



TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS

AN COMHCHOISTE UM FHORBAIRT TUAITHE AGUS POBAIL

TUARASCÁIL ÓN GCOMHCHOISTE

MAIDIR LEIS

AN MBREATHIMEACHT AGUS AN TEORANN

Tionchar ar Phobail Tuaithe

Iúil 2019

A leagadh faoi bhráid dhá Theach an Oireachtais 10 Iúil 2019

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

JOINT COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

ON

BREXIT AND THE BORDER

THE IMPACT ON RURAL COMMUNITIES

JULY 2019

Laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas 10 July 2019



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PREFACE

Ireland and the United Kingdom joined the European Economic Community (EEC) on 1 January 1973.

With our shared history, language, and the common law, both countries worked well together in the European Union.

The Good Friday Agreement, with the support of the European Union, has led to peace and prosperity, and political development in Northern Ireland and the border region.

However, the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union was problematic.

The United Kingdom held its first referendum on membership of the EEC on 5 June 1975. 67% voted to remain.

The United Kingdom held its second referendum on membership of the European Union on Thursday 23 June 2016. The Leave side won by 51.9% to 48.1%, triggering the two year Article 50 withdrawal process on 29 March 2017, with a withdrawal date of 29 March 2019 at 23:00 British time.

The United Kingdom and the European Union negotiated a Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration but the British political system seems unable to choose between the agreement and a "No Deal" Brexit.

The withdrawal date was extended to 12 April 2019, followed by a flexible extension to 31 October 2019, but there is no indication that the United Kingdom is able to decide on a policy, and opinion in Europe is hardening against a further extension.

The Northern Ireland executive collapsed in January 2017, and following a general election, the parties seem unable to agree to elect a new executive.

From the day the referendum result was announced the committee was concerned that an unintended consequence of the Brexit process was that Northern Ireland and the border region North and South would be at risk of suffering a loss of funding and support, with the possible return of a "hard border" with all that that entails.

I wish to thank all those who assisted the committee, both North and South, from Local Authorities, and other stakeholders. I would also like to thank the former committee, and the chairman of the former committee, Deputy Peadar Tóibín, who started the work on this report.

Joe Carey
Cathaoirleach (Chairman)
10 July 2019



1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Continuity of EU Funding

The Committee recommends that the Government seek agreement from the European Union and the United Kingdom for a mechanism to allow Northern Ireland continued access to EU funding programmes of relevance to cross-border co-operation and in the case of non-agreement, that the Government agree EU replacement co-funding with the UK government to ensure funding for the continuation of ongoing and future cross-border cooperation.

Recommendation 2: Monitoring Developments

The Committee recommends that the Special EU Programmes Body, in particular, and other funding bodies in general, closely monitor developments in EU/UK Brexit negotiations on future relations and implementation of the withdrawal agreement with regard to the impact on such bodies' existing funding programmes, especially those relating to regional development, the arts and the Irish language.

Recommendation 3: Evaluations of Funded Activities

The Committee recommends that funding bodies carry out a series of evaluations on currently funded activities and how they could be affected by Brexit, with special regard to regional development in border areas.

Recommendation 4: PEACE V Programme

The Committee recommends that the Government discuss with the European Commission the feasibility of developing a "PEACE V" programme, funded by the EU, and also by the UK and Irish Governments, in consultation with civil society organisations and local authorities, which would specifically address the challenges of inter-community conflict and cross-border relationships in the context of uncertainty and instability arising in the post-Brexit context and its effect on regional development.

Recommendation 5: Common Travel Area (CTA)

The Committee welcomes the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning the Common Travel Area and associated reciprocal rights and privileges, signed at London on 8 May 2019, which reaffirms the Common Travel Area. The Committee recommends that the Government takes the necessary steps to provide certainty and clarity about reciprocal rights and privileges associated with the memorandum and those responsible for the delivery of relevant services.

Recommendation 6: New Business Strategies – Post Brexit

The Committee recommends that businesses in border counties immediately draw up strategies to be implemented post Brexit which will protect current cross-border business arrangements.

Recommendation 7: New Communications Strategies

The Committee recommends that local authorities on both sides of the border publish a communications strategy identifying the problems and their implications for the individual and community groups in existing border corridors.

Recommendation 8: Sharing Resources

The Committee recommends the pooling of local/regional bodies' resources where practicable to promote cross-border initiatives which will enhance and strengthen rural development e.g. in tourism, heritage, arts and culture etc.

Recommendation 9: New Research – EU Borders

The Committee recommends that research be undertaken on agreements in place affecting other EU regions sharing land borders with non EU States (e.g. Norway, Switzerland) in areas such as joint cross-border programmes concerning regional development.

Recommendation 10: Educational Qualifications

The Committee recommends that qualifications issued by authorities in each jurisdiction be recognised equally by both jurisdictions following the Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Common Travel Area 2019.¹

Recommendation 11: Working Time Directive

The Committee recommends that the provisions of the EU Working Time Directive² be continued in Northern Ireland after Brexit.

Recommendation 12: Joint Tourism Initiatives

The Committee recommends that the eleven border area local authorities develop North/South tourism strategies applicable to their specific cross-border regions.

Recommendation 13: Adoption of Common Charter for Co-operation

The Committee recommends that the Common Charter for Co-operation within and between these islands³ be adopted as a framework to drive North-South and East-West community co-operation from a grassroots level.

¹ Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Common Travel Area, 08 May 2019

<https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/eu/brexit/brexitandyou/Memorandum-of-Understanding-Ire-version.pdf>

² Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32003L0088>

³ A New Common Charter For Cooperation Within And Between These Islands

<http://crossborder.ie/site2015/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/A-New-Common-Charter-FINAL.pdf>

2. INTRODUCTION

In December 2018 the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development held a meeting to discuss 'Supporting Communities and Sustaining Small Rural Business within the Border Region after Brexit'. The Committee considered the end of 2018 to be a very appropriate time to consider the risks to rural and community development in the border region two and a half years after the vote of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. In the Committee's view there is no good Brexit and whatever type of Brexit comes about, policies on one side of the border can have serious effects on the other side of the border.

Recent cooperation, due in the main from funding made available under the Good Friday Agreement, has delivered successes: the PEACE IV Programme which funds actions that promote social and economic stability in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo) is co-funded by the EU (85%) and the Irish and UK Governments (15%). This, along with further investment by the EU, Ireland and the UK over the programme period, are successes which clearly demonstrate that when there is cooperation both sides can benefit.

The Committee, as part of a consultative process leading to the publication of this report, heard the views of representatives from cross border regions on how best one can mitigate the risks to the border region in a post-Brexit world, and how best one can enhance rural and community development.

Some of the main concerns of the five stakeholders at the December 2018 meeting of the Committee centred in the main around Brexit stakes for communities and businesses in the border region, the threat to hard-gained social cohesion, the potential loss of current EU funding in supporting communities and small business, fluctuations in Euro/Sterling exchange rate, connectivity infrastructure as key in enabling access to services, and building regional relationships to improve cross-border spatial development and regeneration.

In addition to the above, the former Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs⁴ agreed in 2017 to initiate a project to examine the effects of a British exit from the European Union on matters within Ireland concerning areas under the remit of the Committee. This former Committee held three days of hearings on the topic of 'The Impact of a British Withdrawal from the European Union on Rural and Cross-Border Communities' between March and May 2017. Eight stakeholders in total made presentations to the Committee. All witnesses who participated at these meetings shared very similar concerns on the negative effect of Brexit on the inhabitants of border communities and unintended consequences. Summaries of these stakeholders' discussions with the Committee are provided in [Section 3](#), [Section 4](#), and [Section 5](#) below.

[Section 6](#) provides detail on the discussion and Recommendations arising out of all stakeholders' engagement with the joint committees during 2017 and 2018.

⁴ Following Government changes to departmental structures, the Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs became the Joint Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and remaining functions were transferred to a new committee, the Joint Committee of Rural and Community Development.

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

Table 1: Hearings related to the Joint Committee's consideration of the topic of Brexit the Border

DATE	STAKEHOLDERS	ORGANISATIONS
12 June 2019	Dr Anthony Soares, Acting Director	Centre for Cross Border Studies
	Ms Tara Farrell, Deputy CEO	Longford Women's Link
	Mr Aidan Campbell, Policy & Public Affairs Officer	Rural Community Network
12 December 2018	Dr Anthony Soares, Deputy Director	Centre for Cross Border Studies
	Ms Lisa O'Kane, Programmes Manager	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
	Ms Pamela Arthurs, Chief Executive	East Border Region
	Mr Shane Campbell, Chief Executive	Irish Central Border Area Network
	Mr Aidan Campbell, Policy & Public Affairs Officer	Rural Community Network
10 May 2017	Mr Peter Sheridan, Chief Executive Officer; Mr Brian Ó Caoindealbháin, Uasal, Research and Evaluation Officer; Ms Susan Mc Kay, Director, Glens Centre	Co-operation Ireland
	Ms Ruth Taillon, Director; Dr Anthony Soares, Deputy Director; Dr Katy Hayward, Board Member	Centre for Cross-Border Studies
	Mr Thomas Hunter Mc Gowan, Chief Executive Officer; Mr Aidan Gough, Director of Strategy & Policy	InterTradeIreland
06 April 2017	Councillor Paul Bell, Cathaoirleach; Ms Joan Martin, Chief Executive Officer; Mr Frank Pentony, Director of Service; Mr Joe Mc Guinness, Director of Service	Louth County Council
	Mr John Kelpie, Chief Executive Officer; Mr Michael Gallagher, Strategy Manager	Derry City and Strabane District Council
	Ms Gina McIntyre, Chief Executive Officer; Mr Shaun Henry, Director of Managing Authority; Mr John Greer, Head of Unit, Joint Secretariat	Special European Union Programmes Body
29 March 2017	Mr John Sheridan; Mr J.J. O'Hara	Border Communities Against Brexit
	Mr Neil Mc Donnell, Chief Executive Officer	Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association

3. SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSIONS (MARCH, APRIL, MAY 2017)

3.1.COMMITTEE DELEGATION TO BALIEBOROUGH, CO CAVAN

A delegation from the former committee held meetings with local representatives and organisations from Bailieborough, County Cavan and Carrickmacross, County Monaghan on 26 May 2017 to discuss the topic of “The future of community, social and economic development and co-operation in border counties”.

The delegation informed the group of its strong view that it was crucial for border communities that Ireland secured certain protections against the imposition of a hard border through the middle of these communities. Local economies and communities on both sides of the border needed to be protected and all affected parties needed to be coherent in their requirements in this regard when the case is put to the Ireland and UK governments and to the EU Commission in Brussels.

3.2.BORDER COMMUNITIES AGAINST BREXIT

Border Communities Against Brexit⁵ is a cross community non-political group representing the concerns of those in cross-border regions who feel their voice is not being heard. In its view a ‘soft border is a hard border by stealth’ and the main concern arising out of Brexit would be a return to the border-like conditions which existed before the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Such a scenario would lead to community resentment, affect the local economy, and discommode all those workers who cross the border every day, and many other citizens who cross the border as tourists, or for sports or cultural events.

On a political level, the peace process has been embraced by communities from both sides of the political divide with the financial support of EU funding and there is a strong concern that Brexit will undermine these arrangements and threaten the benefits gained heretofore. A hard border will alienate and divide border communities and result in communities feeling disenfranchised politically.

⁵ <http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/regionaldevelopment/Irish.Network-Presentation---BCAB.pdf>

3.3. IRISH SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

ISME is an independent representative association for small and medium Irish enterprises⁶ whose main aim is to provide a voice for small and medium enterprise owner-managers. In its view the biggest challenge facing small businesses in border areas and throughout the whole of the State, is 'the unknown'.

Since Ireland and the UK's accession to the European Union in 1973, businesses have undoubtedly benefitted and both countries have enjoyed economic growth, prosperity and deeper social cohesion. While it remains unknown, ISME questions the effect of the UK's decision to leave the EU and believes that

"the social, political and economic fabric between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland will be altered; most particularly through the uncertainty businesses, civic society and social groups along the border counties face".

3.4. LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

Louth County Council⁷ referred to what it saw as the widespread concern throughout the whole county on the effects of Brexit in light of the uncertainty surrounding what the final package will look like, due to its border location, and being on the periphery far from centres of government and power. Louth, like other border counties, continues to be exposed to additional difficulties and disadvantages. Existing problems, such as unemployment rates above the national average, fluctuating exchange rates, and difficulties encountered by retail and hospitality sectors, will be exacerbated by Brexit.

An added challenge brought about by Brexit is the challenge faced by cross-border co-operation and cross-border programmes which have been an integral part of community social and economic development for many decades. Most of the key-programmes are EU funded to a lesser or larger degree, and will be threatened in coming years by Brexit and will therefore need to be replaced by similar funding models set up by both the Irish and UK governments.

⁶ <https://www.isme.ie/>

⁷ <https://www.louthcoco.ie/en/>

3.5.DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Derry City and Strabane District Council⁸ and Donegal County Council⁹ commissioned research consisting of a scoping exercise¹⁰ which provided an initial analysis of the challenges and opportunities of Brexit for the North West city region. In their view, Brexit will compound existing challenges such as poor infrastructural links to Belfast and Dublin due to these regions' peripheral location, and this could impact negatively on the economic entity of the North West cross-border region which has benefitted from cross-border collaboration in the areas of education, health, environment and research, and rural development.

This research showed strong consensus amongst the relevant border communities that the free movement of goods, services and people should continue, and concludes with an outline of key strategic initiatives as part of an agreed strategy growth plan which "will not only mitigate the impact of Brexit but correctly position Derry city and the wider north west cross-border city region to face the challenges ahead".

3.6.SPECIAL EUROPEAN UNION PROGRAMMES BODY

The Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB)¹¹ is one of six cross-border bodies set up within the Good Friday Agreement under the overall remit of the North South Ministerial Council¹². As a cross-border body it broadens levels of cooperation between administrations and civil service departments on both sides of the border.

The SEUPB submission provided the Committee with detailed information on the PEACE, and INTERREG EU funding programmes currently being implemented throughout border regions and what they have achieved to date. The body's main concern after Brexit is the threat to EU co-funding and its effect on the viability of existing projects dependant on this funding.

3.7.CO-OPERATION IRELAND

Co-operation Ireland (CI)¹³ was established in 1979 as a peace-building organisation whose main aim is to promote interaction, dialogue, and practical collaboration within Northern Ireland and between Northern Ireland and Ireland. A range of initiatives delivered by CI have been in the areas of socio-economic development and peace-building in the border regions funded in the main from the EU INTERREG and PEACE programmes and have benefitted voluntary sector networks, and developed new community and social services. Other funded projects have contributed to the development of cross-border links at community level, addressing conflict legacies, and fostering social development.

CI states that progress and initiatives in cross-border development will be overshadowed by Brexit and will have a detrimental effect on economic, social, and community development in the border region due in the main to possible new border controls. New controls will impede general travel

⁸ <http://www.derrystrabane.com/>

⁹ <http://www.donegalcoco.ie/>

¹⁰ <https://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/f1f1bbb6-e336-4acf-9fd9-5e1e171fe43f/Initial-Analysis-of-the-Challenges-and-Opportunities-of-Brexit-for-the-North-West-City-Region-150217.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.seupb.eu/Home.aspx>

¹² <https://www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org/>

¹³ <http://www.cooperationireland.org/>

and access to health and other services, in addition to having a detrimental effect on joint-staffing of cross-border initiatives.

