland.

Simon Coveney: The Government is determined, as co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, to do everything in our power to ensure that all of its institutions are operating effectively, including the devolved Assembly and power-sharing Executive in Northern Ireland and the North-South Ministerial Council.

I remain in regular contact with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, James Brokenshire, on how both Governments can best continue to support and encourage the parties in achieving that essential objective. We spoke most recently on 2 October and agreed that some progress is being made in the current discussions between the parties. In the first instance, the two largest parties whose mandates entitle them to nominate a First and deputy First Minister need to reach an agreement to form an Executive. In this context, I have welcomed the sustained engagement between the DUP and Sinn Féin over the last number of weeks. In my ongoing contacts with the parties, I have encouraged them to continue this engagement to achieve a resolution that will allow the devolved institutions of the Good Friday Agreement and the North South Ministerial Council to start operating again.

In the period ahead, I will continue to work with the Secretary of State and the political parties in Northern Ireland to support an agreement on the formation of a new power-sharing Executive for Northern Ireland within the mandate of the current Assembly.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2017-10-04a.232&s=north-south+2017-09-29..2017-10-06#g234.r>