

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

21 September 2018 – 28 September 2018



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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



Tuesday 25 September 2018

Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Peadar Toibín asked Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the independent report on the North-South interconnector will be published

Denis Naughten: In 2017 I commissioned two studies designed to address the main points of the motions passed in Dáil and Seanad Éireann as well as key concerns expressed by those opposed to the development of the North South Interconnector as an overhead line.

The first is an independent study to examine the technical feasibility and cost of undergrounding the interconnector. Three international experts in the field of electricity infrastructure development carried out a comprehensive analysis of international developments in undergrounding technologies since the publication of the International Expert Commission report in 2012. This was a key request of the representatives of the communities concerned about the proposed overhead line development.

The North South Interconnector is critical to ensuring a safe, secure supply of electricity throughout the island of Ireland. It also supports the core objectives of European and national energy policy – namely sustainability, security of supply and competitiveness.

The second study is focused on the levels of compensation provided to land and property owners in proximity to high-voltage transmission lines in a European context. This study was undertaken to consider a separate concern raised by public representatives at meetings with me - the impact of transmission lines on land and property values and the level of compensation paid in lieu of such impacts. Levels of compensation provided to land and property owners are considered to be a reflection of the impact of transmission lines on land and property values, so this study, undertaken by KHSK Economic Consultants, analysed the compensation regimes in other European and selected international countries.

Both studies are now completed and have been submitted to me.

In order to have the most up-to-date assessment of implications of Brexit on the energy sector before bringing the reports to Government, I sought views of the energy regulator and electricity and gas transmission system operators on the implications for the electricity market in Ireland in the event of a hard "Brexit", including for the SEM, for timelines for the delivery of programmes such as DS3 and the NSIC and for continued secure cross-border electricity trading across interconnectors. The outcome of this analysis was submitted to my Department recently and is being considered.

It has always been my intention to bring the relevant reports to Government for consideration prior to their publication and I expect to do this shortly.

Source <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-09-25a.985&s=cross+border+2018-09-21..2018-09-28#g987.r>

Tuesday 25 September 2018

Department of Rural and Community Development

Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he or his Department have had recent discussions with the authorities in Northern Ireland on cross-Border projects which maybe affected by Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Seán Kyne: The Minister for Rural and Community Development is a member of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC). However, his colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine has primary responsibility with respect to the North South Ministerial Council relating to Agriculture and Rural Development.

The North South Ministerial Council has been unable to meet since the Northern Ireland Executive collapsed in January 2017, and specifically because of the continuing absence of a First and deputy

First Minister, who, acting jointly, are required to satisfy a number of statutory requirements in respect of NSMC Meetings.

While formal NSMC official-level Working Groups, whose primary purpose is to prepare for NSMC Ministerial meetings in the areas of cooperation, are also not taking place, officials from Departments in both jurisdictions have continued to work together in line with the previously agreed work programme of cooperation.

My officials have continued therefore to engage with their counterparts in relation to progressing projects under the co-operation measure under the current LEADER programme and within the North West Strategic Growth Partnership initiative being progressed by both Donegal Local Authority and Derry City Council.

My Department is also a Designated Accountable Department under the PEACE IV programme for Peace and Reconciliation. My colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, has overall responsibility for the PEACE Programme and any related BREXIT discussions.

The North South cooperation we enjoy today brings tangible benefits to the daily lives of people in the border region and across the island. It contributes to economic opportunity and development. It is also a very practical outworking of the peace process which allows for the normalisation of relationships between people across the island, to mutual benefit.

It is for these reasons that the Government has prioritised the protection of the Good Friday Agreement in all its part, and the gains of the peace process, along with the avoidance of a hard border, in the Brexit negotiations.

I earnestly hope that a new administration can be put in place in Northern Ireland soon and I look forward to engaging with my counterpart in Northern Ireland at an early date in the future on issues of common interest within my Department's remit.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-09-25a.60&s=cross+border+2018-09-21..2018-09-28>