

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

20 April 2018 – 27 April 2018



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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



Tuesday 24 April 2018

Department for Transport, Tourism and Sport

Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the discussions that have been held with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the European Commission in relation to having cohesion funding post-2020 provided for the development of road projects in the Border region due to the particular difficulties that will arise in the area from Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Shane Ross: While the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has overall responsibility for EU Cohesion Policy and the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds, it should be noted that this Fund is directed towards Member States whose Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average. For the 2014-2020 period, the countries that qualify for the Cohesion Fund are: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. As a budget contributor, Ireland does not qualify for Cohesion funding.

Following the publication of the National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework, Minister Donohoe and I wrote a joint letter in February to the European Commissioner for Transport, Ms Violeta Bulc, and the European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Ms Corina Cretu, emphasising the considerable challenges facing Ireland in the transport sector and setting out how the National Development Plan and National Planning Framework will inform future investments into the regions, including our outermost regions and our connectivity to Northern Ireland, which will be particularly impacted by Brexit. We made the point that investment in infrastructure has the potential to mitigate the implications of Brexit in these regions.

Over the coming years, Ireland will continue to prioritise key projects on the EU's TEN-T core and comprehensive networks under the National Development Plan with the objective of enhancing connectivity between the comprehensive and core networks, thereby enhancing the sustainability and connectivity of our outermost regions.

The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for Transport is the EU funding instrument developed to direct investment in European transport infrastructure. The post-2020 EU Multiannual Financial Framework is due to be released in early May and preparations are now also underway at European Commission level for a new CEF 2 Regulation. All Member States have been invited to engage with the European Commission in relation to its preparatory work for the new CEF 2 Regulation and my Department has been participating fully in that process. The Department wrote to the European Commission in March with its comments on the Commission's draft proposals and highlighted Ireland's reliance on its road network and the need for investment in strategic road links, including on the comprehensive road network. In particular, the Department asked that reference to the cross-border Dublin to Letterkenny road (via the A5) be included in the Annex to the proposed Regulation.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-04-24a.131&s=cross-border+2018-04-20..2018-04-27#g133.r>

Wednesday 25 April 2018

Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the concerns of communities in counties Cavan and Monaghan about the North-South interconnector particularly in respect of health, tourism, heritage, land and property devaluation; if the project will be underground; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Denis Naughten: The North South Interconnector, as proposed as an overhead line, now has full planning permission in both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

I have listened carefully to the issues raised in relation to this project, particularly those living in close proximity to the proposed project. In February and March 2017, two motions calling for an updated independent study into the north-south interconnector were passed by Dáil Éireann and

Seanad Éireann. I met with the Monaghan Anti-Pylon Committee and North East Pylon Pressure Campaign, together with Oireachtas members from Cavan, Monaghan and Meath in February 2017. I subsequently met with Oireachtas members in May 2017 and most recently again in January of this year. In addition, my officials have held separate meetings with the Monaghan Anti-Pylon Committee and North East Pylon Pressure Campaign in March and April last year.

All of these engagements – together with the motions - were important in my decision to commission two independent studies into the project. The studies are designed to address the main points of the motions as well as key concerns expressed by those parties opposed to the development of an overhead line. Some impacts such as environmental and health concerns will not be assessed since the statutory planning process is the appropriate method by which such impacts are assessed and evaluated.

The Consultants undertaking the two studies have finalised their reports and once considered in my department and submitted to me it is my intention that these will be brought to Government and made publicly available. This process will take a number of weeks.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-04-17a.733&s=cross+border+2018-04-13..2018-04-20#g735.r>