



The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

# MEDIA WATCH

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**1 December 2017 – 8 December 2017**

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## Return of border checkpoints in NI 'inevitable' warns committee

A return of border checkpoints between Northern Ireland and the Republic appears inevitable after Britain leaves the EU, MPs have warned.

The Commons' Brexit Committee said it appeared impossible to reconcile the Government's decision to pull out of the single market and the customs union with its declared intention to maintain a "frictionless" border.

It said the Government's proposals for dealing with the issue, including using technology to create a "light touch" border, were "untested and to some extent speculative".

"We do not currently see how it will be possible to reconcile there being no border with the Government's policy of leaving the single market and the customs union, which will inevitably make the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland the EU's customs border with the UK," the committee said.

But the report split the committee, with four of the eight Conservatives present, as well as the lone Democratic Unionist, Sammy Wilson, voting to reject it.

The findings echo the concerns of the Irish government, which has demanded a written guarantee from the UK that there will be no return to the "hard border" of the past as a result of Brexit.

Premier Leo Varadkar has warned that without such an assurance, EU leaders will not give the green light for the second phase of the Brexit negotiations, including talks on a free trade deal, to begin at their summit on December 14 and 15.

In its report, the committee urged the Government to begin work on ensuring the flow of goods in and out of the UK continued as freely as possible, regardless of whether there was a deal, including installing electronic customs checks and the construction of a lorry park at the Port of Dover.

But it added: "Such measures would not deal with all the risks of serious delays in Dover and would have to be reciprocated across the Channel in order to be effective." The report also called on ministers to publish a white paper explaining how its proposed two-year transition period after the UK leaves the EU in March 2019 would work in practice.

It said any agreement made between the UK and the EU on future citizens' rights should be "ring-fenced" to ensure the status of EU nationals living in the UK and British nationals in the EU was guaranteed, regardless of whether there was a wider deal.

One of the four Tory Brexiteers who voted against the report, Craig Mackinlay, rejected the suggestion that leaving the single market and the customs union would mean bringing back a "physical border infrastructure" between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

"Of course, there has long been a VAT and currency border. Goods and services entailing cross-border transactions have paperwork and electronic filing to efficiently and effectively handle the different tax regimes," he said.

"If we end up with the World Trade Organisation model, for instance, I see no reason why it is not possible to add a customs tariff, if necessary under a 'no deal' scenario."

**Source: The Belfast Telegraph**

**2 December 2017**

## Closure of 40 border police stations in 19 years puts sharp focus on security

CROSS-border security after Brexit has been questioned after new figures revealed 42% of police stations on either side have closed since 1998.

Investigative website The Detail published findings which show PSNI and Garda stations within 10 miles of the border have reduced from 92 to 52 since the Good Friday Agreement.

Most closures came north of the border, with 28 police stations shutting compared to 12 in the south.

None of the 11 PSNI border stations are open 24 hours a day, with only eight of the 41 Garda border stations open to the public around the clock.

The main security concerns after Brexit for the 300-mile frontier include a potential for increased smuggling and a rise in dissident republican terrorist activity.

Dr Anthony Soares, deputy director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, told The Detail the finer details of policing the frontier had not been thought through.

"The border has only been addressed as a high-level principle at the Brexit negotiating table but security and other issues, the nitty-gritty and the day-to-day practicalities that will directly affect the

lives of communities on both sides of the border, that has not been fully examined or explored in any meaningful way to date," he said.

He added that reopening border police stations would bring risks.

"If Brexit means reintroducing any infrastructure near or at the border, including police stations, they will become a potential target for attacks," he said.

"To reopen police stations would also have a psychological effect on border communities and reinforce psychologically the presence of the border, and that would be a backward step."

PSNI Superintendent Simon Walls argued modern policing was delivered "by people and not buildings".

"Policing remains a 24 hours, seven days a week operation and we will continue to be there at people's time of need and in emergency situations," he said.

Last September a joint PSNI/ Garda assessment of organised crime along the border renewed commitments to work together.

Both forces are now scenario planning for Brexit, with PSNI Chief Constable George Hamilton promising a new joint report this year.

Police Federation chair Mark Lindsay said funding cuts of £250m since 2011 and a fall in the number of PSNI officers was the real worry.

"There's not nearly enough staff in place to meet current policing demands, let alone deal with a new European frontier after Brexit," he said.

