

# CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

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11 May 2018 – 18 May 2018



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

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



Tuesday 14 May 2018

Department of An Taoiseach

Pat Gallagher asked the Taoiseach the number of staff in his Department assigned solely or primarily to work on North-South issues.

**Leo Varadkar:** The Britain and Northern Ireland Section forms part of the International, EU and Northern Ireland Division of my Department which is headed by a Second Secretary General.

Within my Department, the Britain and Northern Ireland Section supports me, in my role as Taoiseach, on Northern Ireland matters. The Section also supports me in my contacts with the British Prime Minister more broadly in the context of the role of the two Governments as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement and in the ongoing efforts to secure the restoration of the institutions under the Agreement.

It assists me with my participation in key institutions of the Good Friday Agreement, such as the North South Ministerial Council (when operational), the British Irish Council and in other aspects of cross-border engagement and cooperation and the British Irish Council.

As you would expect, there is close cooperation between my Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which has primary responsibility for matters relating to Northern Ireland, North-South cooperation and British-Irish relations. Officials from the two Departments work very closely together across the range of issues relating to Northern Ireland and British-Irish affairs.

There are currently 10 staff assigned to the Britain and Northern Ireland Section of my Department.

Source <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-05-15a.157&s=cross+border+2018-05-11..2018-05-18#g159.r>

**Tuesday 15 May 2018**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

Tommy Broughan asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the next steps of the Brexit negotiations; if a contingency plan is being prepared for the possibility of negotiations not having been completed by March 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

**Simon Coveney:** Firstly, in terms of next steps in the Article 50 negotiations, following on from the March European Council, the EU and UK agreed to five additional formal rounds of negotiations between April and the next European Council in June when progress on all issues will be assessed. These negotiations are focused on all outstanding issues in the draft Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, as well as the future relationship.

In terms of the draft Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, the UK has agreed that a backstop solution for the border will form part of the legal text of the Withdrawal Agreement, in line with paragraph 49 of the Joint Progress Report agreed last December. The UK has also agreed that all the issues identified in the EU draft of the Protocol will be addressed to deliver a legally sound solution for the border. Prime Minister May confirmed this in her letter to President Tusk of 19 March. The focus is now narrowing the gaps between the two sides so that significant progress is made on agreeing the Protocol by the European Council on 28-29 June.

In relation to contingency planning, co-ordination of the whole-of-Government response to Brexit is being taken forward through the cross-Departmental coordination structures chaired by my Department.

Contingency planning for a no-deal or worst-case outcome, bringing together the detailed work being undertaken by individual Ministers and their Departments on issues within their policy remit, is now well advanced. Its focus is on the immediate regulatory and operational challenges which would result from such an outcome. It assumes a trading relationship based on the default WTO rules, but also examines the possible effects on many other areas of concern. This work is therefore providing baseline scenarios for the impact of Brexit across all sectors, which can then be adapted as appropriate in light of developments in the EU-UK negotiations, including in regard to transition arrangements and the future relationship. It also takes account of the planning being undertaken at

EU level by the new Commission Preparedness Unit, which is issuing information notes aimed at different business sectors.

The Government is already acting in order to get Ireland Brexit ready. Dedicated measures were announced in Budget 2018, including a new €300m Brexit Loan Scheme for Business and a €25m Brexit Response Loan Scheme for the agrifood sector as well as additional supports for capital investment in the food industry and Bord Bia marketing and promotion activities, amounting to over €50m in total. Additional capital expenditure allocation of €4.3 bn over four years will also allow the State and its agencies to properly plan major infrastructure projects while ensuring that communities and businesses can plan ahead. There was also increased funding provided to my Department for the opening of six new diplomatic missions as part of Global Footprint 2025, which will contribute to helping our exporters find new markets. Our Government's enterprise agencies continue to work with companies, helping them to deal with Brexit – making them more competitive, diversifying market exposure, and upskilling teams.

Longer-term economic strategies will also be critically important in addressing the challenges of Brexit, notably Ireland 2040 –the National Development Plan. The Enterprise Strategy 2025 Renewed was recently launched and we are in active discussions with the European Investment Bank on a potential increase in investment in the country.

Before the summer the Government will finalise a paper, building on that published in May 2017, on our approach to the negotiations and our latest assessment of the economic and sectoral challenges posed by Brexit and our responses to them.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-05-15a.92&s=cross+border+2018-05-11..2018-05-18#g95.r>