



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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24 November 2018

Hope for border area after Brexit deal

When RTE presenter Claire Byrne met BBC's Stephen Nolan against the spectacular view of Carlingford Lough last week, they couldn't have imagined the dramatic events that were beginning to unfold.

Filmed as they crossed the currently seamless border to host the television special NolanByrne Live, the well known personalities swapped places for the live show.

With Claire Byrne in Belfast and the Stephen Nolan at RTE studios in Dublin, the scene was set for what looked to be the first truly transparent cross border debate on Brexit.

But within 24 hours of the show airing, reports emerged that a deal had been reached between the UK and the EU.

Two years and five months after the shock vote, it was the first major breakthrough, and a welcome one for the border area, with specific caveats for the north which were essential to preventing the return of a border to this area.

Among the first to welcome the news was the lobby group, Border Communities Against Brexit (BCAB) who have campaigned tirelessly against the return of a hard border.

Spokesman Declan Fearon said: 'Developments on the progress of the negotiations between the British Government and the EU are welcome.

It is our understanding that the Backstop for Ireland will be set in place alongside the UK remaining in the Custom Union and Parts of the Single Market to allow further detailed trade negotiations to take place.

This would allow Certainty for everyone living in Border Communities and further across this Island. It also provides economic assurance for the thousands of business who face a very difficult future and the tens of thousands of jobs put at risk by a Brexit crash.

We will all have to wait and see what developments take place in Westminster in the coming weeks.'

The European Union's Chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, who laid out the work being done to avoid the return of a border in this area during a visit to Dundalk earlier this year, said that a 'solution to avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland has been found.'

He explained that Northern Ireland would stay in the same customs territory as the rest of the United Kingdom, but that the region would remain aligned to some EU regulations to avoid a hard border.

The draft agreement was, he added, a 'key step towards concluding the Brexit talks.'

He insisted that the backstop 'is designed to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland post-Brexit.'

Meanwhile Louth TD, Declan Breathnach, has urged the publication of a key Brexit report, which details the areas of North-South cooperation under the Good Friday Agreement, that are at risk due to Brexit.

Deputy Breathnach, who is also vice-chair of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, was commenting following the call from EU Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly to publish the document given that it is in the public interest.

Deputy Breathnach said: 'I believe this document, which sets out how dependent North-South cooperation is on EU membership by both Ireland and the UK, needs to be published without any further delay.'

'The 1998 Good Friday Agreement makes explicit reference to 'areas for co-operation' many of which are directly or indirectly underpinned by EU law. We cannot countenance any threat to these areas of cooperation and must ensure their continuation long into the future.'

He added: 'I appreciate and understand the complexity of the past number of weeks when negotiations were ongoing.

However, I think it is timely that the document is now published, and the full extent of the risk is made known. We know that Brexit will have negative consequences on this island and it is in everyone's interest that we mitigate against this, we need to be informed to do so,' concluded Deputy Breathnach.

Louth TD Gerry Adams also weighed in on the current crisis arising from Brexit withdrawal agreement saying: 'Brexit is a deadly serious issue. It poses a significant threat to the economy of County Louth, to jobs and infrastructure. It threatens the two economies on this island, will undermine social cohesion, and directly attacks the Good Friday Agreement.'

He said that the crisis within the British government, along with ' the chaos within Westminster, and the fallout between the DUP and the Tory leader Theresa May highlights the stupidity, insanity, absurdity and ludicrousness of Brexit.'

'In the referendum in 2016 the clear majority of voters in the North voted to remain within the EU. The DUP and the British government continue to disrespect that democratic vote.'

'We have consistently campaigned for the North to be designated a special status within the EU in order to ensure there is no hard border and that communities and businesses, especially along the border corridor, are protected. Our MEPS led this effort in the European Parliament. In Ireland, North and South and in Westminster we consistently pressed this proposal.'

He said the the draft withdrawal agreement, and in particular the backstop arrangement, if implemented would go some way to achieving this objective.'

The Louth TD added: 'However we should not lose sight of the fact that the current draft withdrawal agreement will not stop Brexit.'

The reality is that the agreement reached between the EU and the British can only moderate some of the worst aspects of Brexit.'

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has said the Government is not contemplating a hard border on the island of Ireland in the event of a rejection of the draft Brexit withdrawal deal.

He said the focus remained on getting the deal ratified, but he added that a difficult conversation with the EU would have to take place if the UK parliament votes it down.

Source: The Argus

29 November 2018

John Simpson: However we leave, Northern Ireland's sure to suffer

The economic analysis of the options currently under consideration, published yesterday, is a competent, professional report that deserves to be taken seriously.

Leaving the EU, which is essentially a mechanism to liberalise trade and payments, will inevitably initially disrupt some of the flows of trade and payments meaning that, for the economy as a whole, there will be less efficiency.

No deal Brexit risks future security of Northern Ireland, says Bradley

John Simpson: However we leave, Northern Ireland's sure to suffer

There is little surprise in the conclusion that Brexit in almost any shape will have a negative influence. A 2% difference after 15 years when EU membership is compared with the Government's proposed Brexit treaty is small, but it is a downside.

The critical feature of the official forecasts is not that Brexit is expected to have an initial negative outcome, it is that we now have a data on the different Brexit options.

Claims that these assessments are a simple, crude fear factor or are based on flawed assumptions, are a misreading of arguments that deserve the credit of being considered as a useful contribution to the debate now gripping the political arena across the UK.

To say that economic forecasts are usually wrong, or that forecasts purporting to reach ahead for 15 years are not credible because so much can go awry in the changing economic environment, is dismissive of the essential, well understood dynamics of the way that the economy works.

The most advanced economic analysis used by the Treasury and independent organisations is internationally reputable.

Yes, economic forecasts will usually have margins of error because so many decisions made by businesses, individuals and Government are subject to variations as events unfold.

That variability should not be used as a criticism to devalue the results.

The Treasury analysis will have evaluated sensibly the variables and built a logical result with a predictable margin of error.

The key results published by the Government suggest that the Brexit deal now ready for debate would have a small marginal negative effect on the economy.

A no-deal Brexit would hit the economy hardest: a 9% loss of income in 15 years, or possibly about £250bn. This compares with a Brexit linked to a free trade agreement that might mean a 6.5% loss of income.

The Treasury papers clearly favour the deal now before Parliament for all the reasons that the Prime Minister repeats frequently.

If the Government Brexit deal is implemented, Northern Ireland may expect to experience broadly the same negative influences that apply for the UK, possibly on a larger scale. The NI-Ireland backstop is a necessary part of the proposed Brexit deal, but even it would not prevent some trade and income disruption because of extra degrees of relative uncertainty.

There are no official estimates of the way the Brexit options would differ when applied to Northern Ireland. However, the degree of disadvantage would be higher in Northern Ireland in a no-deal result, which could damage cross-border business and businesses.

The UK loss of over 9% of gross income might be significantly higher here.

At the unmerited risk of being accused of playing on the fear factor, caution suggests the Northern Ireland loss might be nearer to 15%: jobs lost, investment deterred and changed migration.

John Simpson is an economist and commentator

Source: The Belfast Telegraph