CI is also concerned about the effect of Brexit on improved relations between both nationalist and unionist communities but is encouraged by the fact that both parties to the Brexit negotiations have recognised the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland with the aim of avoiding the return of a hard border.

3.8.CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES

CCBS (see also section 3.1 above) is of the view that Brexit 'poses a significant threat to the future of community, social and economic development and cooperation in border counties'. Cross-border and wider cross-jurisdictional (North-South) cooperation on the island of Ireland has been successful in a range of sectors. "One of the most valuable outcomes of the EU cross-border programmes has been the facilitation of multi-level cross-border networks [where] partnership working has effected a real change in culture for civil society organisations".¹⁴

CCBS is concerned however that the full potential of cross-border cooperation may not have been achieved and it refers to a viewpoint expressed by the OECD in 2013 that

"Cross-border flows are below their potential at present in terms of trade, commuting, business networks, access to public procurement, sales of design services, students and tourists, collaboration between research, technology and development (RTD) centres and between these centres and industry".¹⁵

3.9.INTERTRADEIRELAND

InterTradeIreland (II)¹⁶ was set up under the Good Friday Agreement as an all-Ireland trade and business development body to enhance North/South business co-operation, delivering mutual economic benefits to the whole of the island.

In its view, navigating the changing trading relationship between North and South will be the biggest challenge after Brexit. While InterTradeIreland's focus is on advising and supporting businesses in how to deal with the challenges and opportunities from a changing trading relationship, the need to maintain free movement of goods and people, especially in border communities where functional economic areas often transcend the political border, is a key concern that is constantly emerging for this body's stakeholders.

¹⁴ Ruth Taillon, "Cross-Border Cooperation and Peacebuilding in Ireland", The Journal of Cross-border Studies in Ireland 9 (2014), p.97;

available at: <http://crossborder.ie/the-journal-of-cross-border-studies-in-ireland-no-9/>.

¹⁵ OECD, Regions and Innovation: Collaborating across-borders (2013), p.194 and p.196, <http://www.oecd.org/innovation/regions-and-innovation-collaborating-across-borders.htm> [last accessed 15/03/2017].

¹⁶ <http://www.intertradeireland.com/>

4. SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSIONS (DECEMBER 2018)

The following is a brief summary of the presentations made to the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development on the theme 'Supporting Communities and Sustaining Small Rural Business within the Border Region after Brexit' on 18 December 2018.

4.1. CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES

In its submission to the Committee, the Centre for Cross-Border Studies (CCBS)¹⁷ (see 5.1) said it is strongly of the view that Brexit threatens the current benefits of EU funding programmes such as PEACE, INTERREG and LEADER, which enable businesses and communities in the border region to avail of support to engage in mutually beneficial cross-border cooperation initiatives. It is essential therefore that the UK Government's proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund, designed to replace EU Structural Funds, should encompass Northern Ireland's need to engage in cross-border cooperation. As it is currently framed, this is not the case, and it must be borne in mind that Brexit will not alter the fact that the United Kingdom will remain a co-guarantor, along with Ireland, of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which forms the foundation and rationale for the EU funds referred to above.

It added that the UK Government therefore must not shirk responsibility to a non-operational Northern Ireland Assembly or Executive, but must instead develop policies that encourage and fund local authorities and others in Northern Ireland to engage in cross-border cooperation with their counterparts across the border.

In addition, the CBBS also sees opportunities for North-South cooperation in the Government's National Development Plan 2018-2027, in addressing the needs of communities and rural businesses in the border region.

¹⁷ <http://crossborder.ie/>

4.2. NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

The Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)¹⁸, a Northern Ireland cross party political body, seeks to build consensus and to represent all of Northern Ireland's main political parties at local government level in Westminster, Dublin and Brussels.

Brexit is a major concern for Northern Ireland councils as it is Northern Ireland, and the border corridor in particular, which will be most affected. NILGA is therefore working intently to prepare its councils for Brexit and to minimise any negative effects. On the other hand, it remains optimistic about the future of cross-border cooperation following meetings with the European Union's Committee of the Regions¹⁹ and follow-up meetings at home resulting in planning for future collaboration.

NILGA's report of May 2018²⁰ highlights the interconnectedness of the two economies on the island and in particular the links with the Government's National Development Plan 2040. Investment in one jurisdiction will reap benefits for the entire region, whether that be investment in jobs, broadband, education or infrastructure.

4.3. EAST BORDER REGION

East Border Region (EBR)²¹ is a local authority-led cross border organisation, whose mission is to "promote cross border economic development which benefits the people of the region".

Since the introduction of the EU INTERREG Programme in 1990, EBR has drawn down millions of Euro for a host of projects which have benefitted communities and small rural businesses along the border corridor and has significantly contributed to the growth of border business over the past 25 years.

Brexit has highlighted the many challenges which already exist and potential future problems. However small rural businesses are already being affected and this is further compounded by the lack of a Government in Northern Ireland.

While the Government of Ireland has put in place measures to support rural business the same opportunities do not exist for businesses in Northern Ireland. The economy of the border region currently lags behind the economies of both Ireland and Northern Ireland and will be the most detrimentally affected region by Brexit.

Intervention in the form of upgrading infrastructure, providing of ongoing business support measures, placing a stronger focus on relevant skills levels in the region, introducing a Brexit Transition Programme, and continuing EU funding programmes, or alternative funding programmes, is needed to counteract the negative effect of Brexit. In addition, there is a need for new policy, new thinking and the devising of new methods of cooperation and partnership between local authorities and central government in the wake of Brexit.

¹⁸ <https://www.nilga.org/>

¹⁹ https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-committee-regions_en

²⁰ <https://www.nilga.org/news/2018/june/councils-with-more-powers-and-responsibilities-is-good-for-ni>

²¹ <http://www.eastborderregion.com/>

4.4. IRISH CENTRAL BORDER AREA NETWORK

The Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN)²² is the local authority-led partnership for the area known as the Central Border Region.²³ The Partnership was formed in 1995 and works to develop common solutions to area-based challenges. The 25 members of its Management Board are drawn from Council-elected members representing the main political interests in the area.

Brexit represents the single greatest challenge to cross-border cooperation in over 20 years and communities and businesses being impacted. Within this context the most important consideration in ICBAN's view is protecting the hard-won peace which is very much supported by continued direct interventions into promoting cooperation in the region through the delivery of PEACE, INTERREG or LEADER funds. It is crucially important therefore that arrangements between the UK and the EU are maintained, or in the absence of these, are directly replaced by new post-Brexit programmes. Also, while infrastructure supports are critical for the area to ensure the region maintains its competitiveness, the form of support should not be focused on infrastructure alone but provision should also be made for the softer people-to-people and community-based initiatives. Policy and delivery must continue to support the regeneration and revitalisation of border towns and villages in the border area.

²² <http://icban.com/>

²³ Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo

4.5. RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK

Rural Community Network (RCN)²⁴ is a regional voluntary organisation established in 1991 by local community organisations to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty, disadvantage, equality, social exclusion and community development. It consists of approximately 250 member groups across Northern Ireland whose main aims are to empower the voice of rural communities; promote, support and celebrate community development practice in rural communities; actively work towards an equitable and peaceful society; and support rural communities to realise their potential and ambitions.

Many central border communities are on the periphery of both jurisdictions and citizens in this region need to be better connected to opportunity. Many of these communities are still recovering from the legacy of the conflict, and the uncertainties caused by Brexit, has led to fears about how the UK leaving the EU will impact on the daily life of citizens.

RCN expressed its concern in its written submission to the Committee that within the context of Brexit Northern Ireland has barely started discussing what a future policy or programme for rural development post Brexit will look like, and that rural development is very far down the agenda amongst the myriad of other issues affected by Brexit. While the UK Government intends future “rural development” type funding to be distributed through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), agriculture and rural development are devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly leading to Northern Ireland delivering a post Brexit rural development policy and programme that differs significantly from that proposed elsewhere throughout the UK.

RCN is concerned therefore that if any future rural development type programme is incorporated into the UKSPF, it will represent approximately 2% of any notional UKSPF compared to the amounts of funding typically distributed by the EU Structural Funds. Any future “rural development strand” will be relatively easy to cut if budget pressures force a reduction in allocation to the UKSPF. There may be no guarantee that any part of the UKSPF will be ring fenced for rural communities.

²⁴ <http://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org/>

5. SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSIONS (JUNE 2019)

The following is a brief summary of the presentations made to the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development on the theme 'Towards a New Common Chapter Project: Discussion' on 12 June 2019.

5.1. CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES

The Centre for Cross-Border Studies (CCBS)²⁵ was created in 1999 and has as its mission to increase the social, economic and territorial cohesion throughout the island of Ireland through the promotion and improvement of the quality of cross-border cooperation between public, business and civil bodies. This it achieves through research, provision of resources and other tools and supports.

In its written submission to the Committee, the CCBS outlined its two primary public policy imperatives as being the commitment to cross-border and North-South cooperation integral to Strand II of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement²⁶, and the European Union's Cohesion Policy²⁷ with its focus on social, economic and territorial cohesion, and supported by the EU's Territorial Cooperation and Structural Funds programmes. Its work became more focused towards the end of 2018 on Brexit, and the Centre commenced a deeper engagement with relevant political representatives and decision-makers in Ireland, the United Kingdom and the EU in raising its concerns and suggesting potential means of mitigating any adverse effects.

The CCBS updated the committee on the results of the "Towards a New Common Chapter Project" which was established in 2014, which looked to support and inspire grassroots community commitment to cross-border co-operation, North-South co-operation and East-West co-operation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain.²⁸ This project worked towards a bottom-up vision of importance and role of cross-border co-operation within and between these islands while noting the need for community groups to possess the skills and capacity to engage with cross-border initiatives but also to enter dialogue concerning government policies and strategies.

Community groups on both sides of the border have engaged with the Project which resulted in "The New Common Charter",²⁹ an initiative to empower civic society and to drive cross-border North-South and East-West co-operation across these islands.

²⁵ <http://crossborder.ie/>

²⁶ https://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/NIPeaceAgreement.pdf

²⁷ A EU fund directed towards less developed EU member states and regions in order to help them to catch up and to reduce the economic, social and territorial disparities that still exist in the EU: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/basic/basic_2014_en.pdf

²⁸ Following the Good Friday Agreement, the devolved administration in Northern Ireland gave its approval to a section on co-operation with Ireland in the Northern Ireland Structural Funds Plan 2000-2006. The same text was contained in the Irish Government's National Development Plan 2000-2006. This replicated text set out the two Government's priorities for co-operation and was known as the Common Chapter. Within the 2000-2006 period, devolution in Northern Ireland was suspended and following the restoration of the Assembly in 2007, the Common Chapter was not revived.

²⁹ The New Common Charter for Co-operation Within and Between These Islands
<http://crossborder.ie/site2015/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/A-New-Common-Charter-FINAL.pdf> (2019)

5.2.LONGFORD WOMEN'S LINK

Longford Women's Link is a social enterprise founded in 1995. It links women with the resources to make their community safe and promote equality. The organisation identifies and addresses key inequalities that prevent women in Longford achieving their full social / economic potential. They provide services to 900 women and 130 children annually, including services focusing on education, entrepreneurship, community development and domestic violence.

Longford Women's Link have been active members of the Towards a New Common Chapter initiative since 2015 and see it as a key all-island programme of sustained engagement as we move beyond Brexit.

In their submission they stated that working at a grassroots level

"is absolutely critical if we are to see meaning co-operation and community development alongside an empowered civic society across these islands".

5.3.RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK

Rural Community Network (RCN) is a regional voluntary organisation, established by community groups in 1991 to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty, disadvantage and equality. RCN has 250 member groups across Northern Ireland.

They argue that many of the challenges rural communities face are similar. RCN has a long tradition of partnering with like-minded NGOs in Britain, Ireland and further afield. RCN supports the New Common Charter as it provides a framework to encourage co-operation amongst civic society groups on the island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain.

6. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING OUT OF ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

6.1.OVERVIEW

There was widespread consensus amongst all present of the enormous positive impact of the EU INTERREG and PEACE programmes on the border region, which, combined with local authority initiatives across all border counties, has benefitted all communities. Much has been achieved, and can continue to be achieved, by adopting a bottom-up community-led approach and by ensuring a duty of care through new and revised government policies in the extreme case of an EU withdrawal by the United Kingdom Government. It is imperative therefore that these regions continue to prosper and that monies coming from existing programmes, or replacement programmes post-Brexit, filter all the way down to communities along the border and in deprived urban areas in larger cities such as and Belfast and Derry.

The border communities are currently at a double disadvantage with the imminence of Brexit and the non-functioning of the Assembly in Stormont. It is left in a vacuum which threatens the whole infrastructure of the region. The work so far achieved and currently being carried out by all organisations that were present at the Committee hearing was described as having been adversely affected and their future placed in doubt. The vacuum created must be addressed collectively so that the focus is brought back to these areas of concern and to ensure the continuation and strengthening of the connectivity network including roads, rail and broadband.

While the history, tradition and spirit of cross-border co-operation were recognised by all, in some contributors' views, a "sticking plaster" approach had been adopted where in the main, the co-operation had been driven by funding. With the emergence of very clear cross-Border links supported by the regional, spatial and economic strategies being driven by the regional assemblies, the question needs also to be asked as to whether working together at this level, with funding from Governments on both sides of the Border, is sufficient. Or, could there be better complementarity which would address many of the infrastructural issues raised during the discussion? The economic hinterlands of Northern Ireland councils extending across the Border all have shared objectives on economic growth.

One concrete example of working collectively which was provided to the Committee was that of a non-EU funded project with alternative funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust,³⁰ the Community Relations Council³¹ in Northern Ireland and most recently the reconciliation funds from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Dublin. Funds were directed towards a new common chapter project working with community groups from both sides of the Border who came up with their own vision of what they wanted for co-operation, how to go about such co-operation and the kinds of co-operation issues they would like to see addressed. The Committee was

³⁰ Joseph Rowntree Charity Charitable Trust is a Quaker charity supporting those who address the root causes of conflict and injustice <https://www.jrct.org.uk/>

³¹ Community Relations Council: an Arms' Length Body of The Executive Office, a Department of the Northern Ireland Executive, Promoting a peaceful and shared society based on reconciliation and mutual trust. <https://www.community-relations.org.uk/>

informed that the communities were about to link up with community groups in Scotland, England and Wales because they are conscious not just of the North-South element but of the east-west one too. That would also fit in with the Good Friday Agreement (1998). If all parts of the Good Friday Agreement are to be respected in a Brexit scenario, bearing in mind that both the EU and UK Government have said they will protect it, it is not just about the institutions in Northern Ireland but also the relationship between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and the island of Ireland as a whole and Great Britain.

Reference was also made to two consultation responses to the current PEACE and INTERREG programmes, with specific reference to the PEACE programme, where the need to ring-fence at least 15% of that fund for cross-Border co-operation was noted. Concern was expressed that ring-fencing must be provided for part of the future PEACE PLUS programme that is a continuation of the current PEACE programme. Committee members were strongly urged to promote the voices of people in the region, and support them in what they are trying to do with their vision for co-operation, and to help them to pay close attention to what is coming with the future PEACE PLUS programme.

However, close attention needs to be paid to the UK Government's proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the fact that it, as a replacement for EU structural funds, seems to ignore that structural funds finance cross-Border co-operation.