**Source: The Belfast Telegraph**

**4 December 2017**

**'I think I'll survive a Border with the EU';  
Derry farmer believes Brexit gives industry 'the chance to get away  
from subsidies'**

"I survived 25 years of the Troubles living here, I think I'll survive a Border with the European Union."

These days, when asked if he's worried about a hard Border, farmer Robert Moore has his answer ready.

An arable and beef farmer, he and his family have been farming their land at Ballougray in Co Derry for more than 200 years.

The road out to the farm, on the west bank of the Foyle, follows the path of the river as it flows inland towards Donegal; the farmhouse itself is a quarter of a mile from the Border.

A "moderate unionist" who voted for the SDLP in the last UK general election, Moore voted Leave in the Brexit referendum.

Eighteen months on, he remains convinced that leaving the European Union is the best decision for farmers.

"Leaving gives us the opportunity to get away from subsidies," he says. "It gives the freedom to develop a new agricultural policy, which we can't do while we're within the EU.

"What we want to do is develop a sustainable agricultural policy where the industry can stand on its own two feet."

In 2016, the total income from farming in Northern Ireland, according to the department of agriculture's figures, was £244 million. The income from direct subsidies in the same period was £276 million.

The same report put average farm business income at £14,788 in 2015/17, which is expected to rise to £18,943 in 2016/17.

Looking inwards

"The problem with subsidies is it makes agriculture look inwards," says Moore.

"I don't want to farm for subsidies, I want to farm for the price of the beef and the potatoes and the cereals that I produce."

Among the crops grown by Moore is millet oats.

"The minimum price for what I produce is £152 a ton, but if you go in and buy them in their basic form in the supermarket they're £1,530 a ton, that's for a 1.5kg bag.

"If you take the oats out and put them into little sachets and put them into a little box that's easy to open you can sell them for £6,300 a ton.

"All I need out of that £1,530 is 2 per cent. 2 per cent gives me three tons to the acre, and that would replace my single farm payment so I can live without subsidy."

If efficiencies were made in the industry, Moore argues, farmers could earn a sustainable wage without the need for price rises.

"I spoke to a meat buyer for a supermarket last week, and she made a comment that consumers are not tolerant to price rises. I thought, well they're tolerant to price rises in energy, because they don't have a choice.

"But I don't believe food prices necessarily have to rise. We're wasting £10 million tons of food in the UK every year, which is worth an estimated £17 billion.

"If you could save 60 per cent of that £17 billion through a more integrated supply chain, that would enable farmers to make a standard living.

"You wouldn't make a fortune, but you wouldn't lose a fortune either."

At lunchtime, Moore comes in from the farm and listens to the latest news on the Brexit negotiations. Is he optimistic?

"I'm cautious. We can get this right, or we can get this wrong.

"My view is simple - do a free trade deal, and the EU have said they're up for that."

Fees

Moore does business on both sides of the Border but points out that "in farming, there isn't actually a totally free Border at the moment".

His pure-bred cattle are bought in Donegal and must go through a process of testing, certification and fees before he can bring them into his farm in Derry.

"There will be an administrative system, but that doesn't mean boots on the ground up at the Border.

"Negotiate a separate agreement. There are all sorts of examples, between the EU and Norway, or Switzerland, or Turkey.

"There's no way there's going to be a hard Border, or could be, because why would you put something in place that you can't enforce?

"The only way you could have a hard Border would be to have something like North and South Korea, or build a Donald Trump wall, but that's not going to happen."

During the Troubles the road out to Moore's farm, and the one above it, were closed.

"There were three main access points from this side of the river into town, and all the little roads were blocked off, but even then there was nothing to stop anybody walking over the fields and handing somebody something over a hedge or a fence, or just walking across the Border."

He is reluctant to say any more. "It wasn't nice. It's all in the past, the Troubles were not nice here, particularly in the 1970s - we were under considerable threat and we were not the only ones."

"We were lucky actually, because this is a much quieter Border than Armagh or parts of Tyrone, and there are a decent bunch of people living in Donegal on the whole, so it was a much quieter Border and people worked much more closely together and it was much more integrated.

"I take some optimism from that. If you think back, who would ever have thought that Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness would go into government together?

"I'm actually far more concerned about our political situation in Northern Ireland than I am about the EU."

**Source: The Irish Times**