



The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies

# MEDIA WATCH

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**5 October 2019 – 12 October 2018**

**6 October 2018**

## Minister has 'no confidence' that cross-Border pylon plan will work

Kevin Doyle A CABINET minister has "absolutely no confidence" the North-south electricity inter-connector between Meath and Armagh will ever happen.

Regina Doherty is on a collision course with her own Government after claiming the long-delayed project should now be scrapped.

Her statement comes despite a report brought to Cabinet earlier this week by Communications Minister Denis Naughten which supported the economic and technical case for using pylons rather than putting cables underground.

Officially the Government has said it will not now intervene in EirGrid's plans to build the cross-Border power lines. However, Ms Doherty, who is a TD for Meath East, said the arguments being made why the inter-connector is needed are a "smokescreen".

She said claims by groups like Ibec - which represents businesses - that it will help attract business are not true.

Speaking to Michael Reade on LMF, Ms Doherty said Mr Naughten has "no choice" but to support the project, but "the rest of us in Ireland are very aware that there are immense vulnerabilities".

Supporters say it will provide a second highcapacity all-Ireland interconnector, ensuring the long-term supply and enhancing services to business. But Ms Doherty said: "I have absolutely no confidence that this project will ever be delivered."

Asked whether she was in a difficult position as part of the Government backing the plan, Ms Doherty said her first responsibility is to the people of her constituency.

Fianna Fáil TD Thomas Byrne slammed the approach being taken by Ms Doherty, saying she was trying to "wash her hands" of the issue. Mr Byrne, who also opposes the pylons, said it is not possible for a Cabinet minister to be advocating against Government policy.

"Regina likes to just get through the gaps. I'd have no difficulty saying it to her face."

**Source: The Irish Independent**

**11 October 2018**

## PSNI and Garda tell Irish parliament of joint plans for policing border in hard Brexit

The PSNI and Garda are planning for a hard border in the event of a no-deal Brexit, a committee in the Republic's parliament heard yesterday.

Assistant Garda Commissioner Patrick Leahy ▼ and PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Alan Todd said they had been working together in an attempt to reduce the fallout of a chaotic Brexit.

Mr Todd appeared before the Oireachtas committee in Dublin for the first time alongside Mr Leahy in which they discussed the range of work both police forces have been putting in place.

It is only the second time a PSNI officer has appeared before the sub-committee, following Sir Hugh Orde's visit in 2006.

Sinn Fein Senator Niall O'Donoghue asked the pair how damaging a hard border would be for cross-border corporation.

Mr Leahy responded: "We all know what could happen so we are planning for it, and in terms of resources and training we are looking at our infrastructure and what the implications will be.

"We are being mature about what is required around (Brexit) and we are waiting with bated breath as to where this takes us, but we are not sitting back and doing nothing."

Mr Todd told the committee it was difficult to plan without details of the final Brexit deal.

"We have been looking at the range of work we do on a cross-border basis and looking at which pieces rely on European regulations, and trying to work out if we lost those how we would maintain what we have," he said.

While there is no Brexit deal on the table, and with just months to go before the UK leaves the European Union, there is a growing risk of a hard border.

Mr Todd said that the PSNI continues to face threats from dissident republicans and said he would be "nervous" of a return to infrastructure at the frontier.

He said: "We would be nervous about anything that could be used as a focus to try and harness discontent and be used as some sort of quasi-legitimacy for their actions.

"It would make us uncomfortable at the notion that local community teams would want to enforce or be part of a border structure that didn't have approval of local communities."

It has also emerged that the armed response unit in Northern Ireland, which was set up to deal with gun and knife crime, spends more than half its time in interventions with people suffering from mental health problems.

"That has been the saddest shift with which policing deals," Mr Todd added.

Independents 4 Change TD Clare Daly described it as "mind blowing", and asked whether police in the Republic were dealing with similar issues.

Mr Leahy told the committee that mental health was a factor in policing and the level of trauma that officers dealt with in the public is "becoming really topical".

The Leinster House committee further heard about the PSNI's use of social media to reach out to the public.

Mr Todd explained how the PSNI now had a social media outreach of more than 900,000 followers.

"In most towns across Northern Ireland there are more people following us on social media than have ever met a police officer," he added. Mr Todd said that local police were able to post updates without centralised control, but this also brought "risks".

The committee heard that the Garda Facebook has 450,000 followers, while its Twitter account has almost half-a-million.

Ms Daly, however pointed out that the PSNI had almost double the number of social media followers, and urged the Garda to "pay attention" to that area.

**Source: The Belfast Telegraph**