Close monitoring must commence without delay and has to be more strategic and involve the Irish Government, at the highest levels, working in conjunction with Northern Ireland. The UK and Ireland Governments need to acknowledge at the highest levels the serious concerns within the communities, and within those organisations working on their behalf, that notwithstanding all the talk about the border, they will be left to fend for themselves. Such high-level inter-governmental intervention is crucial in ensuring all issues are addressed, including those which were not addressed by the existing programmes under threat.

This would consist of a major change of course requiring a large investment to support new ideas and novel initiatives. Both Governments, therefore, as guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement, share the responsibility to do what it takes to make those critical changes. What is needed is a specific short-term budgeted plan in order to bring about a sustainable prosperity plan for once and for all.

It was proposed that the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development, in the context of the LEADER programme, write to officials in the Department for Rural and Community Development, or even to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK) (DEFRA), in Westminster and ask about their future plans for new rural development programmes. In the absence in Northern Ireland of a parliamentary committee similar to that of this Committee the view was expressed that, as a neighbouring jurisdiction, Ireland had an interest in terms of development co-operation. The rural development programme in Ireland will go through change as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)³² comes under review and it would be a practical step to ask what the plans are for rural development post Brexit. While these requirements are different and

³² <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/agri-foodindustry/euinternationalpolicy/commonagriculturalpolicyCAP/>

bodies and organisations in each jurisdiction will compete with each other, at the end of the day there is a shared common view in terms of promoting cross-order economic development.

The Joint Committee for Rural and Community Development can play its role in using its influence to achieve strategic support for the Border region as outlined above and which must come from Government. Part of the delivery of such a strategy must also include the participation and input provided by local leadership while at the same time acknowledging existing strengths and potentials such as transport and infrastructure connectivity and links between policy makers on either side of the border.

6.2.EU FUNDING PROGRAMMES

Recommendation 1: Continuity of EU Funding

The Committee recommends that the Government seek agreement from the European Union and the United Kingdom for a mechanism to allow Northern Ireland continued access to EU funding programmes of relevance to cross-border co-operation, and in the case of non-agreement, that the Government agree EU replacement co-funding with the UK government to ensure funding for the continuation of ongoing and future cross-border cooperation.

Recommendation 2: Monitoring Developments

The Committee recommends that the Special EU Programmes Body, in particular, and other funding bodies in general, closely monitor developments in EU/UK Brexit negotiations on future relations and implementation of the withdrawal agreement with regard to the impact on such bodies' existing funding programmes, especially those relating to regional development, the arts and the Irish language.

Recommendation 3: Evaluations of Funded Activities

The Committee recommends that funding bodies carry out a series of evaluations on currently funded activities and how they could be affected by Brexit, with special regard to regional development in border areas.

Recommendation 4: Peace V Programme

The Committee recommends that the Government discuss with the European Commission the feasibility of developing a "PEACE V" programme, funded by the EU and UK and Irish Governments, in consultation with civil society organisations and local authorities, which would specifically address the challenges of inter-community conflict and cross-border relationships in the context of uncertainty and instability arising in the post-Brexit context and its effect on regional development.³³

Recommendation 5: Common Travel Area (CTA)

The Committee welcomes the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning the Common Travel Area and associated reciprocal rights and privileges, signed at London on 8 May 2019, which reaffirms the Common Travel Area. The Committee recommends that the Government takes the necessary steps to provide certainty and clarity about reciprocal rights and privileges associated with the memorandum and those responsible for the delivery of relevant services.

³³ <https://drctd.gov.ie/community/peace-iv-2014-2020-programme-for-peace-and-reconciliation/>

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

One of the main concerns of the majority of stakeholders who engaged with the Committee was the threat after Brexit to existing EU funding as part of the ongoing peace process arising out of the Good Friday Agreement. The Centre for Cross-Border Studies, in a briefing paper³⁴, highlighted the significance of this funding to the continued development of cross-border transport and energy infrastructure, both of which facilitate cross-jurisdictional flows. It said that these have “enabled cross-border cooperation to move beyond piecemeal activities lacking a more strategic vision and wider socio-economic impact”.

The Special EU Programmes Body provided further information in its submission on the EU INTERREG and PEACE funding programmes and how they have benefited cross-border communities. The PEACE Programme has benefitted several hundred thousand participants involved in cross-border activities including development of border region SMEs and social economy enterprises; community based organisations leading projects on reconciliation and cultural understanding; and cross-border projects focusing on skills, learning and training. Also as part of a PEACE IV Programme initiative¹⁷, local authorities across Northern Ireland and the border regions of Ireland were invited to develop an action plan for their own areas, which would address three out of the four PEACE IV Programmes core objectives: Children and Young People (Action 2.2), Shared Spaces & Services (Action 3.2) and Building Positive Relations (Action 4.1).

The INTERREG Programme has also benefitted the cross-border population in job creation in areas such as business development, tourism, rural business assistance, and cross-border business clusters, as well as those providing training and re-skilling programmes. Such EU programmes play a major role in fostering clusters and networks that encourage cross-border cooperation between local firms with the potential of benefitting arts and culture projects also.

The current programming strands are for the period 2014-2020 guaranteeing continued European Union assistance to help create a more prosperous and sustainable cross-border region. The amount for 2014 to 2020 was projected to be €3.5 billion, however, the uncertainty around the ability to draw down a proportion of these funds from these same EU programmes post Brexit is an issue of deep concern to the relevant sectors.

The North South Interparliamentary Association (NSIPA), an inter-parliamentary forum created between the Dáil and the Northern Ireland Assembly, shared the same view. In a research paper on Brexit it states that in the long-term, the absence of EU programmes would be of real concern to a range of sectors and, if funding is not found elsewhere, there was a risk of “a return to patchy cross-border cooperation with little strategic impact”³⁵ which could undermine the work of the last twenty years and a key foundation of the peace process.

³⁴ Brexit and UK Irish Relations- Briefing Paper (October 2016)

<http://crossborder.ie/brexit-and-uk-irish-relations-3/>

³⁵ Centre for Cross-Border Studies and Cooperation Ireland, Briefing Paper 3 Link provided above

6.3.REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation 6: New Business Strategies – Post Brexit

The Committee recommends that businesses in border counties immediately draw up strategies to be implemented post Brexit which will protect current cross-border business arrangements.

Recommendation 7: New Communication Strategies

The Committee recommends that local authorities on both sides of the border publish a communications strategy identifying the problems and their implications for the individual and community groups in existing border corridors.

Recommendation 8: Sharing Resources

The Committee recommends the pooling of local/regional bodies' resources where practicable to promote cross-border initiatives which will enhance and strengthen rural development e.g. in tourism, heritage, arts and culture etc.

Regional development is closely linked to socio-economic and cultural development overall and all of the submissions touched on the Brexit effect on all these areas. The Centre for Cross-border Studies expressed the view that Brexit posed a number of headline challenges to the future health of community, social and economic development and cooperation in the border counties. The manner in which the Governments in London, Dublin and Belfast recognise and face these challenges will stand as a litmus test of their respective commitment to cross-border and North-South cooperation, and to Strand II of the Good Friday Agreement.

The Centre for Cross-border Studies expressed concern on the emergence of divergences in border counties as a result of their differing capacity to exploit any opportunities presented by Brexit. This could for example negatively impact on Irish businesses close to the border that following the introduction of a hard border may choose to relocate north of the border for easier market access. Irish businesses may also be affected by companies currently north of the border who may move to Britain for closer access to this market once Brexit determines limited access to the EU market through Ireland.

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

The socio-economic development of border counties is very much dependent on future cooperation and this could be very much under threat by any loss of funding currently derived from the EU's Territorial Cooperation programmes³⁶. According to the Centre:

Without either the UK retaining post-Brexit access to the relevant European Territorial Cooperation programmes (and therefore contributing to the relevant EU budgets), or the UK and Irish Governments ensuring new and sufficient resources are available for the social and economic development of the border region, including local authority and civic society-led cross-border projects, there will be a significant risk to community cohesion and the cross-border and North-South dimensions of the ongoing peace and reconciliation process.

While ISME insisted in its submission that the immediate challenges of Brexit are unknown, it agreed that Britain's decision to leave the European Union questions this ongoing economic interconnectedness and social cohesion in general. ISME made reference to CSO (Central Statistics Office) data on the regional quality of life in Ireland showing social deprivation and unemployment levels being highest in border counties³⁷. In ISME's view, if regional supports from the EU are withdrawn along border counties, economic prospects will be further worsened, and businesses would be very concerned with the adverse effects of the reintroduction of tariffs, a decline in competitiveness, delays in business, and higher administrative costs.

6.4. INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Recommendation 9: New Research- EU Borders

The Committee recommends that research be undertaken on agreements in place affecting other EU regions sharing land borders with non EU States (e.g. Norway, Switzerland) in areas such as joint cross-border programmes concerning regional development.

In spite of the concerns outlined above, InterTradeIreland pointed out in its submission to the Committee that currently a very high number of businesses had no plan in place to deal with the consequences of Brexit. Strategies and mitigation plans ensuring continued cross-border cooperation need to be drawn up without delay and could be informed by examples of arrangements in other jurisdictions. Instruments such as the EU's Framework for Territorial Cooperation³⁸, which supports regional development along external borders and currently involve countries which are candidates or potential candidates for EU Membership (e.g. Serbia, North Macedonia), should be consulted. It is important to note that such instruments also support cooperation with 'third countries' which are neither candidates nor potential candidate states (e.g. Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland).³⁹

³⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/

³⁷ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-rsdgi/regionalsdgsireland2017/int/>

³⁸ Centre for Cross-Border Studies, Briefing Paper 3 p. 7. Link provided above

³⁹ Link to European Commission's overview of regional cooperation across external borders http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/outside-the-eu/

6.5.EMPLOYMENT

Recommendation 10: Educational Qualifications

The Committee recommends that qualifications issued by authorities in each jurisdiction be recognised equally by both jurisdictions following the Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Common Travel Area 2019.

Recommendation 11: Working Time Directive

The Committee recommends that the provision of the EU Working Time Directive⁴⁰ be continued in Northern Ireland after Brexit.

The Centre for Cross-Border Studies (CCBS) estimates that between 23,000 and 30,000 people are cross-border workers⁴¹ and there is no doubt that each one of these cannot but be affected by the issues outlined above. These workers are currently facilitated by the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) which aims to relate different countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework and promoting mobility of workers and learners between countries. Individuals and employers can use the EQF to better understand and compare the qualifications levels of different countries and different education and training systems. Given the regular movement of workers across the border, the loss of the EQF may create problems in having qualifications recognised impacting on both employees and employers. EURES, the European Job Mobility Portal,⁴² provides a cross-EU information, advice and recruitment service.⁴³ It links the various Public Employment Services (PES) in each EU Member State⁴⁴ thus allowing jobseekers to search for employment across the EU.²⁸

It also plays a particular role in cross-border areas, supporting those who work cross-border (or those seeking work) in tackling any administrative, legal or fiscal barriers they may face. The border between Northern Ireland and Ireland is one of twelve EURES cross-border partnerships.⁴⁵ It is unknown what the impact of Brexit will be on the services provided by EURES:

The links between Ireland and the UK in terms of cross-border working is highlighted by a study PWC (Price Waterhouse Coopers) carried out which found that in 2014 Ireland issued 15,000 new Personal Public Service Numbers to UK nationals and the UK issued 17,000 new National Insurance Numbers to Irish nationals.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ EU Working Time Directive <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=706&langId=en&intPageId=205>

⁴¹ Centre for Cross-Border Studies, EU Reference Briefing Paper 4 <http://crossborder.ie/site2015/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CCBS-and-Cooperation-Ireland-EU-Referendum-Briefing-Paper-4.pdf>

⁴² <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/homepage>

⁴³ EURES, What can EURES do for you?, https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/en/what-can-eures-do-for-you-?lang=en&app=0.9.1-build-3&pageCode=about_eures

⁴⁴ In Northern Ireland this is the Jobs and Benefits Offices, in the Republic this is provided by Intreo

⁴⁵ EURES, EURES in cross-border regions, https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/en/eures-in-cross-border-regions?lang=en&app=0.9.1-build-3&pageCode=cross_border#/details/46

⁴⁶ PwC, Brexit: The Implications for Irish Businesses <http://www.pwc.ie/media-centre/assets/publications/2016-pwc-ireland-Brexit-booklet2.pdf>

In addition, the CCBS stated that:⁴⁷

Amongst these cross-border workers are some who are neither UK nor Irish citizens, and are instead citizens of other EU countries, and their situation in a post-Brexit context would be uncertain.

In May 2019, the Government of Ireland and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland signed a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Common Travel Area.⁴⁸ The memorandum specifically outlines the rights of Irish and UK citizens to work, including on a self-employed basis in either jurisdiction and in relation to qualifications, it states:

It is acknowledged that the recognition of qualifications, including professional qualifications is an essential facilitator of the right to work associated with the CTA. The Participants are committed to ensuring that within their respective jurisdictions comprehensive measures continue to be in place to allow for recognition of such qualifications, covering for all relevant professions, in accordance with national laws.

Representatives from ISME referred to the EU's Working Time Directive and the importance of a special economic zone status for Northern Ireland. However, ISME in its presentation impressed upon the Committee the importance from an employment law perspective of Northern Ireland workers being either in or out of the Directive. It stressed that employers in the North cannot have an à la carte approach to what set of employment standards they will follow and it was therefore very important that in service industries, for example, there be a clear understanding about whether the working time directive would continue to apply to workers who could ply their trade on both sides of the Border.

⁴⁷ Centre for Cross-Border Studies, EU Reference Briefing Paper 4
<http://crossborder.ie/site2015/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CCBS-and-Cooperation-Ireland-EU-Referendum-Briefing-Paper-4.pdf>

⁴⁸ Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Common Travel Area 2019
<https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/eu/brexit/brexitandyou/Memorandum-of-Understanding-Ire-version.pdf>

6.6.TOURISM

Recommendation 12: Joint Tourism Initiatives

The Committee recommends that the eleven border area local authorities develop North/South tourism strategies applicable to their specific cross-border regions.

Louth County Council was of the view that while tourism is one of the greatest hopes for economic development in the county, with Brexit there is the danger of a hard border leading into a cul-de-sac instead of part of the Dublin-Belfast corridor. It gave practical examples of the success of some joint tourism initiatives by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council such as the Carlingford to Omeath Greenway which has proved extremely popular with locals and tourists alike with over 53,000 users in 2016 - 25% of which were cyclists.

Another practical example of cross-border investment in tourism came from Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council. Their joint initiative, the North West Strategic Growth Partnership,⁴⁹ is expected to be pivotal in leading a strong forum to outline the key strengths to allow them to achieve the targets for the North West City region to become a resilient economy and a thriving prosperous city region post Brexit.

6.7.COMMUNITY CO-OPERATION

Recommendation 13: Adoption of Common Charter for Co-operation

The Committee recommends that the Common Charter for Co-operation within and between these islands be adopted as a framework to drive North-South and East-West community co-operation from a grassroots level.

Uncertainty about future funding allocation following Brexit, along with the continued suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive has cast doubt on the direction and support for new cross-border community initiatives and co-operative efforts. In their submission to the Committee, the Centre for Cross Border Studies outlined the need for continued support for cross-border grassroots community engagement.⁵⁰ They also noted a lack of an appropriate platform for dialogue to take place between smaller or grassroots community organisations from across these islands.

