



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

22/07/2016 - 29/07/2016

July 23, 2016

Enda Kenny says no united Ireland vote in medium term 'or perhaps ever'

Speaking at a meeting of the British-Irish Council in Wales yesterday, to discuss member states individual concerns, Mr Kenny admitted that a vote on a united Ireland is not going to be the case now or in the medium term, or perhaps ever .

Despite the clear U-turn, the Fine Gael leader has stressed that the country is still not going back to the days of checkpoints and towers amid heightened talk of a hard border between north and south developing.

At the MacGill summer school in Glenties, Co Donegal, on Monday, Mr Kenny said a vote on reuniting the Republic and Northern Ireland was now a possibility in light of the Brexit vote.

He said this was because Northern Ireland had voted to remain in the EU, and that the clear break by Britain from the common market means the border issue is now back on the agenda.

Senior Government sources have indicated Mr Kenny s comments were directed at Germany in a bid to convince it Ireland is a special case in the post-Brexit negotiations.

However, the remarks have led to a short-lived controversy on both sides of the border, with Mr Kenny forced to step back significantly from the position yesterday after meeting with Ms Foster and others in Cardiff.

Maybe he should stay away from Donegal on the weeks in the summer and give some thought to other things, Ms Foster told reporters.

But seriously, I think it [talk of a united Ireland vote] has been unhelpful maybe in the way which it has come over.

That s all very well at summer schools and what have you, but I have to deal with reality and they have to be prepared for the people of Northern Ireland moving forward in this new era.

Despite taking a clear step away from talk of a border vote in the near future due to the Brexit fallout, Mr Kenny reiterated his position yesterday that no hard border will return, regardless of Britain's decision to leave the EU.

Due to last month's Brexit vote, the line between the Republic and North will soon be the only part of the common market which touches a non-member state but does not have a hard border.

The issue has raised legitimate security questions for other EU nations, most notably Germany, where Chancellor Angela Merkel last week ruled out any special case deal for Ireland in light of the emotive nature of the border.

During yesterday's meeting of the British-Irish Council which consists of the Republic, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland, England, and the Channel Islands Northern Ireland's deputy first minister, Martin McGuinness, said there are huge concerns about the prospect of a hard border developing.

New Northern Ireland secretary James Brokenshire said: I do not want to see a return to the borders of the past.

Source: Irish Examiner

July 25, 2016

Ibec's (EURO)12bn cross-border infrastructure plan launched

Donal O'Donovan A (EURO)12BN programme to upgrade the transport network across the island should be rolled out regardless of last month's Brexit vote, according to the two main business groups in the Republic and in Northern Ireland.

Employers' group Ibec, in the south, and the Northern Ireland branch of the UK's Confederation of British Industry (CBI) have jointly launched a major report setting out proposals to upgrade the all-island transport network on a phased basis in order to cope with a future population of 10 million by 2050.

They warned that the Brexit vote demanded a "new, concerted and co-ordinated policy response" and that all-island investment must remain a priority. The director of policy and corporate affairs at Ibec, Mary Rose Burke, said piecemeal plans to extend road infrastructure on both sides of the border need to be merged to create a comprehensive all-Ireland motorway and dual carriageway network.

Under the plan 85pc of the population would be within 10km of a motorway or dual carriage-way, easing access to trade, work and services, she said.

The plan includes development of major connecting roads on the west coast, connecting the so-called Atlantic cities, from Derry to Tralee and Cork.

The plan is also to add more north-south routes, and roads between second-tier urban centres, in addition to the current networks radiating out of Dublin and Belfast. A fully national network will be vital to any shift to more balanced regional development, Ibec said.

Immediate priorities include completing routes in development, such as the A5 and A6 connecting Derry and the north west to Dublin and Belfast; upgrades to the N20 from

Cork to Limerick; enhancing capacity on the M50; the N15 linking Letterkenny to Sligo; and the A5 route extension to Letterkenny.

The country has not had a comprehensive all-island transport network since the high point of the railways in 1920. After partition, links to the north west in particular have not developed, she said.

Referring to partition, she said there was a danger of "repeating the mistakes of the past" if last month's Brexit vote is allowed to spell the end of joint action by Dublin and Belfast on work - including transport, energy and digital.

With the population set to increase, investment is needed to support exports, job creation and business development, the organisations said. Ibec and the CBI will lobby leaders on both sides of the border with a view to getting work to the planning stages next year. The estimated (EURO)12bn cost is based on a price of (EURO)5m per km of dual carriageway and (EURO)10m per km of motorway.

That level of investment is affordable, Ms Burke said, but may require public-private partnerships, and new and innovative forms of tolling - including time based-charges levied using GPS technology.

European rules mean financing by the State is likely to be done "off balance sheet". The push by tech and motor companies to develop smart cars and more eco-friendly vehicles demonstrate that road, rather than rail or air transport, is likely to remain dominant, she added.

Source: Irish Independent

Money must be invested in all roads across Ireland, say business bodies

ROADS in Northern Ireland and the Republic must be improved despite the challenges of Brexit, two major business groups said today.

The CBI and Ibec - CBI's equivalent in the Republic - said **all-island** development faced "significant risks" from the vote to leave the EU.

But in a report today, the groups insist that investment must be made to support exports, jobs and business development.

And the they vowed to identify all possible investment and funding opportunities to allow such investment to take place.

Northern Ireland received more than £170m towards business and infrastructure in the two years between 2013 and 2015 from the EU.

