

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

5 October 2018 - 12 October 2018



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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



Tuesday 9 October 2018

Department of Finance

Declan Breathnach asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that an increase in carbon tax on solid fuel in the forthcoming budget will lead to an increase in illicit trade in solid fuels to the detriment of legal business owners south of the Border; if his attention has been drawn further to the fact that such an increase would also lead to increased use of illegal polluting solid fuels purchased on the black market; if he will keep prices in line with pricing north of the Border; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Paschal Donohoe: As the Deputy will be aware, it is a longstanding practice of the Minister for Finance not to comment, in advance of the Budget, on any tax matters that might be the subject of Budget decisions.

In relation to the issue of the illicit trade in solid fuels, as I, and my predecessor, have pointed out before, the collection of solid fuel carbon tax is heavily reliant on the regulatory regime covering the marketing, sale, distribution and burning of solid fuels in the State. This regulatory regime is operated by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and is enforced by local authorities. This regime, which imposes higher environmental standards on coal in the State than

applies in Northern Ireland, enables local authorities to undertake enforcement action to prevent the sale or distribution of coal that does not meet our standards.

European Union Single Market constraints preclude the use of any cross-border movement controls in the administration of Solid Fuel Carbon Tax. Therefore, Revenue has no authority to stop vehicles and physically inspect loads of such fuel. Similarly, the transport or possession of solid fuels that originated in Northern Ireland are not, in themselves, Revenue offences and Revenue's officers have no authority to challenge such transportation or possession. It is important to note that liability to Solid Fuel Carbon Tax does not arise on the physical presence of the goods in the State, but on first supply in the State by the supplier who is obliged to register with Revenue, make a return and pay the tax. This return must be made one month after the two-month accounting period provided for in law.

I am advised that Revenue is in contact with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to discuss the effectiveness of the regulatory regime for solid fuel and to explore how to improve matters in light of continuing concerns that fuel sourced from Northern Ireland is getting onto the market here, including the scope for cooperation to ensure improved compliance in the sector.

Source <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-10-09a.168&s=cross+border+2018-10-05..2018-10-12#g170.r>

Thursday 11 October 2018

Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Martin Kenny asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps that have been taken to ensure that cross-Border veterinary regulations and standards will be maintained after Brexit.

Michael Creed: Brexit has the potential to have a significant impact on the whole of the agriculture industry throughout Ireland.

However, the Government, in the first instance, is seeking to minimise the impact of Brexit through a negotiated outcome which avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland and which permits a trading arrangement post-Brexit that is as close as possible to that prevailing currently. That is what Ireland wants from the negotiations, and it is also what the EU wants.

In this regard, the UK commitment, in the Joint EU-UK Report of last December, to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, was extremely important. The aim from an agri-food perspective is to continue with the free movement of agricultural goods and animals on the island of Ireland, while maintaining veterinary regulations and standards.

Ensuring that the UK gives effect to this commitment is a significant focus of the Irish Government, and we have the full support of our EU partners and of the European Commission Task Force in this regard. I and my Department have been contributing actively to the Department of Foreign Affairs and

Trade- coordinated 'whole of government' approach to ensuring such an outcome from the negotiations.

In relation to the maintenance of veterinary regulations and standards on the island, I want to assure the Deputy that the ongoing, close co-operation between my Department and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland established under the All island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy is continuing. The working groups established under the strategy, continue to focus on critical issues such as disease control, animal identification and movement, cross-border communication, data sharing and the development of joint initiatives on animal welfare.

I wish to assure the Deputy that the Government remains very focused on supporting the agricultural industry through the challenges ahead. The Government will be firm in arguing that any agreement reached between the EU and the UK must take account of the very serious challenges presented by Brexit for the sector, particularly given the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland and the importance of our economic relationship with the UK.

And, of course, ultimately Ireland's objective in the negotiations is to have a trading relationship with the entire UK which is as close as possible to the current arrangement.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2018-10-11a.38&s=cross+border+2018-10-05..2018-10-12#g39.q>