⁴⁹<http://www.donegalcoco.ie/yourcouncil/communicationsoffice/pressreleases/north%20west%20strategic%20growth%20partnership/>

⁵⁰ Dr Anthony Soares, The Towards a New Common Chapter Project submission, 12 June 2019

Ms Tara Farrell of Longford Women's Link, an organisation which has engaged with grassroots organisations in Northern Ireland, also argued that grassroots engagement was vital to furthering civil dialogue:⁵¹

We have seen with Brexit what happens when civil society is largely excluded from central discussions. Whatever happens with Brexit, we believe that the voices of grassroots women, especially in rural areas, not only need to be heard but are essential in building inclusive and resilient communities.

The Centre for Cross Border Studies recommended the adoption of an initiative known as The New Common Charter for Co-operation Within and Between These Islands,⁵² as a framework to encourage co-operation amongst civic society groups on the island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. The Charter resulted from several years of dialogue between community groups from Northern Ireland and Ireland, and more recently with groups from England, Scotland and Wales. According to the CCBS:

The New Common Charter represents a shared desire to maintain and strengthen relations between communities across these islands, to work together on issues of common concern and to advocate for the provision of the requisite structures and means to co-operate within and between these islands in whatever circumstances may arise.

The value of cross-border knowledge-sharing and networking among community organisations at either side of the border was emphasised by Aidan Campbell, from Rural Community Network who argued that many community organisations are volunteer-based and may not be as networked as organisations that can employ staff. He told the committee that now a more systematic approach is needed in ensuring groups have these networks and know who to contact.

6.8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The North South Interparliamentary Association paper on the impact of Brexit on cross-border activity,⁵³ which formed a background briefing prepared by the Research and Information Service (RaISe) of the Northern Ireland Assembly and of the Library & Research Service of the Houses of the Oireachtas, refers to the Good Friday Agreement and its provision of constitutional guarantees for dual nationality and agreed power-sharing institutions. It further refers to Strand 2 of the Agreement which provides for the North/South Ministerial Council, through which ministers from the Government and the Assembly Executive work to "develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland – including through implementation on an all-island and cross-border basis – on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the Administrations, North and South".⁵⁴

The North South Interparliamentary Assembly states in its paper that Brexit will not affect the status of the Agreement as an international agreement between two states. Since the UK's announcement on Brexit, both the Irish and UK governments, as co-guarantors of the Agreement,

⁵¹ Tara Farrell, The Towards a New Common Chapter Project submission, 12 June 2019

⁵² See pages 168-170 of this report for full text of the New Common Charter

⁵³ <http://crossborder.ie/site2015/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Impact-of-Brexit-on-CrossBorder-Activity.pdf>

⁵⁴ The Agreement, Section 3 (Stand 2),

have officially further committed to abide by its terms.⁵⁵ Some concern has been expressed, however, as to the effect of Brexit on the Agreement's reference to Ireland and the UK as "partners in the EU" within the over-arching enabling framework provided by that body. While this is an acknowledgement of the over-arching framework that the European Union provides for the constitutional relationship between Northern Ireland and Ireland,⁵⁶ the North South Interparliamentary Assembly reminds us, according to the Centre for Cross-Border Studies, that future non EU membership of one of the signatory parties does not of itself undermine the status of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.⁵⁷

In spite of the assurances expressed above concerns remain for Brexit's impact on border counties following on from its impact on structures set up under the Agreement. Two of these, the North/South Ministerial Council⁵⁸ and the British-Irish Council,⁵⁹ will become more important as mechanisms to develop the detailed outworking of policy issues arising and play a crucial role in the progressive strengthening of cross-border relations which is central to the Agreement and to the logic underpinning the peace process.

With regards to other agreements currently in force, the European Convention on Human Rights as a separate regime from the EU will not be affected by Brexit.⁶⁰ On the other hand, it is the case that the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which applies to matters concerning EU law, is unlikely to continue to apply to Northern Ireland post Brexit. While both the UK and Irish Governments have committed themselves to upholding the principles of the Agreement, there is no doubt that Brexit brings change and uncertainty to the relationship.

The North South Interparliamentary Assembly stresses in its paper that any outcome from Brexit on border counties, be they positive or negative, rely heavily on cross-border North/South cooperation pursued through the Agreement's institutions and is central to the political compromise inherent in the Agreement. Reference is also made to part of a publication by Hayward and Wiener⁶¹ where the argument is made that cross-border cooperation was legitimised by the EU providing a de-politicised context in which cross-border cooperation is pursued for mutual economic development rather than as a back-door to unity. Such relations and cooperation, at all levels, constitute the compliments of a peace building process which to date has facilitated contact and cooperation for mutual benefit between individuals and sectors (e.g. business, regional health authorities, local councils and/or communities) and serve to break down stereotypes and promote good relations between communities on both sides of the border and, indeed, within Northern Ireland. One of the main impacts has been a substantial reduction in the negative effect of the border on daily lives, which has reduced its political significance for Northern

⁵⁵ Statements by UK Prime Minister and Irish Taoiseach (extracts), 26 July 2016

⁵⁶ See De Mars, Murray et al (June 2016) 'Policy Paper: Brexit, Northern Ireland and Ireland' Durham University and Newcastle University

⁵⁷ Centre for Cross-Border Studies and Co-operation Ireland, EU Referendum Briefing Paper 1 p. 5

⁵⁸ North South Ministerial Council: established under the Good Friday Agreement to develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland <https://www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org/>

⁵⁹ A council established as part of the Good Friday Agreement comprising representatives from the Irish Government; UK Government; Scottish Government; Northern Ireland Executive; Welsh Government; Isle of Man Government; Government of Jersey and Government of Guernsey <https://www.britishirishcouncil.org/>

⁶⁰ Minister addressing the Joint Committee on the Good Friday Agreement, 27 September 2016

⁶¹ Hayward and Wiener argue that the European Union legitimised cross-border cooperation (Hayward and Wiener, 2008, 'The EU and Border Conflicts' p. 51).

Ireland nationalists. Where the border is invisible, British sovereignty is “no longer seen as having implications for internal power (within Northern Ireland), cultural status, or freedom of movement”.⁶²

The Centre for Cross-Border Studies, in a paper on the EU referendum,⁶³ states that Ireland and the UK’s joint EU membership has enabled the border to become almost invisible, delivering the benefits to peace-building outlined above. While the UK and Irish Governments have both stated that they are against a return to a hard border, the end of both states having common membership of the EU means that there is no certainty that customs and immigration border checks can be avoided. The other option is for cooperation to take place outside of the EU funding programmes under its own legal framework.

The Karlsruhe Agreement (1996)⁶⁴ between France, Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland, for example, supports cross-border cooperation between local and regional authorities and local public institutions in their common areas of competence.⁶⁵ The legal framework could be the substantial partnership which already exists between the Irish and UK government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

Cross-border cooperation in a variety of sectors, including the six areas of cooperation under the Agreement and for the six implementing bodies, has been greatly facilitated by the fact that both jurisdictions are subject to common EU legislation and regulation.

Under the Agreement, the North/South Ministerial Council has a duty to consider the European Union dimension of relevant matters, including the implementation of EU policies and programmes and proposals under consideration in the EU framework. It commits parties to making arrangements to ensure that the views of the Council are taken into account and represented appropriately at relevant EU meetings. While the context and the issues raised may be different, it is possible that the Council would continue to undertake this duty after Brexit.

⁶² Todd Jennifer, 2016 cited above

⁶³ Centre for Cross-Border Studies, EU Referendum Paper 3, 2016, 7. While reciprocal arrangements between the UK and Ireland predate their entry into the EU, Protocol 20 to the EU Treaty formalised this under EU law and, with accession to the Single Market, customs checks were abolished between them.

⁶⁴ <https://www.regbas.ch/files/downloads/Karlsruherabkommen1.pdf>

⁶⁵ Centre for Cross-Border Studies, Paper 3, p. 8. Link provided above

APPENDICES

7. GLOSSARY

BCAB: Border Communities Against Brexit.

BIPA: British-Irish parliamentary Assembly (<http://www.britishirish.org/>)

BRA: The former Border Regional Authority comprising the areas under the jurisdiction of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo county councils (<https://www.nwra.ie/wp-content/uploads/Planning-Guidelines-for-the-Border-Region.pdf>) (Note: The eight regional authorities were replaced by the three regional assemblies in 2014.)

CAP: Common Agricultural Policy, a framework of two complimentary pillars:

- Pillar I: direct payments to farmers and market measures and
- Pillar II rural development measures which include those that are beneficial for the environment and climate change. (ERDF – European Rural Development Fund.)

CCBS: Centre for Cross Border Studies, a research, information and support resource facilitating collaboration and cooperation across borders in Ireland and beyond (<http://crossborder.ie/>)

Cohesion Policy: the policy behind the hundreds of thousands of projects all over Europe that receive funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund (Cohesion Fund applies to EU Member States which have a GDP lower than 90 % of the EU-27 average – Croatia not taken into account) (https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/faq/)

Community Relations Council: an arms' length Body of the Executive Office, a Department of the Northern Ireland Executive, promoting a peaceful and shared society based on reconciliation and mutual trust. (<https://www.community-relations.org.uk/>)

Co-operation Ireland: to promote and encourage interaction, dialogue, and practical collaboration between the peoples of Northern Ireland and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (<https://www.cooperationireland.org/>)

CSO: The Central Statistics Office (CSO) is Ireland's national statistical office its purpose is to impartially collect, analyse and make available statistics about Ireland's people, society and economy.

CTA: Common Travel Area, an arrangement between Ireland and the United Kingdom which enables Irish and UK citizens to travel and reside freely in either jurisdiction without restriction and provides for other associated rights.

DCC: Donegal County Council (<http://www.donegalcoco.ie/>)

DEFRA: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>)

DCSDC: Derry City and Strabane District Council (<http://www.derrystrabane.com/Council/Council-Business>)

DRCD: Department of Rural and Community Development (<https://drcd.gov.ie/>)

EBR: East Border Region, a Local Authority led cross border network. The East Border Region comprises six Local Authorities namely; Newry, Mourne & Down District Council, Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council, and Ards and North Down Borough Council in Northern Ireland and Louth, Monaghan and Meath County Councils in Ireland (<http://www.eastborderregion.com/>)

ECJ: European Court of Justice, officially The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) which interprets EU law to make sure it is applied in the same way in all EU countries, and settles legal disputes between national governments and EU institutions. It can also, in certain circumstances, be used by individuals, companies or organisations to take action against an EU institution, if they feel it has somehow infringed their rights.

EEA: European Economic Area, an agreement extending the EU single market to non EU States which are members of the European Free Trade Association, (<https://www.efta.int/eea>)

EFTA: European Free Trade Association, an intergovernmental organisation which promotes free trade and economic integration between its four members, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland (<https://www.efta.int/>)

EQF: European Qualifications Framework (<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/european-qualifications-framework-egf>)

ERDF: European Rural Development Fund

EU's Territorial Cooperation and Structural Funds:

(https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/factsheets/2016/european-structural-and-investment-funds-country-factsheet-european-territorial-cooperation)

EURES: the European Job Mobility Portal <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/homepage>

FRONTEX: the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the operational arm of the EU in its ongoing response to the challenges at its external borders.

GFA: 1998 Good Friday Agreement

(<https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebsitemedia/ourrolesandpolicies/northernireland/good-friday-agreement.pdf>)

ICBAN: Irish Central Border Area Network, a Local Authority led cross border network. ICBAN comprises eight Member Councils including Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Fermanagh and Omagh; Mid Ulster and the counties of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan and Sligo. Many of these areas share similar geographical, economic, social, administrative and political characteristics. (<http://icban.com/>)

INTERREG: EU inter regional development fund helping regional and local governments develop and deliver policy leading to integrated and sustainable impact for people and place (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/>)

InterTradeIreland: Helping small businesses in Ireland and Northern Ireland explore new cross-border market, development of new products, processes and services to being investor ready (<https://intertradeireland.com/>)

ISME: Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association: Independent business association for Irish small and medium enterprises (<https://isme.ie/>)

Joseph Rowntree Charity Charitable Trust: Quaker charity supporting those who address the root causes of conflict and injustice <https://www.jrct.org.uk/>

LCC: Louth County Council (<https://www.louthcoco.ie/en/>)

JCRCD: Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development

LCDC: Local Community Development Committees

LDS: Local Development Strategy

LECP: Local Economic Community Plans

LEADER: *Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale*: (Links between actions for the development of the rural economy): an EU initiative supporting local led rural development projects (<https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/leader-programme-2014-2020>)

NDP: The National Development Plan 2018 to 2027 sets out the public fiscal investment priorities facilitating the implementation of the National Planning Framework (<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/07e507-national-development-plan-2018-2027/>)

NFP: National Planning Framework, a framework with ten strategic outcomes guiding the future development of Ireland (<http://npf.ie/>)

NILGA: Northern Ireland Local Government Association (<https://www.nilga.org/>)

North West Strategic Growth Partnership: The North West Strategic Growth Partnership is a unique partnership established in 2016 through the North South Ministerial Council that brings together senior Government officials from all Government departments in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to meet with Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council to deliver on the strategic priorities aimed at bringing real and positive change for the North West City Region.

NSIPA: North South Interparliamentary Association (<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/inter-parliamentary-work/northsouth/>)

PEACE IV Programme: An EU cross-border programme designed to support peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

Project Ireland 2040: the Irish Government's long-term overarching strategy to improve and invest in Ireland's infrastructure, and consisting of two main parts:⁶⁶

- the National Development Plan - NDP
- and the National Planning Framework - NPF

RCN: Rural Community Network: a regional voluntary organisation⁶⁷

⁶⁶ <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/09022006-project-ireland-2040/?referrer=/2040>

⁶⁷ <http://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org/>

RDP: The 'Irish National Rural Development Programme Ireland 2014 – 2020' is operated in the main by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and forms part of the EU's Common Agricultural policy. This includes LEADER which is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Regional Authorities: Ireland has three regional authorities as per Local Government Act 1991:

- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly⁶⁸
- Northern and Western Regional Assembly⁶⁹
- Southern Regional Assembly⁷⁰

SAC: Special Area of Conservation. These are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level.

SEUPB: Special European Union Programmes Body:⁷¹ a cross-border body in the United Kingdom and Ireland which co-ordinates projects funded by the European Union and implemented in Northern Ireland and adjacent regions: the Border region of Ireland, and Western Scotland

UKSPF: UK Shared Prosperity Fund:⁷² Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) when the UK leaves the European Union

⁶⁸ <https://emra.ie/>

⁶⁹ <https://www.nwra.ie/>

⁷⁰ <https://www.southernassembly.ie/>

⁷¹ <https://www.seupb.eu/>

⁷² https://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Locality_EU-Replacement-Fund_Future-Places_FINAL.pdf

8. INSTITUTIONS AND AGREEMENTS

8.1. INSTITUTIONS – GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

The Belfast Agreement (also known as the Good Friday Agreement, because it was reached on Good Friday, 10 April 1998) was a major initiative of the peace process leading to the current devolved system of government in Northern Ireland. The Agreement led to the creation of the following institutions.

8.1.1. THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

The Assembly, which sits in Stormont, Belfast, is a unicameral democratically elected body with 90 members elected under the single transferable vote form of proportional representation using the Gregory Method. The Assembly has legislative powers and is also responsible for electing the Northern Ireland Executive. It has authority to legislate in a field of competences known as "transferred matters", matters which include any competence not explicitly retained by the Parliament at Westminster. Powers reserved by Westminster are divided into "excepted matters", which it retains indefinitely, and "reserved matters", which may be transferred to the competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly at a future date.