Projects part-funded by the EU include the £130m A8 road to Larne, which received (EURO)18m (£15m) from the EU towards its development.

Today's report said existing projects should be prioritised such as the A5 and A6 upgrades to Londonderry and the north west, as well as the M1/A1 Sprucefield bypass, which they said would improve the links between Dublin and Belfast. CBI Northern Ireland director Nigel Smyth said: "Investment in **all-island** infrastructure and initiatives must progress with added urgency.

"Progress has been achieved over the last two decades but we must now set out ambitious plans to complete the connectivity across the island that businesses need.

"Ibec and the CBI will continue to identify and facilitate investment and funding mechanisms to deliver the ambitious proposal that is put forward by the **all island** investment project.

"Business will rise to the challenge and continue to build on the strong historical cooperative relationship across the island and between the two islands."

The report, entitled *Connected: A prosperous island of 10 million people*, argues for a comprehensive **all-island** motorway/ dual carriageway network.

The report says better roads would make it easier for people to move and do business around the island - and overseas, by improving links to airports and ports.

And in the absence of most forms of EU funding for Northern Ireland, the report suggests financing options such as off-balance sheet financing from strategic investment funds, European Investment Bank (EIB) loans and European Commission funding via the Juncker Fund.

Mary Rose Burke, director of corporate, strategic and international affairs at Ibec, said: "Infrastructure is the backbone of everyday life, underpinning economic activity.

"And if implemented, its report would improve everyday life and boost economic activity, investment and employment. "Continuing to focus on delivering these needs is especially important given current uncertainties."

Source: The Belfast Telegraph

Farming and food sectors to be worst hit by Brexit: Ford

BREXIT will have major cross-border trade implications for farming and food, according to Alliance party leader David Ford.

"Agriculture and food will be the sectors most exposed to these challenges if a hard border becomes a reality over the coming years," he said.

Mr Ford made the comments while visiting this year's Antrim Show.

He sits on the new agriculture, environment and rural affairs committee at Stormont.

"The reality is that the Irish border immediately becomes an international frontier between the EU and the United Kingdom post-Brexit.

"And this will have major implications for the way that we in Northern Ireland go about our business. "Farming and food already operate on an all-island basis, to a large extent."

Mr Ford welcomed the merger of both agriculture and environment within the new ministerial and departmental arrangements at Stormont.

"Both policy areas fully complement each other," he said.

"Irrespective of the UK coming out of the EU, the fact remains that local farmers will have to attain the highest environmental standards when it comes to producing food."

Meanwhile, in the show rings, the McLean family, from Bushmills, were having another excellent day out.

They won their fifth inter-breed dairy championship of the summer with the Ayrshire 4th calver, Marleycote Sea Lilly.

The judge, Robert Hunter, from Lanarkshire, described the cow as an excellent example of the Ayrshire breed. Dromara flock owner Jim Aiken will also have fond memories of Antrim Show 2016.

He won his second inter-breed sheep championship in successive weeks with the same animal, a truly eye-catching Border Leicester shearling ewe. Judge Kevin Buckle, from Cumbria, described the animal as one having outstanding breed characteristics.

"In addition to her tremendous conformation, she has effortless grace and poise. She stood out from all the other sheep that qualified for the inter bred class," he said.

The beef inter-breed championship was won by the Connolly family from Ballynahinch in Co Down, with their outstanding Charolais cow, Wesley Glamorous.

Source: Belfast Telegraph

July 28, 2016

Moves to scrap EU tariff deal 'would hit cross-border trade'

THE Government's new Trade Minister is pushing an agenda that could be "detrimental" to trade between Northern Ireland and the Republic, Irish business leaders have said.

Liam Fox (below) is reported to be pressurising Prime Minister Theresa May to break free from an agreement which ensures there are no tariffs on goods moving within the European Union.

Despite the Brexit result, it was believed that the UK would remain within the European 'customs union' - but Mr Fox, who was central to the Leave campaign, has indicated that he wants the freedom to cut all existing ties with EU.

Such a move would add "significant" administrative costs and delays to trade crossing the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, it was claimed. Prior to the referendum, the UK Treasury warned that leaving the customs union would lead to **cross-border** transactions being subject to "various forms of customs control and their liability to duty determined according to complex rules on origin".

Mr Fox's approach has been described by the director of Corporate, Strategic and International Affairs at the Irish Business and Employers Confederation Mary Rose Burke as "madness".

"I was a bit staggered when I read it," she said.

"Any additional barriers, even if the tariff is set at zero, would be a hindrance. The extra paperwork would be very challenging for Irish businesses."

Similarly Simon McKeever, chief executive of Irish Exporters' Association, said Britain leaving the European tariff-free zone has "potential to get very messy for us".

"The EU is a trade unit and does negotiation on all of our behalfs using just one external border.

"It would be detrimental to trade crossing the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic," he said.

Mr McKeever said the changes would result in companies having to account for the origins of each individual piece of a product assembled in Ireland. "With all the rules and regulations and the extra paperwork this could mean hiring extra staff which could add about 25% to the cost of trade," he said.

During a visit to the United States this week, Mr Fox told the Wall Street Journal that staying in the custom union could limit the UK's ability to negotiate lower tariffs with other trading partners around the world.

While members of the European Union do not charge each other tariffs for most goods, they do impose a common external tariff on all goods coming from outside.

Source: Belfast Telegraph