

# CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

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2 February 2018 – 9 February 2018



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

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



Wednesday 7 February 2018

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the additional budget for 2018 or other years, provided to his Department and all agencies and bodies within his remit to plan or prepare for Brexit; the number of additional staff that have been recruited to work on this policy area in each body, agency and his Department; the number of dedicated staff planning and working on Brexit matters in each; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

**Paschal Donohoe:** My Department's Brexit / EU / North South Unit is responsible for coordinating Brexit issues across the Department. The Unit comprises six staff, along with an attaché based in the Permanent Representation in Brussels. It oversees Brexit work across the Department and works closely with the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Finance, as well as other Government Departments. It is represented on the Interdepartmental Group on the EU and Brexit, and supports me in my work on Brexit.

Brexit issues are also addressed by staff in relevant areas across the Department. The cost of the Brexit/EU/North South Unit is met from within the Department's existing budget and is kept under review.

My Department and the relevant bodies under its aegis engage as necessary in relation to Brexit matters.

**Source:** <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-02-07a.209&s=north-south+2018-02-02..2018-02-09#g211.r>

**Thursday 8 February 2018**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

Brendan Smith asked Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the recent comments of the EU Agricultural Commissioner ([details supplied](#)) on the possible return of Border checks on goods and persons on the Border following Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

**Simon Coveney:** The Government's priority on protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts and the gains of the peace process, including a hard border on this island, has always been clear. This is also important for the maintenance and protection of North South Cooperation and the all-island economy.

In this regard, the Government welcomed the decision of the European Council on 15 December 2017 that sufficient progress had been made in phase one of the Article 50 negotiations. In phase one we secured clear and strong commitments on avoiding a hard border and the UK Government set out, for the first time, how this will be achieved.

In the event that it is not possible to resolve the border issue as part of a wider EU-UK future relationship agreement, which has always been the Irish Government's preference, or through specific solutions, the UK has committed that "in the absence of agreed solutions, the United Kingdom will maintain full alignment with those rules of the Internal Market and Customs Union which, now or in the future, support North-South cooperation, the all-island economy, and the protection of the 1998 agreement." In the Joint Report, the UK recalled "its commitment to the avoidance of a hard border, including any physical infrastructure or related checks and controls". It has also been agreed that any arrangements put in place will be accompanied by effective mechanisms to ensure implementation and oversight.

The EU and the UK also agreed that the Common Travel Area can continue. In plain terms, it means there will be no change in the right of Irish citizens to move freely North and South, East and West and to live, work, study and access social benefits in the UK on the same basis as UK citizens. This is important for avoiding a hard border.

Irish specific issues will continue to be taken forward in a distinct strand of the negotiations in phase two. This will ensure that they will not be overlooked in this phase and that work will continue on

how to protect the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process and avoid a hard border, based on the agreements reached in phase one and in parallel with the wider negotiations on scoping out the EU's future relationship with the UK.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-02-08a.287&s=north-south+2018-02-02..2018-02-09#g289.r>