8.1.2. NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE

The Executive is the administrative branch of the Assembly (above) consisting of the First and Deputy First Minister, and other ministers with various portfolios and remits. It takes decisions on significant issues and matters which cut across the responsibility of two or more Ministers. It also agrees proposals put forward by Ministers for new legislation in the form of 'Executive Bills' for consideration by the Assembly. It is also responsible for drawing up a programme for government and an agreed budget for approval by the Assembly.

8.1.3. NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

The Council co-ordinates activity and exercises certain governmental powers across the whole island of Ireland in the form of meetings between ministers north and south.

It meets in both plenary and sectoral format and in Northern Ireland is led by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and in Ireland by the Taoiseach and Tánaiste. The Council is supported by a standing joint secretariat, consisting of members of the civil services of both Northern Ireland and Ireland. It has various areas of cooperation which are either shared through all-Ireland implementation bodies⁷³ or implemented separately in each jurisdiction.

⁷³ Waterways Ireland, Food Safety promotion Board, Special European Union Programmes Body, The North/South Language Body, IntertradeIreland, and Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission.

8.1.4. NORTH/SOUTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

The Association is the forum for members of the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly to come together to deal with various topics of the day. Following an agreement by working groups of both the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly on 4 July 2012, the inaugural plenary session of the North South Inter-Parliamentary Association was held in the Seanad Chamber on 12 October 2012. The most recent plenary session of the North South Inter-Parliamentary Association took place on 2 December 2016 in Belfast.

8.1.5. NORTH/SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

This independent consultative forum appointed by the Government of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive brings social partners and other members with expertise in social, cultural, economic and other issues together and being representative of civil society.

8.1.6. BRITISH - IRISH INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE

The conference is an organisation set up by the governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom and is chaired by the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Devolved matters revert to the Conference on suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

8.1.7. BRITISH - IRISH COUNCIL

The Council's membership is made up of the Governments of Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. It also includes the governments of the Crown dependencies, Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man. Its standing secretariat is in Edinburgh, Scotland and it provides support to the Council in delivering on its main aim in promoting the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands.

8.2. BRITISH-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

The British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly ⁷⁴ was established as the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body in 1990 as a link between the Houses of Parliament and the Houses of the Oireachtas. The first plenary session took place in London under the inaugural Co-Chairs, Peter Temple-Morris MP and James Tunney TD.

In 2001 membership was enlarged to include the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the Northern Ireland Assembly, the High Court of Tynwald, and the States of Guernsey and Jersey. In 2008, the name British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly was adopted to reflect a new era of relations between Britain and Ireland.

8.3. COMMON TRAVEL AREA

The Common Travel Area (CTA) is an arrangement between Ireland and the United Kingdom which enables Irish and UK citizens to travel and reside freely in either jurisdiction without restriction and provides for other associated rights.

The Common Travel Area predates membership of the EU by both Ireland and the UK. It is recognised by the Treaty of Amsterdam but is independent of any EU agreements, and is therefore not affected by either Ireland or the UK not being part of the EU.

The arrangement confers rights to Irish and UK citizens to live, travel, work and study within Ireland, England, Wales Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man.

In May 2019 the UK and Irish governments signed a memorandum of understanding reaffirming that rights offered by the Common Travel Area (CTA) will continue after the United Kingdom leaves the European Union.

The Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Common Travel Area 2019⁷⁵ is intended to copper-fasten the free movement of people between Ireland and the United Kingdom. It provides rights and entitlements such as the free movement of Irish and British citizens, the right to reside, the right to work, health care access as well as social protection rights, the right to access social housing and education as well as voting rights in local and parliamentary elections.

Through the Memorandum of Understanding, both Governments committed to undertaking all the work necessary, including through legislative provision, to ensure that the agreed CTA rights and privileges are protected. A group of senior officials from both jurisdictions will meet at least once a year to oversee the implementation of the agreement.

Neither Irish citizens in the UK nor British citizens in Ireland are required to take any action to protect their status and rights associated with the Common Travel Area.

⁷⁴ <http://www.britishirish.org/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/eu/brexit/brexitandyou/Memorandum-of-Understanding-Ire-version.pdf>

8.4. WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT

The EU/UK Withdrawal Agreement is an agreement between both parties to ensure an orderly UK exit from the European Union. The UK parliament has yet to ratify the agreement according to its own constitutional requirements. The main themes of the agreement include: citizens' rights, separation, transition, financial settlement, and protocols related to Northern Ireland, Cyprus⁷⁶, and Gibraltar.

8.5. POLITICAL DECLARATION – FUTURE RELATIONSHIP

The UK and EU have published a Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom. It sits alongside the draft text of the Withdrawal Agreement.

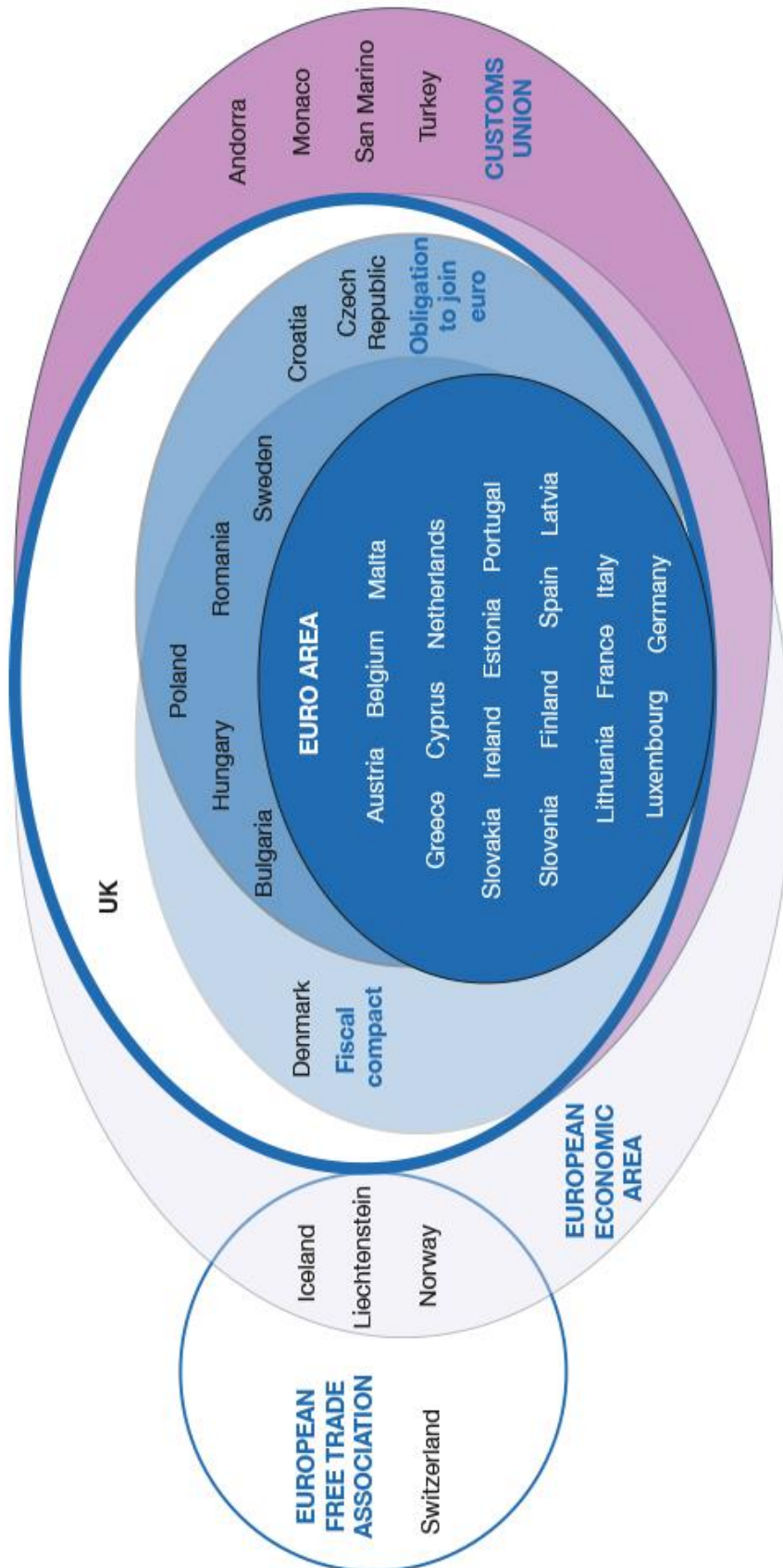
8.6. WITHDRAWAL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION (CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) ACT 2019

The 'Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019'⁷⁷ is an Act of the Oireachtas made of 15 parts in preparation for a disorderly Brexit. This is a special law intended to mitigate the worst effects of a no-deal scenario and was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas in March 2019.

⁷⁶ The Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia in Cyprus, to the extent necessary to ensure the implementation of the arrangements set out in the Protocol on the Sovereign Base Areas of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Cyprus annexed to the Act concerning the conditions of accession of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Malta, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovak Republic to the European Union
(See Withdrawal Agreement Article 3 Territorial scope, page 11, section D:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/759019/25_November_Agreement_on_the_withdrawal_of_the_United_Kingdom_of_Great_Britain_and_Northern_Ireland_from_the_European_Union_and_the_European_Atomic_Energy_Community.pdf)

⁷⁷ Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019
<https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/act/2019/8/eng/enacted/a0819.pdf>

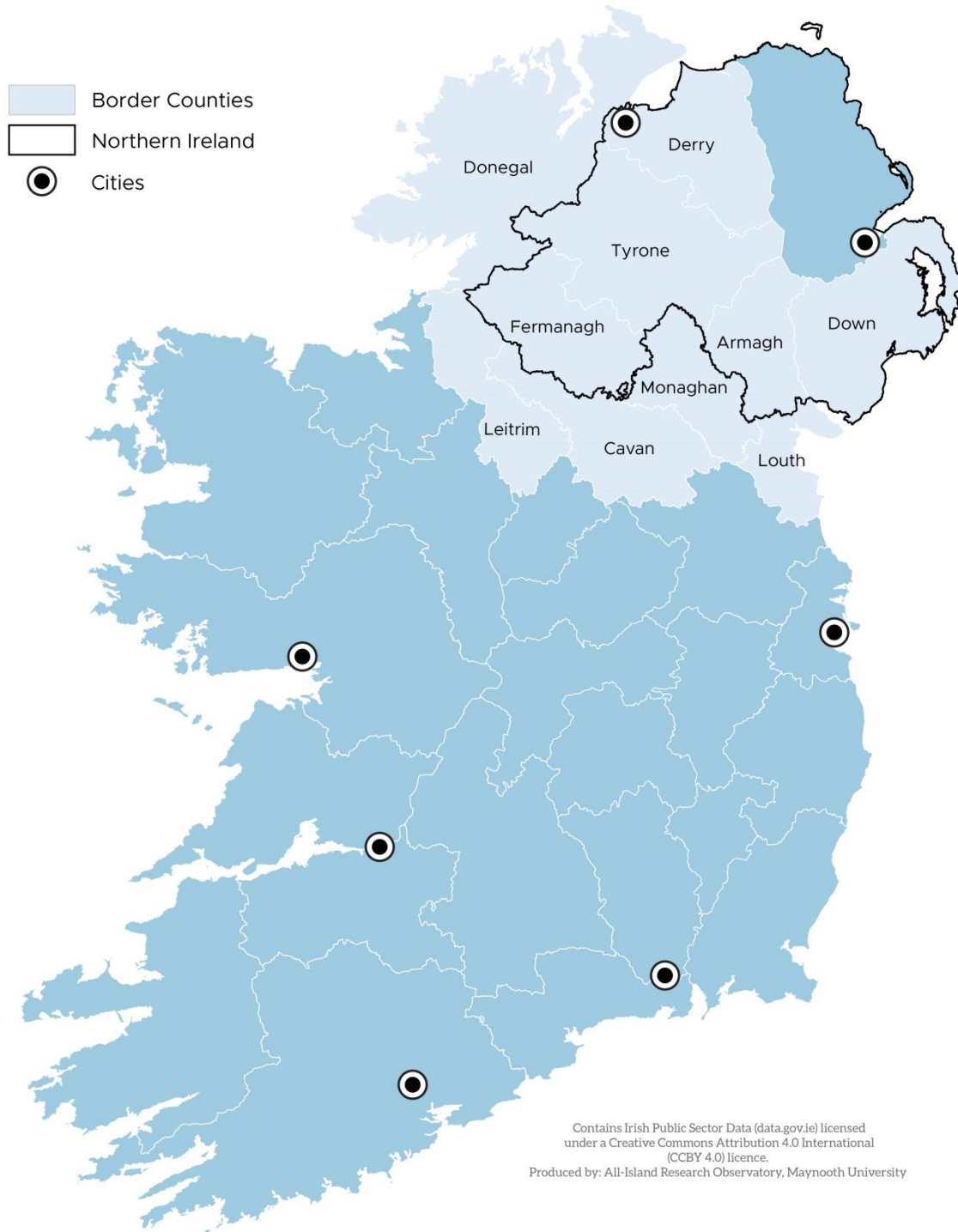
9. EU MEMBERSHIP GROUPINGS⁷⁸



⁷⁸ Source: HM Treasury, [EU referendum: HM Treasury analysis: the long-term economic impact of EU membership and the alternatives](#), p.29.

10. MAP OF THE HISTORICAL BORDER COUNTIES

The Border Counties of Ireland



OPENING STATEMENTS AND SUBMISSIONS

11. BORDER COMMUNITIES AGAINST BREXIT, OPENING STATEMENT, MARCH 2017

**Meeting of Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional,
Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs**

Irish Network / Border Communities Against Brexit (BCAB)

29 March 2017

Thank you Chair for your kind invitation and the opportunity to address this committee.

As many of you know, Border Communities Against Brexit, came about because of real concerns that the voices of those of us in the border region are not being listened to when it comes to the implications of Brexit.

We are a broad, cross community and non-political group. We invite anyone who shares our concerns to join with us in building an effective campaign.

We have come together to ensure that the North's democratically expressed wish by 56% of its people is to remain within the EU is respected.

Two Members will meet from Border Communities Against Brexit group.

John Sheridan

Runs a farm on the very south western corner of Fermanagh, most of the farm is located in the International Geo Park, Marble Arch which is jointly managed by Fermanagh/Omagh and Cavan District Councils and there is more as it runs up to the border between the north and south of Ireland. He feels that there is no such thing as a soft border; that any level of borderisation is a hard, border by stealth, there by putting our fragile Peace Process at risk. At risk also are the markets for beef and lamb. The land is all in a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and is involved in the primary production of beef and lamb. Concern also for the loss of funding to our schools and colleges, our European health cards and Free Sky's Agreement and a creation of an us and them factor throughout Europe. All this will ruin rural communities, harm our heritage and through border communities against Brexit calls for the Good Friday Agreement to be properly addressed and implemented. He is convinced that we have right for special designated status for the economy of the island of Ireland.

