



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

27 October 2017 – 3 November 2017

27 October 2017

Fear factor over Brexit is damaging Northern Ireland economy;

Unhappily, job losses in well-established engineering businesses have been announced. Replacing lost jobs has become a logical aspiration but, with so many current uncertainties, will not be easy.

Businesses across the UK are facing inevitable worries about the possible outcome of the Brexit negotiations.

Pleas have been made by business organisations for efforts by the UK Government and negotiators to ease difficulties caused by uncertain conditions which may influence business decisions for at least the next two years.

For Northern Ireland, the local economy is more fragile than much of the rest of the UK.

Unhappily, optimistic ambitions have not been backed by firm, reassuring proposals on how cross-border trade will be facilitated.

Even the continuing uncertainty will have pervasive effects.

The emerging evidence is that businesses are postponing investment decisions, most with the soft pedalled agenda that the Brexit outcome does not hold out quick benefits.

The economic prospects for the months ahead can be summed up as worrying.

In recent months NI has enjoyed a falling rate of unemployment, job numbers have held up, but this record has evolved with a fall in the overall levels of real earnings.

The critical missing factor to rebuild the strength of the local economy is a need for more progress in support for a higher value-added, knowledge-based business investment programme.

An unfinished Brexit, causing uncertainty, is proving damaging.

Certainty and recovery, for the near future, are proving illusory.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

30 October 2017

Seamless border in Ireland after Brexit not achievable, warns Shatter

A former Republic of Ireland Justice Minister has described the Irish Government's aim of a "frictionless border" in Ireland after Brexit as a "political fantasy".

Ex-Fine Gael TD Alan Shatter also described the decision to leave the EU "one of the most stupid acts of self-destruction since the Second World War".

He also told the Sunday Business Post that peace in Northern Ireland could be in jeopardy as a result of the Brexit referendum.

"We've heard endlessly that there is a sense of agreement between the British and Irish Governments that we'll have some sort of seamless, invisible border.

"Waffling away about 'We all want seamless borders' may be a wish, but it may not be achievable," the former TD told the newspaper.

Mr Shatter's remarks come just days after DUP MP Ian Paisley said that Ireland was in "total denial" about the reality of Brexit and should consider seeking a special arrangement from the EU to help it cope with the impact of the Brexit.

"Nationalist parties north and south have been vocally complaining about a hard border that has not arrived and is unlikely to appear unless the Republic of Ireland really wants it," the MP told the Belfast Telegraph.

"The fact is that there is a border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Smuggling along this border has been occurring ever since price and product differentials made it worthwhile.

"It is about time that the Irish allowed a new national conversation to begin and that they at least considered what it would be like to exit the EU along with the UK."

Mr Shatter - once tipped as a possible future Taoiseach - resigned from the Irish Government in 2014 following a report critical of his department's handling of a Garda whistleblowing issue.

He was also found to have broken data protection laws by disclosing personal information about independent TD Mick Wallace. He lost his Dail seat in the 2016 general election.

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

2 November 2017

Man, 90, had to make 1,000km round-trip for vital cataract op

A 90-YEAR-OLD had to endure a gruelling 1,000km round-trip to Northern Ireland in order to stop going blind.

John Patrick Harrington, from Coomhola in Bantry, Co. Cork, lost the sight of his left eye in June 2013, and was told he would lose the sight in his remaining eye if he didn't get his cataracts operated on.

But when his son Jerry tried to get him an appointment at his local hospital, he was warned it would take up to four years for him to be operated on in the HSE.

Knowing he would go totally blind in the meantime, his family learned about a scheme which allows people here get treated abroad and have the costs reimbursed by the HSE within five weeks.

Unlike the National Treatment Purchase Fund - where hospitals identify patients on waiting lists for lengthy periods and offer them the chance to get treated privately here or abroad - people with a simple GP referral letter can avail of the Cross Border Directive on Healthcare and be treated in any EU state.

And all it took to get the Belfast operation booked was three phone calls over 25 days - and by the third phone call, the Harringtons had a date for their father's operation. John Patrick's son Jerry, a retired farmer, told the Irish Daily Mail last night: 'I can say with certainty, based on what his doctors told him, he would have been blind if he didn't get the operation.

'We just had to take the bull by the horns and sort this out ourselves.

'It was the only way of saving the sight in my dad's right eye.' Chris White, CEO of the National Council of the Blind of Ireland, said last night: 'The case of John Patrick Harrington is unacceptable.

'NCBI are aware that there are 38,094 people on ophthalmic waiting lists.' Although he gave up farming a few months ago, Mr Harrington is one of the main carers for his wife Nora.

The 83-year-old has Alzheimer's and he was worried he wouldn't be able to help look after her at their home if he had gone totally blind.

His son Jerry, who also helps look after Nora, is now planning to help take other pensioners needing eye operations up to the same Kingsbridge Hospital in Belfast where his father was treated. 'I've been contacted by people who are a few years younger than my dad,' he said.

'And they are saying that if someone that old can get up there, so damn well can they.' Mr Harrington's story featured in an unreported segment of Leader's Questions in the Dáil last week.

On October 25, Michael Collins, Independent TD for Cork South-West, demanded the Taoiseach explain how it was acceptable for a 90-year-old man to have to endure such a long trip to get his cataracts done.

And he asked if this was another example of how the health service was not only failing in its job to care for people, but also failing the elderly people in the country.

In reply, Leo Varadkar said that he was sorry Mr Harrington had to travel so far... but he would encourage anybody else in his position to do the same. 'I am very sorry to hear that that gentleman had to wait so long for his cataract operation,' he told Mr Collins.

'I am pleased, though, that he was able to avail of the Cross Border Directive on Healthcare.

'That does mean his healthcare was funded by the HSE, by the Irish taxpayer. Even though he had to travel to another jurisdiction for it, that is one of the benefits of EU membership.' He added: 'It would of course be preferable that people be able to have operations in their own county or at least in their own country.' Jerry Harrington said: 'The Belfast consultant, Mr Wing Chan, has been brilliant and routinely follows up with calls to make sure everything is going great, which it is. It's extraordinary.

'The only contact I had with Belfast was three phone calls and by the third phone call, I had a date for dad's operation. That took just 25 days.

'But the most frightening part for Dad was his one remaining good eye was bandaged over and he was blind.

'He couldn't see a thing and he was frightened.

'He should never have had to make that journey at his age; someone who worked all his life and paid his way, to be treated like that. It's nothing short of outrageous.'

Source: The Irish Daily Mail