

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

13/05/2016 - 20/05/2016



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Wednesday, 14 May 2016

Justice Achievements

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Justice to highlight some of his achievements during his time in office.

Mr Ford: We should certainly recognise the very significant progress that has been made since that Good Friday. We should also recognise what I believe has been progress made in the Department that was left as "too difficult" in 1998 and only saw devolution in 2010. In my time as Minister, I attended the funeral of David Black, a murdered prison officer; the funeral of Ronan Kerr, a murdered police officer; the funerals of others who have died in the course of duty; and the funerals of two members of an Garda Síochána, who were murdered by terrorists operating on a crossborder basis. We should fully acknowledge that a significant problem remains with a small number of those who have not accepted that this society has moved on, and we should ensure that we provide support to those who are leading the fight to ensure that we become a normal society, particularly those who wear police and prison officer uniforms.

Source: <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-14-03-2016.pdf>



Tuesday, 17 May 2016

Department of Health

Written Answer

Summary: Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 447 of 6 April 2016, the status of the proposed provision of a fixed cardio catheterisation laboratory for Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Simon Harris: The Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS) Programme produced a model of care in March, 2012. This described the treatment of ACS and the provision of Primary Percutaneous Intervention (PPCI) nationally, and set out proposals for an optimal reperfusion service, which have been implemented.

The Acute Coronary Syndrome Working Group has recently been asked to conduct a comprehensive review of PPCI and PCI services nationally; recommendations will be made regarding the future configuration of these services, including the number and location of centres required to serve the population needs. Any future redesignation or expansion of PPCI Centres will be informed by this comprehensive review. It is anticipated that it will be completed within 3 months.

The Saolta Cross Border Cardiology Service commenced on May 4th 2016. This new service will greatly enhance patient access to emergency Cardiology services in the North-west region. Patients residing in the Donegal catchment area who suffer a suspected ST-Elevation Myocardial infarction, and who previously would have been transported to University Hospital Galway by road or air, will now be transported the shorter distance to Altnagelvin Area Hospital Derry, for emergency pPCI treatment.

This service is provided by the Saolta University Healthcare Group in conjunction with the Western Health and Social Care Trust and will provide treatment for approximately 60 patients per annum, who, post treatment, will be repatriated to the agreed acute Saolta Group hospital, whether Letterkenny University Hospital or Sligo University Hospital.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-05-17a.1963&s=cross-border#g1965.r>

Department of Education and Skills

Written Answer

Summary: Catherine Martin asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is aware of the concerns that grade comparisons may be working at a disadvantage to Northern Ireland students and if he will resolve this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Richard Bruton: I understand that the institutes of technology and the universities are looking at their entry criteria for students presenting with A-Levels into their institutions. I fully support the promotion of better cross border flows of students in this regard. However, the entry requirements for third level education courses are determined by individual higher education institutions. The Central Applications Office (CAO) administer the processing of applications on behalf of the higher education institutions and my Department does not have any role or function in relation to this.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-05-17a.809&s=cross-border#g811.r>

Wednesday, 18 May 2016

Cross-Border Co-operation

Summary: Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Finance his proposals to implement additional measures to deal with cross-Border criminality such as the smuggling of diesel and tobacco products and other illicit trade; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Michael Noonan: Combatting cross-Border smuggling is a high priority for Revenue. Mineral oil and tobacco smuggling are crimes that require both national and international responses.

I am advised by Revenue that it works closely with law enforcement partners both at home and abroad to disrupt and deter smuggling activities. Revenue co-operates extensively with, *inter alia*, An Garda Síochána in acting against illicit trades. The relevant authorities in the State also work closely with their counterparts in Northern Ireland through cross-Border enforcement groups to target the organised crime groups that are responsible for a large proportion of these forms of criminality. There is close co-operation with other international law enforcement agencies, in particular HM Revenue and Customs in the UK.

As has been reiterated in the programme for a partnership Government, the work to tackle cross-jurisdictional organised crime will be supported and reinforced by the establishment, in the framework of A Fresh Start, the Stormont agreement and implementation plan, of the joint agency task force, which includes Revenue. In this context the development of strategic and tactical plans has been agreed by all key stakeholders to further support effective action against cross-Border excise fraud. This interagency national and international co-operation is complemented by Revenue's use of intelligence gathering, its profiling of suspects and effective intervention programmes to counter the threat posed by criminal activities such as fuel and tobacco fraud.

Over the past number of years Revenue has implemented a number of strategies against both fuel fraud and the illegal tobacco trade, underpinned by an extensive and effective legislative framework to maximise its impact on the illegal operations referred to in the Deputy's question. I am satisfied that the current legislative framework provides an effective basis for action by Revenue against fuel and tobacco offences, and I am assured by Revenue that action against such activities will continue to be a key focus of its work.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/debates/?id=2016-05-18a.326&s=cross-border>