JJ O'Hara, Leitrim Tourism Network

"Buyers are asking straight out if the Troubles are coming back"

JJ O'Hara is involved in tourism and technology businesses on several fronts. He operates a large, 12-bedroom B&B overlooking Lough Gill and Parkes Castle just outside Dromahair, Co. Leitrim. He also runs Irish Life Tours www.irishlifetours.com which takes groups large and small on trips around Ireland and Scotland. And he is a driving force behind the Leitrim Tourism Network. He specialises in the US and Italian markets and the intelligence he is picking up in both is not exactly reassuring.

"People are asking us about safety. Buyers are asking straight out if the Troubles are coming back. All they hear is that there is going to be a border again, and they remember what they heard about the same border 20 or 30 years ago."

This type of intelligence cannot be ignored, not even after our best ever year for tourism. In the North the sector was up 26% after three good years, and Leitrim saw a 14% increase.

"We are well above the national average and in the Network we are working on a 15-year plan to divert people off the Wild Atlantic Way and in towards Leitrim. In fact, there are absolutely crucial cross-border elements in the strategy because much of it is based on the Marble Arch Global Geopark which takes in a substantial part of Fermanagh and includes the Glencar Waterfall on this side. There's a butterfly-shaped tourist route around it and we have developed a Wild Atlantic butterfly marketing campaign. We are developing the Technology in Tourism concept at both ends of the Geopark."

Hard border outcomes could put all that at risk, but the implications go far wider.

"At the local level we have a boardwalk over the Cuilcagh Mountains which runs right across the border –just imagine having to close it. But there is a much bigger picture and bigger things at stake.

We have record visitor numbers north and south delivered by global marketing by Tourism Ireland. It is a north-south cooperation body established under the Good Friday Agreement and nobody is telling us what is going to happen to it. It could be in the firing line in two years' time when the UK actually leaves the EU. There's a minimum two-year delivery timescale on almost anything in tourism product. So who will fund it? We need to know now, not in two years' time. We should have learned from the recession that continuity in marketing is absolutely vital."

We want to ensure that the views of local communities are heard when big decisions affecting our futures are taken in London, Dublin and Brussels.

The prospect of a new EU frontier, stretching from Dundalk to Derry some 300 miles, is not acceptable to those of us living and working in border areas, North or South.

Our DAY OF ACTION in October and again in February was a huge success, and today we are protesting at Stormont and Leinster House against article 50 being triggered without the British Prime Minister outlining a position for the North and Border Communities.

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

We are gathering a huge ground swell of public support with thousands attending our co-ordinated rallies.

It also demonstrates to everyone how unworkable a hard border would be.

We have met the Ministers at the North South Ministerial Council, attended the All Ireland Civil Dialogue in Kilmainham, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all political parties and the office of the Taoisigh, for their support.

If Brexit proceeds under the current constitutional arrangements, the border dividing Ireland will become an external border of the EU, possibly classified by the EU as a Third Country.

There is no reassurance for us in hearing both the British and Irish Governments state publicly that they do not wish to see the introduction of border controls and customs posts, and the closure of hundreds of Border roads.

This may not be up to them alone to determine.

Like me, you probably remember what it was like when there were customs post here in the past.

We remember the time of lengthy delays and traffic backlogs crossing the border. We were recently told that in excess of 2 million vehicles cross the border each month, with over 30,000 cross border workers each day.

Every other external border of the EU has physical and economic controls. Why should we believe that the border dividing Ireland would be any different?

The current arrangements for Europe managing its external border on the Eastern part of Europe is the responsibility of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

Frontex supports co-ordinates and develops European border management in line with the Treaties including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU as well as other international obligations.

Frontex seeks to ensure the coordination of the actions of the Member States in the implementation of measures, thereby contributing to an efficient, high and uniform level of control on persons and of surveillance of the external borders of the Member States.

All small roads are closed and people are forced through large designated checkpoints.

We have approximately 277 border roads, in the past there were approximately 17 official crossings.

Frontex state that the issue of migration is there largest issue, but also is the issue of smuggling of excise goods, stolen vehicles and human trafficking.

Unfortunately we know too well of the damaging effect of smuggling and the rise of criminality in the border area.

On our recent visit to Brussels it became very clear to us, that our border will throw up many problems, it is a very complex issue, which cannot be easily sorted out.

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

A frictionless border or a soft border is a nonsense, because all it takes is a series of serious infringements of that border for Europe to decide that a Hard Border must be put in place; such as the potential for GMO's or beef coming into the UK from countries who do not have the same welfare or steroid rules as the EU does.

Therefore a soft border is a Hard Border by stealth.

Added to that Britain with many different tariffs on excise goods, such as cigarettes and fuel and the forced closure of hundreds of border roads we can therefore see a huge rise in resentment that this new physical border would create.

From the very damaging economic effect on business, the 30,000 workers who cross the border daily, the tens of thousands who visit family and friends, and the tens of thousands who for work or sporting fixtures, or those who choose to holiday and travel North and South on a regular basis a Hard Border would be a disaster.

But on a broader political issue a Hard Border is much, much more potentially disastrous.

Northern Nationalism has embraced the Peace Process which has had massive European support.

The financial assistance to thousands of community groups in Peace building, the fantastic support in developing the Economy such as Motor Ways, Train links, and Telecommunications and supporting business to set up and create jobs, has utterly transformed the North of this Island in the past 25 years.

No one has been left out or excluded.

The total financial assistance from the EU Co Funded Programmes to the North from 2014 –2020 is €3.5 billion, while the period from 2007 –2013 was €3.4 billion.

£2.3 billion pounds of EU financial support to the rural community and farmers in the North of Ireland (from 2014 –2020) is another example of how enormous the EU assistance to the North is.

Further detail on the various EU funded programmes can be found here <http://www.eurolink-eu.net/eu-funding-2/> .

The total funding for the North from 2014 / 2020 is close to €4 Billion.

The economic damage done by the loss of these funds will be huge, a British administration who has been against CAP for very many years will not assist farmers and rural communities in the North.

The EU imposes dozens of different duties on the import of beef; these are the percentage rates charged on selected cuts. For example, if after a Brexit on WTO terms a French restaurant sought to buy £100 worth of British rump steak, it would have to pay an additional £62.20 in customs duties.

Beef Cut	Import Duty Rates
Whole carcass Carcasses or half-carcasses of bovine animals, fresh or chilled	36.1%
Forequarters Unseparated or separated forequarters of bovine animals, with bone in, fresh or chilled	47.2%
Chuck and brisket Frozen bovine boneless crop, chuck and blade and brisket cuts	68.5%
Tongue	0%
Hindquarters Unseparated or separated hindquarters of bovine animals, with bone in, fresh or chilled	64.5%
Rump Fresh or chilled bovine meat, boneless	62.2%
T-bone Fresh or chilled bovine cuts, with bone in	77.4%
Skirt Fresh or chilled edible bovine thick and thin skirt (excl. for manufacture of pharmaceutical products)	83.8%

Source: The Guardian⁷⁹.

30% of raw milk produced in the north is processed in the south every day; a big percentage of this milk is processed into Baby formula.

Firstly a big question mark hangs over whether any of this milk will be able to be processed in the south and the Chinese will not allow formula to contain milk from outside the EU. If this happens it will cause a major shock to the dairy industry in the North.

In 2014, over 45% of lambs from the north (370k) were sold to the south, which is over 7,000 a week, the most of these go on for sale in France, this market access is crucial for sheep farming in the North, it faces devastation.

⁷⁹ The Guardian 20 February 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/feb/20/no-deal-brexit-would-mean-6bn-in-extra-costs-for-uk-exporters>

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

The UK is Ireland's largest trading partner, with more than €1.2 billion of goods and services traded between us every week, directly supporting 400,000 jobs on both islands and even more among suppliers and surrounding communities.

Irish Nationalism has been very confident in its Irish-ness and has not felt excluded or undermined.

The Good Friday Agreement has given all an equal identity whether or not you wish to belong to the Unionist Tradition or the Irish one, and sets out very clearly the safe guards in the EU Charter of Human Rights which is enshrined in the GFA.

What concerns me greatly is the effect of a hard border on the impression of Irish identity in the North and particularly the Border areas.

Currently it is very difficult to find the actual border, with free travel, free movement of goods and services, and to just freely go where you want whenever you want, that could be taken away.

It is also very important that no border exists to those who see themselves living in Ireland.

Add to that the fact that 56% of the North voted to Remain in the EU, the North's population is being dragged out against our will. 441,000 voted to remain.

Their opinion is NOT being respected.

They are being totally disenfranchised.

It could be argued that many will see this as a Re - Partition of Ireland, with hard physical infrastructure.

There is at least a generation who do not remember the troubles, and at least two generations who do not remember any physical border.

Therefore the potential exists for creating a divided Ireland, giving way to alienation of border communities, the growth of resentment and frustration as they will perceive that their Irish-ness has been greatly diminished or taken away.

We need European Prime ministers, Governments and Commissioners to hear a very clear and strong message of the necessity for the North to stay within the European Union, does the committee know if the Irish Government has drawn up a framework so that can occur.

The Irish Government are pivotal in articulating the rights and the needs of Border Communities and the North's population?

However possibly the biggest question for this committee is what effect does restricting people's movements, damaging an entire community economically, disenfranchising an entire community politically, cause people to feel resentment and alienation, to strip away people's hard won rights and safeguards, to put in place an incentive to smuggle and enter criminality?

While on the fringes we have groups who are ready and willing to use people's emotions and difficult economic conditions to create division seek a return to our past?

An extract from Irish Border Lands.com on Crossing the Border.

I have an – a memory, very distinct memory, of going to hire – in real hard times, trying to, to buy in a couple of trees from somebody that was felling them, and this was going to keep, eh, reduce the fuel bill and keep the family warmer for the winter, but having to hire em, a chainsaw, which I didn't have, from a fella named Maurice Allen at Kanturk, which is a post office, which basically if you look at it, about two miles from Clones on the Newtownbutler road. And I had to go through a Gard –a Garda checkpoint at the Creighton corner, which is on the, on the Newtownbutler road in Clones. I had to go through a customs post then, on the southern side. Then I had to go through a joint Garda and army checkpoint just before I crossed the border, to be met by a foot patrol of the British army, who were out on manoeuvres.

Then I had to go through an RUC checkpoint less than half a mile up the road, to go through the permanent army British checkpoint at Kanturk... that was six stops to go to a fella to hire a chainsaw, and I had to go through the six of them on the way back in. and those were the kind of things that in the end of it all, scraped away at people's tolerance.
Donald McDonald Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

As a group, Border Communities against Brexit, we believe Brexit will have a very negative impact for business and community development.

Here is a project, Irish.Network, that one of our members is developing on a national and international basis.

Irish.Network, which has the following vision:

1. Rural Regeneration
2. Business Communication
3. Community Development
4. Agricultural Support
5. Social Energising
6. International Outreach

12. IRISH SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES ASSOCIATION, OPENING STATEMENT, MARCH 2017

Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

**“The future of community, social and economic development
and cooperation in border counties”**

The Irish Small Medium Enterprises Association (ISME)

ISME thanks the Committee for this invitation to address the members.

12.1. BACKGROUND

The biggest challenge for businesses, social and community groups is management of the unknown: what will Brexit will look like? We will only start to see clarity emerge on this as Prime Minister May triggers Article 50.

EU membership has rebalanced bilateral relations between Ireland and the United Kingdom through its various support programmes. Common membership of the EU has solidified the peace process, improved cross community relations, and provided economic prosperity over the last two decades.

Since UK and Irish accession to the Union, both countries have enjoyed economic growth, prosperity and better social cohesion via access to the single market and EU funding programmes.

Britain’s decision to leave the European Union questions this continued economic interconnectedness and social cohesion. The social, political and economic fabric between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland will be altered; most particularly through the uncertainty businesses, civic society and social groups along the border counties face.

12.2. COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The European Union has invested heavily in Northern Ireland. EU territorial cooperation programmes, which have been in existence since 1990, provide support for cross-community cooperation and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and in border counties. Since 1995 Europe has paid €1.3 billion euro into the region via the PEACE⁸⁰ and Interreg⁸¹ programmes. An example of the social cohesion work is the 'Erne East Sports Partnership Project'⁸².

Ireland is Northern Ireland's single largest export market. The latest data shows 37 per cent (£3.6 billion) of Northern Ireland's goods and services exports go to Ireland.

Cross-Border trade in manufacturing alone is worth €3.1 billion (€1.75 billion North to South and €1.3 billion South to North). If the UK removes itself from the Customs Union, this sector will be one of the worst impacted.

In our latest Trends Survey, 8 out of 12 confidence indicators showed a decline; business expectations, confidence, profitability, future employment and sales all experienced declines as a result of the uncertainty of Brexit.

In a post-Brexit world, questions arise as to the future of this funding. Will the British and Irish Governments provide it in lieu of EU funding?

The most recent CSO data on regional quality of life in Ireland shows social deprivation and unemployment levels are highest in border counties. If regional supports from the EU are pulled along border counties, economic prospects will be further worsened⁸³

12.3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Maintenance of a frictionless and seamless border is vital for businesses in border counties. Spot checks on people travelling across the border, restrictions upon the goods that can be taken across the border, duties to declare goods going across the border, the need for work permits, electronic monitoring of border crossings, the presence of some physical checkpoints would all significantly damage economic prospects in the region.

Businesses are concerned about the reintroduction of tariffs, a decline in competitiveness, delays in business, and administrative costs.

The slide in the value of Sterling against the Euro since 2015 has made cross-border shopping more attractive again. The share of Irish-registered cars in border shopping centres has risen from 33% in Q1 2016 to 43% in Q2, even before the result of the Brexit referendum was known. With the subsequent 10-12 per cent rise in the value of the Euro against Sterling, Q3 2016 has seen a further increase to 56% in flows of cross-border shoppers⁸⁴

⁸⁰http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_IV_Programme_Guidance/PIV_ProgrammeFactsheet.sflb.ashx

⁸¹http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/2014-2020/united-kingdom/2014tc16rfcb047

⁸²<https://www.coady.ie/project-clones-erne-east-sports-centre-the-peace-link.php>

⁸³<http://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2013pressreleases/pressreleaseregionalqualityoflifeinireland2013/>

⁸⁴<http://www.intertradeireland.com/researchandpublications/trade-statistics/cross-border-shopping/>

13. LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL, OPENING STATEMENT, APRIL 2017

Comhairle Contae Lu

Louth County Council

06 April 2017

Statement of Louth County Council to the Joint Oireachtas Committee

on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs on

"The future of community, social and economic development

and co-operation in border counties."

13.1. INTRODUCTION

Louth County Council greatly welcomes this opportunity to address you committee on the future of community, social and economic development and co-operation in the Border Counties. Communities throughout Ireland have faced difficult times over the past decade or so due to the prolonged economic crisis. Reductions in both central and local government support and funding, coupled with large gaps between vital programmes such as INTERREG, LEADER and PEACE, have meant that it is been very difficult indeed to either maintain or develop community infrastructure or facilities. The recent commencement of these programmes has been a tremendous boost for the people of County Louth.

People in Border Areas which are, by their nature, so often on the periphery and far from centres of government and power, have always considered that they suffer additional difficulty and disadvantage. The long recession has certainly exacerbated this problem and towns like Dundalk continue to suffer unemployment rates above the national average. The retail and hospitality sectors have been badly hit and our proximity to the Border, coupled with the ever-present challenge of fluctuating currency exchange rates, makes recovery that bit harder.

The decision of Britain to leave the European Union is an added challenge and at the present time, when so little is known with any certainty about what the final Brexit package might look like, there is widespread concern throughout the county in all sectors about the future. Cross Border co-operation and cross border programmes have been an integral part of community social and economic development in this area for many decades, including right throughout the Troubles.

Most of the key programmes, such as INTERREG and PEACE, on which we rely so much, are at least partly funded by the European Union.

While a reasonable degree of certainty has been brought to the current round of funding, a future without these programmes is almost unthinkable and if they cannot continue in their present form, then similar replacement programmes must be developed and put in place by both Governments. Our own Council's close relationships with Councils in Northern Ireland date back to the early

1970s and we would not like to see this valuable cooperation damaged or diminished, especially as a result of Brexit.

I have set out below a brief description of some areas which may be of interest to the Committee members:

13.2. LOUTH LOCAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITY PLAN

The matter of Community Development has been largely legislated for in recent times through aspects of the Local Government Act, 2014 which provided the statutory basis for both Local Economic Community Plans (LECP) and associated Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) and the Public Participation Network (PPN). The LECP in particular has provided specific goals and actions to underpin the principal of encouraging Community Development. Louth County Council are now moving forward and are putting a mechanism in place that will monitor the implementation of these actions both by ourselves and by a wide range of other bodies and agencies who are also responsible for delivery and implementation of actions under the Plan.

The Community Goals of the Louth LECP are:

- Strong, safe and flourishing communities
- Access to education
- Prosperous, inclusive communities and places
- Health and wellbeing
- Nurturing children and young people
- An age-friendly society
- Entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise
- A valued environment

The Economic Goals of the Plan also play a critical role in supporting our communities with jobs and investment. These goals are:

- Foreign Direct Investment
- Sustainable Development
- Education & Training
- Future focused Innovation
- Indigenous Industry
- Tourism and Heritage
- Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
- Broadband Connectivity and Transport

13.3. TOWN AND VILLAGE RENEWAL SCHEME

The above scheme which was reintroduced by Government in 2016 provided a most welcome and needed opportunity for groups to develop small capital works that would provide both a community and economic benefit to their area. Louth County Council relied on the existing supported Tidy Towns Network of 22 groups (Louth Tidy Towns Together) to promote and develop proposals. Although the timeframe was extremely short, a number of projects of merit were delivered but more importantly others have been prepared for the 2017 scheme, to which we are also looking forward. We continue to work very closely with Louth Tidy Towns Together and many of the projects proposed will be part of each town or village's National Tidy Towns Plan. Clearly the ongoing enhancement and improvement of towns and villages and their facilities is of huge benefit in improving the quality of life of residents. In addition, these works also make the places more attractive from a tourism and investment point of view and obviously that is of critical importance as we continue to recover from the very long recession.

13.4. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - LEADER

As I mentioned above, there has been a long gap since the end of the last LEADER Programme. The Louth Rural Development Programme developed through LEADER which is detailed in the Local Development Strategy (LDS) will provide an even more sustainable opportunity for community and social development, which will address identified local target groups. The same supported communities have been active in contributing to the development of the LDS which is now grounded in a funding model. It should be noted again that the LDS is specifically compatible and complementary to the LECP actions. In County Louth the LAG is Louth LCDC and our delivery partner is Louth Leader Partnership who have long experience in delivering LEADER Programmes since the 1990s. The programme has just recently opened a number of calls.

13.5. INTERREG PROGRAMME

The European Union's INTERREG Programme has also been a crucial source of funding for an astonishing variety of projects in the Border Region of Ireland and Northern Ireland for the past 25 years. Louth County Council is part of a local authority-led cross border organisation which was established in 1976 to facilitate and promote cross border economic development. The organisation is the key mechanism through which local authorities in the East Border area have access to EU funding such as INTERREG. Just to give a flavour of the financial impact of the programme in the region:

13.6. INTERREG IIIA (2000-2006)

East Border Region was the Implementing Agent and supported projects to the value of **€25 million**.

13.7. INTERREG IVA (2007-2013)

East Border Region was lead Partner on projects valued at **€24million**.

Under the INTERREG V Programme Louth County Council have already been awarded very significant funding for a greenway extension project about which there are further details below.

13.8. PEACE PROGRAMME

With regard to the border community, Louth County Council is a beneficiary of the PEACE Programme and again a strategy was developed to address the particular needs of border communities. An initial funding allocation has been made against these themes and again a similar process of addressing target groups is planned. A peace partnership committee has been established representing all target groups as outlined in the programme. This committee reports via the LCDC ensuring an integrated approach to this element of specific community development. The PEACE Programme has been ongoing since the mid-1990s and over the years very many worthwhile projects of both a capital infrastructure and a soft support nature have been undertaken. An example of the latter would be the Challenge of Change project which dealt with the integration of new communities from Africa and Eastern Europe in particular.

13.9. TIDY TOWNS & ESTATES AND THE PRIDE OF PLACE COMPETITION

Louth County Council has a very long history of encouraging communities to assist themselves and, to this end, we have been providing grant assistance to both Tidy Towns Groups and Residents Associations to develop and support project that better the general community. This support has been successful over many years and helps to provide and sustain the community structures that can then avail of any funding schemes that are available.

County Louth has been a very successful participant in the National Tidy towns Competition for decades and the Wee County tends to punch well above its weight. We are currently the proud holders of no less than 4 Gold Medals, with a further collection of Silver and Bronze. We all so hold several hugely popular local competitions at village and housing estate level. In the past few years we have entered the All Island Pride of place Competition. This is truly one of those competitions where the taking part is more important than the winning and I have been delighted at the huge beneficial impact of participation on all those businesses, estates, communities, towns and villages who have been entered for Pride of Place.

13.10. LOUTH TOURISM AND HERITAGE ACTION PLAN



The **Louth Tourism and Heritage Action Plan 2017 - 2021** was launched by the Louth Economic Forum on the 9th March, 2017. This is the second such plan developed by the Louth Economic Forum and it details its strategy to maximise Louth's tourism potential to 2021, through three key themes:

- 1) Sharing our Heritage
- 2) Exploring our Mountains, Fields and Sea
- 3) Enjoying Our Arts, Culture Food and Festivals.

Louth County Council aims to position the county as a leading sustainable tourism destination by harnessing the potential offered by its unique location within Ireland's Ancient East, as the hub for the Boyne Valley and the Cooley, Mourne and Gullion Regions.

The plan sets out a range of actions, including:

- Increasing the number of bed nights and "dwell time"
- Promoting Louth's unique heritage, arts and cultural strengths, including supporting
- Louth County Council's bid to have Monasterboice designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Promoting Louth as a key destination for adventure sports, cycling, watersports, and horse racing
- Regenerating Louth's indigenous craft industry, focusing on thatching and boat
- Building to enhance the visitor experience.
- Establishing an annual award structure to reward Good Food establishments and
- Food producers in Louth.

13.11. CARLINGFORD LOUGH GREENWAY

The **Carlingford to Omeath Greenway was built in 2013** by Louth County Council with grant aid from the Department of Transport's Smarter Travel fund. Over 6km of off road trail on the route of a disused railway along the shores of Carlingford Lough has been constructed to date. The trail has proved extremely popular with locals and tourists alike with over **53,000 users in 2016 - 25% of which are cyclists**. The Carlingford to Omeath Greenway is part of a proposed cross border cycling and walking route linking Dundalk with Newry. It will tie into the Newry Tow Path and the National Cycle Network in Northern Ireland and to the developing National Cycle Network in Ireland. Recently Newry, Mourne and Down District Council constructed over 2km of Greenway, providing another element of this project.

Working together, Louth County Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Councils have recently successfully obtained nearly **€3.5 million of EU INTERREG VA** funding to further develop this project. This funding together with funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and from the Department of Regional Development NI will be used to **construct a further 10km of Greenway by 2019**. Louth Council as lead partner is overseeing this cross border project which when completed will connect Carlingford with Newry and onwards via the Canal Tow Path towards Lough Neagh, thus providing more sustainable mobility for cross border travellers.



13.12. BROADBAND

When the Government launched the National Broadband Plan, it was envisioned that 75% of premises in County Louth, by the end of 2016, would have broadband by commercial operators offering at least 30 Mbs. However, since then the roll out of broadband in County Louth by commercial operators has accelerated and **it is anticipated that the county will have over 85% of premises with broadband speeds in excess of 50Mbs by mid-2017.**

This acceleration has been facilitated through the implementation of our **Louth Broadband Action Plan**. In December 2015, Louth County Council through the Louth Economic Forum launched its Broadband Plan to deliver on key actions and establish an implementation committee to coordinate and facilitate the roll out of broadband in County Louth. The **implementation committee, made up of the broadband infrastructure providers and Louth County Council, provides a forum** to review the progress of broadband deployment and prioritise key actions to focus on. The action plan also promotes the county's broadband value proposition by highlighting the benefits that County Louth has in relation to broadband delivery, capacity and availability.

The plan also includes:

- the identification of black-spots for remediation throughout the county ./ to work with the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment, to ensure that those areas of County Louth (15%) where the market will not deliver is featured prominently in the Government's intervention strategy
- To respond to the high speed broadband needs of indigenous industry through publicising broadband capacity
- Promote and capitalise on County Louth's enviable position of high speed
- broadband connectivity availability for VOiP, video conferencing, cloud services and remote working
- explore the possibility of developing a Green Data Centre Park and promote
- the county as a location of choice for international IT organisations who
- host digital assets to service European and Middle Eastern markets
- work with Newry, Mourne & Down District Council and telecom providers to explore broadband possibilities to our mutual benefit for the communities both sides of Carlingford Lough

13.13. BREXIT

On 23rd June 2016 the UK voted in a referendum to leave the European Union. This dramatic result means there will be a significant change in the relationships between the UK and the European Union and more importantly between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. County Louth is at the frontier of this change. The major areas of change will be in a large number of strategic areas e.g. Trade, Foreign Direct Investment, Energy, Migration and Labour Market, European Union Funding, Financial Services, Immigration, Border Controls to name but a few.

Working through our MOU between Louth County Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and alongside other Border Counties, a strategic study, analysing the impact of Brexit in the frontier region of Louth and Newry, Mourne, Down has been commissioned.

The results of this study will help shape Newry, Mourne & Down District Council's submission to the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly. The issues to be considered in the study are:

- What is the message from the Louth and Newry, Mourne, Down Region
- What are the key issues for our businesses, citizens, communities, farming and fishing section
- What is meant by a 'soft border'
- What is our position on the Common Travel Area and Custom Union
- What do we mean by bespoke arrangements
- What are the legal issues for our area.

At a local level, Louth County Council, through the Local Enterprise Office and the Louth Economic Forum has been active disseminating BREXIT guides and advice from the Government's Information Service (Dept. of Taoiseach), Enterprise Ireland and InterTradeIreland to the business community. A '**Brexit Information Centre**' has been established on the LEO website and updates are issued to a subscriber base through social media platforms and email bulletins.

In November 2016, Louth County Council through its LEO assisted InterTradeIreland in delivering a **free breakfast briefing** in County Louth for SMEs with advice and information to help businesses prepare for new trading relationships that emerge from BREXIT negotiations. The event focused on business planning, currency hedging, innovation, diversification and building cross-border relationships. Earlier this year, Louth County Council's Head of Enterprise compiled an **Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)** on the impacts and options for small business resulting from BREXIT which was published by the Independent Media Group's two publications in County Louth. A number of information briefings for business, in conjunction with the banks, Enterprise Ireland and InterTradeIreland are being planned for the county in 2017.

13.14. CONCLUSION

As you can see, successful communities in border areas (and indeed everywhere) depend on a wide range of factors, including:

- **Building capacity for self-help and development in each community**
- **A strong cohort of plans and supports from central and local government, along with a wide range of other agencies and organisations**
- **A certain and predictable future within which communities can plan and Hope**

Many of these ingredients are in place for our border communities at the present time. We have had a very welcome return of nearly all funding programmes and communities can now plan again with some confidence. In County Louth there are very strong relationships and cooperation between the Council and all other state and non-state agencies which play a vital role in the health of our communities and I am confident that we will successfully deliver on most of the actions set out in our Louth Local Economic and Community Plan.

However, we need all of these ingredients to remain at the disposal of our communities and the looming shadow and uncertainty of Brexit is probably the greatest area of concern at the current time. Certainly local authorities are still hugely underfunded compared to prerecession levels and this impedes our ability to deliver as much as we would like for our communities but things are getting better and I am optimistic that they will continue to improve.

Brexit is an entirely different matter. It is currently no more than a "concept".

We have no idea what it will look like and can be certain about nothing. One thing I am certain of, however, is that the possible or more likely probable loss of existing levels of EU funding has the potential to do irreparable damage to and stunt the future development of many communities. As I said in the introduction above, it is essential that steps are taken now to ensure that this does not happen.

Joan Martin

Chief Executive, Louth County Council

14. DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL, OPENING STATEMENT, APRIL 2017

Initial Analysis of the Challenges and Opportunities of Brexit

for the

Derry City and Strabane and Donegal County Council Areas –

The North West City Region

Opening statement to

Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

06 April 2017

We welcome the opportunity to present this joint research, which was commissioned by Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council to provide strong leadership for the region in this time of great uncertainty.

While the results of Brexit will have differential geographical impact across these Islands, the effect on Derry City and the wider North West Region, the fourth largest City Region within Ireland, may be significant and sustained unless coherent, decisive, mitigating actions are put in place.

Work on the establishment of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership between both Councils and both Governments is well advanced. It provides a strong model of partnership through which to build practical responses to the UK's exit from the EU. Much work has already been done through the development of the draft Strategic Growth Plan 2017-2022 for the DCSDC area and Donegal's Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022.

As one of the few City Regions within Europe that will potentially now see an EU/non-EU international frontier cut across it - we face particular challenges, many of which are outlined within this report.

Peripherality has been a continuing issue for the region with poor infrastructural linkages to the major cities of Belfast and Dublin. These challenges will only be compounded by the changes that Brexit will bring, no matter in which form it is implemented.

While many areas make claims to their uniqueness in the context of Brexit, our research to date provides a robust evidence base. It unambiguously demonstrates the extreme sensitivity of this City and Region to any changes in trading arrangements whether by the imposition of tariffs, quotas or restrictions on services or labour mobility.

The North West, Cross -Border 'economic entity' has benefitted significantly from the cross-border collaboration evident in the spheres of education, health, environment and research and development, through economies of scale, reduced duplication and improved co-ordination rather than back to back development.

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

It is a truism that uncertainty, at the level of citizens, negatively impacts upon consumer confidence, consumer spending and ultimately quality of life. Similarly, within a business environment it undermines business sentiment, and in turn investment and wealth generation which affects those living within this region. It also impacts on the ability of local government to raise revenue and thus provide improved services.

Now, over nine months on from the UK decision to exit the EU, and following the UK's triggering of Article 50, it is apparent that the North West Region faces significant challenges alongside some opportunities.

Against a background of growing clarity on how Brexit will be implemented – UK PM Theresa May's statement on 17 January confirms the decision to leave the Single Market – both Councils have pro-actively responded.

We particularly welcome the commitments expressed within the Article 50 letter on 29th March from the PM Theresa May to the EU Council which reiterates the UK's unique relationship between the UK and The Republic of Ireland and the need to ensure no hard border.

We want to avoid a return to a hard border between our two countries, to be able to maintain the Common Travel Area between us, and to make sure that the UK's withdrawal from the EU does not harm the Republic of Ireland.

14.1. UK PM, ARTICLE 50 LETTER TO EU COUNCIL

Collaboratively we have assembled the range of sources of information that will be needed by local, national and international policymakers to inform them on the issue of the UK's exit from the EU regardless of the option – hard or soft.

This initial report enables us to consider the socio-economic characteristics of the region, identify gaps in the knowledge base, consult with key stakeholders and evidence-share with agencies, social, community, voluntary and enterprise sectors and the business community.

Our report concludes with an outline of the key strategic initiatives that require to be delivered for the North West as part of our agreed Strategic Growth Plan which we believe, when implemented, will not only mitigate the impact of Brexit but correctly position Derry City and the wider North West Cross-Border City Region to face the challenges ahead.

Our consultation finds that overwhelmingly, the consensus is there should continue to be free movement of goods, services and people across this Region, "preserving the seamless border", as Taoiseach Enda Kenny has said.

It demonstrates that there is an even greater imperative to ensure that our Strategic Growth Plan priorities are realised i.e. the A5, A6 and N14 roads, Transport Hub, University Expansion, development of tourism infrastructure and our regional strategic sites. Additionally, we will begin exploring opportunities emergent from Brexit such as the possible development of a Cross-Border Free Trade Zone.

This joint work will be on-going as the nature of the UK's exit from the EU becomes clearer. We are beginning to explore opportunities emergent from Brexit including a number of localised solutions within the North West City Region to mitigate the potential impact of Brexit while maximising any benefits of the UK's exit from the EU.

The Northwest Region has developed significantly throughout the last two decades since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and has achieved much in the area of Arts, Culture, Tourism, Employment and Good Relations and thus we fully endorse the Prime Minister's assertion that We also have an important responsibility to make sure that nothing is done to jeopardise the peace process in Northern Ireland, and to continue to uphold the Belfast Agreement.

UK PM, Article 50 letter to EU Council Over many years Derry City and the wider North West has led in finding solutions to many complex problems, our strength lies in our track record of co-working and resilience, we welcome the prospect of even closer cooperation as these relationships deepen in order to build a prosperous region for all our citizens.

We believe that the undertaking we have just embarked on will be critical in achieving just that and we look forward to continuing close working with all our partners in Dublin, London, Belfast and Brussels in this endeavour.

15. THE SPECIAL EUROPEAN UNION PROGRAMMES BODY, OPENING STATEMENT, APRIL 2017

Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Thursday 6 April 2017 (updated May 2019)

Opening Statement Report

Provided by Gina McIntyre, CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

15.1. WHAT IS THE SEUPB

The SEUPB operates under the overall policy direction of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC), with clear accountability lines back to the European Commission, the NSMC, the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Executive.

Cross-border bodies (of which the SEUPB is one of six established within the Good Friday Agreement) broadened levels of cross-border administrative co-operation, by working with relevant civil service departments and divisions in Northern Ireland and Ireland. This broad co-operation is central to the work of the SEUPB.

The SEUPB brings together officials from the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. It also works closely with a wide variety of civil service departments in Northern Ireland and Ireland.

15.2. WHAT IS THE PEACE PROGRAMME

The EU cross-border Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE) Programme is a unique (across all 28 member states) structural fund aimed at reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society within Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

The first PEACE I (1995-1999) Programme was created as a direct result of the European Union's desire to make a positive response to opportunities presented in the Northern Ireland peace process during 1994.

Since then it has provided €1.56 billion worth of funding to support peace and reconciliation projects on a cross-border basis.

The PEACE Programmes have evolved over each programming period, and several hundred thousand people have participated in cross-border activities including development of border region SMEs and social economy enterprises; community based organisations leading projects on reconciliation and cultural understanding; and cross-border projects focusing on skills, learning and training.

15.3. PEACE III (2007-2013) PROGRAMME

The PEACE III (2007-2013) Programme delivered a number of key achievements, as detailed below:

- 189,007 attendees at 8,393 events that address sectarianism and racism or deal with conflict resolution.
- 6,999 people in receipt of trauma counselling.
- 44,037 people attending 1,887 events assisting victims and survivors.
- 25,429 people attending 2,184 conflict resolution workshops.
- 2,754 participants from 63 interface areas engaged in initiatives which addressed barriers (physical and non-physical) to acknowledge and deal with the past.
- 136,166 users of 18 shared public environments which were created or improved through cross-community regeneration projects.
- 27,383 people benefiting from shared services. These innovative service delivery models (at both the local and central level) directly addressed the issues of segregation, sectarianism and racism and focused on sectors such as education, community health, employability, environmental protection and sport.
- 7 pilot projects of cross-border co-operation between public sector bodies aimed at increasing the capacity for a shared society.

15.4. NOTABLE CASE STUDIES (FUNDED BY THE PEACE III PROGRAMME)

15.4.1. PEACE BRIDGE, DERRY/LONDONDERRY.

A £14.6m PEACE III funded new iconic foot and cycle-bridge, joining the city physically and promoting interaction and cross-community engagement among communities. It has also brought back into public use the former Ebrington military barracks, thereby creating a new shared space.



15.4.2. GIRDWOOD HUB, NORTH BELFAST.

This £11.7m PEACE III funded project created a state-of-the-art 'Community Hub' on the site of a former army barracks ensuring a new iconic shared space for Belfast and the wider region. The President of the Republic of Colombia, President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon, recently visited the Girdwood Community Hub during a three day visit to the UK.

During his visit President Santos took time to meet with local politicians, community representatives and school groups involved in the development and implementation of the project.

15.4.3. CASTLE SAUNDERSON INTERNATIONAL SCOUT CENTRE.

This €3.7m PEACE III funded project has created a 30 acre multi-activity adventure centre, just outside Cavan. It includes fully equipped indoor facilities as well as a Jamboree site, capable of accommodating up to 1,000 people at any given time.

Located between Cavan, Fermanagh and Monaghan, the centre has been designed to encourage greater levels of interaction from young people from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.



15.4.4. PEACE LINK

a €7.8m EU PEACE III funded project officially opened in September 2014 by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins. The project has transformed a fourteen acre site at Liseggerton in Clones into a state-of-the-art multi-use sports and recreational facility that will be able to host major sporting competitions.

The core objective of the facility is to encourage greater levels of positive cross-community engagement through a shared interest in sport. It will also provide much needed cross-border access to high quality sporting facilities for people living across County Fermanagh and County Monaghan.



15.5. WHAT IS THE INTERREG PROGRAMME?

The EU cross-border INTERREG Programme was first introduced in 1991 and was devised as the European Community's response to the implications of the single market. It recognised the relatively disadvantaged situation of Border Regions throughout the European Community and proposed a mechanism of support for such areas.

Since 1991 the INTERREG Programme has provided approximately €1.13 billion of support into the region. This funding has been used to finance thousands of projects that support strategic cross-border co-operation in order to create a more prosperous and sustainable region.

The eligible area for the INTERREG IIIA Programme was Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland, and in excess of a hundred thousand people have benefitted from jobs created or safeguarded throughout the Programme in areas such as business development, tourism, and rural business assistance, cross-border business clusters as well as those created by participation in skills training, re-skilling programmes and sectorial initiatives such as cross-border healthcare.

Under the last programming period the eligible area of the Programme was expanded to include Western Scotland. This continues into the INTERREG VA Programme for 2014-2020.

15.6. WHAT HAS THE INTERREG PROGRAMME ACHIEVED

The INTERREG IVA (2007-2013) Programme delivered a number of key achievements, as detailed below:

- 3,552 businesses assisted to help promote innovation and creative activities. This assistance included the development of new and innovative products and business processes, expertise sharing, skills sales, marketing, strategy development, staff training, mentoring and the development of educational/business skills.
- 663 of these businesses assisted above have entered new markets, both domestic and international.
- 954 new jobs created as a result of this support offered to businesses.
- 33 networking projects supported which focused on encouraging strategic co-ordination of small firms to raise competitiveness, market access and enhance reputation and credibility within and outside the region.
- 1,318 businesses collaborating on a cross-border basis as a result of participation in the above networking projects.
- 100 cross-border collaboration projects supported to promote co-operation and the exchange of expertise, information and best practice between public bodies and other relevant stakeholders to deliver services within border areas.
- 121,741 beneficiaries in terms of supported cross-border collaboration which included support in the areas of health, rural development, life sciences, enterprise and tourism.
- 14,373 attendees at 364 cross-border collaboration conferences and seminars which were focused on agreeing joint cross-border solutions for common problems and provided opportunities to create synergies, share best practice and information, facilitate greater joined-up delivery, improve access to services and facilities and ensure better value for money.
- 17 research projects completed that helped to improve the evidence base and quality of comparable information available when making policy and design decisions for cross-border collaboration.
- 8 renewable energy projects/energy efficiency projects assisted.
- 8 environmental management projects funded.
- 1 telecommunications project funded – telecommunication line/infrastructure installed.

15.6.1. NOTABLE CASE STUDIES (FUNDED BY THE INTERREG IVA PROGRAMME) NORTH WEST REGIONAL SCIENCE PARK

The construction of a £12m INTERREG IVA funded 50,000 sq ft science park facility in Londonderry and a 20,000 sq ft extension to the CoLab facility at Letterkenny Institute of Technology. This will assist with long-term development of the NW Business Technology Zone and foster clusters and networks that encourage cross-border cooperation between local firms.



The Centre for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technologies (CREST) - is Ireland's largest green technology research and development and training facility. Based at the South West College (SWC), Enniskillen, County Fermanagh. The EU INTERREG IVA funded £1.5m facility provides specialist education, training and R&D support to help small and medium-sized firms compete in the multi-billion pound renewable energy and sustainable technologies sector.

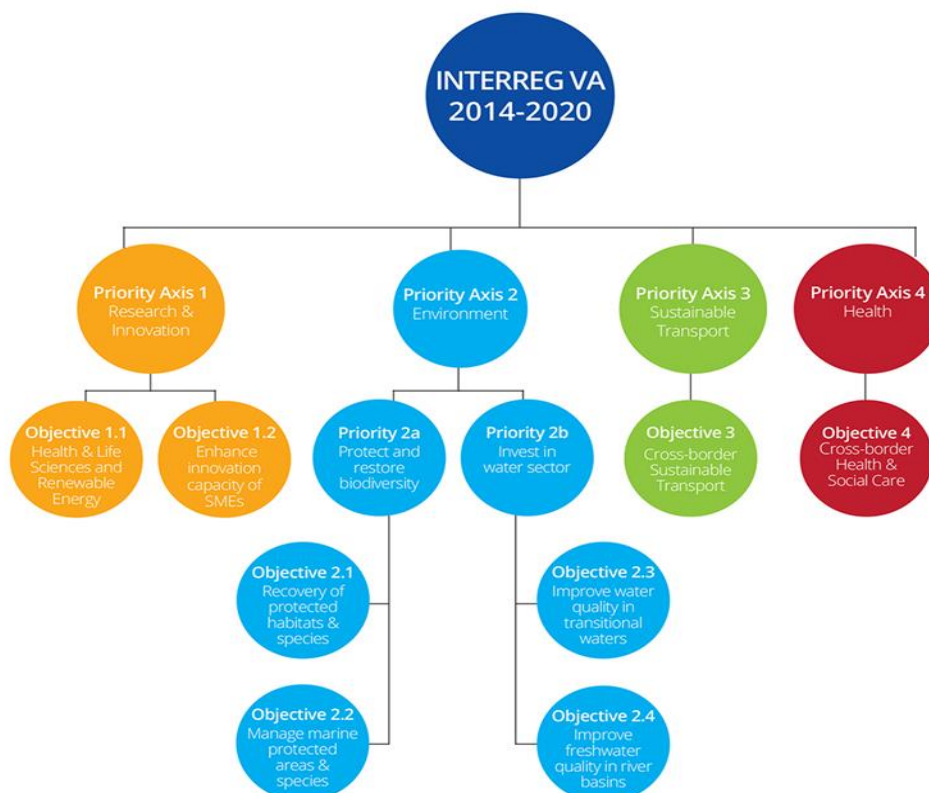
The Social Farming Across Borders project - a c. €700K EU INTERREG IVA funded project designed to promote 'social farming' as a viable option for achieving improved quality of life for people who use health and social services, as well as for farm families. The service provides disadvantaged groups of people the opportunity for inclusion, to increase their self-esteem and to improve their health and well-being.

15.7. UPDATE ON EU PROGRAMME DELIVERY 2014-2020

15.7.1. INTERREG VA PROGRAMME (2014-2020)

The **€283m INTERREG** VA Programme is one of 60 similar funding programmes across the EU that have been designed to help overcome the issues that arise from the existence of a border. These issues range from access to transport, health and social care services, environmental issues and enterprise development. The new programming period for 2014-2020 provides opportunity for continued European Union assistance to help create a more prosperous and sustainable cross-border region. In total 85% of the Programme, representing €240m, is provided through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The remaining €43m, representing 15%, is match-funded by the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

The content of the new INTERREG VA Programme has been agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government, the Scottish Government and the European Commission. It has four core objectives where it will make real and lasting change: **Research & Innovation; the Environment; Sustainable Transport and Health & Social Care.**



Priority Axis 1: Research & Innovation (€71.7m)

1.1 Research and Innovation, Health and Life Sciences and Renewable Energy (€53m)

This objective will increase business industry-relevant Research & Innovation capacity across the region within two target sectors; 'Health & Life Sciences' and 'Renewable Energy'.

It will create up to 514 years' worth of PhD (or above) level research; 5 research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects; and 10 enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects etc.

It will result in 'an increase in the annual number of peer reviewed journal and conference publications within these two sectors, with cross-border authorship and with the potential to create economic impact'.

1.2 Research and Innovation, Enhance Innovation capacity of SMEs (€18.7m)

This objective will increase the number and capacity of SMEs and micro-businesses in the region which are engaged in cross-border Research & Innovation activity aimed at the development of new products, processes and tradable services.

It will provide support for 1,408 enterprises, with 50 enterprises cooperating with research institutions; 469 enterprises receiving one-to-one innovation advice; 94 enterprises in receipt of an Innovation Capability Development Programme; and 70 enterprises engaging an Innovation intern, on a cross-border basis etc.

It will result in 'an increase in the percentage of SMEs and micro-businesses in the eligible area which are involved in Research & Innovation involving cross-border collaborations'.

Priority Axis 2: Environment (€84.6m)

Protect and Restore Biodiversity (2a) and Invest in the Water Sector (2b)

This objective will promote cross-border cooperation to facilitate the recovery of selected protected habitats and priority species. It will also facilitate the development and implementation of common approaches to the management of the marine environment. The improved management of the marine resource will contribute to the EU's Atlantic Strategy and Action Plan.

The support will create 25 conservation action plans; 6 complete marine management plans for designated protected areas; 10,000 people benefiting from improved wastewater treatment; and the creation of 1 cross-border drinking water Sustainable Catchment Area Management plan etc.

It will result in 'an increase in the percentage of selected protected habitats in or approaching favourable condition'.

Priority Axis 3: Sustainable Transport (€47m)

Transportation across the region is dominated by car usage, which results in high carbon emissions. This trend is set to increase in line with rising population and economic growth. The Programme will provide support to greater connectivity between the three jurisdictions, creating a more coherent and integrated network.

This objective will also promote cross-border, intermodal and sustainable mobility in the region. It will create 80 km worth of new cross-border greenways and a multi-modal public transport hub etc.

It will result in 'an increased number of passenger journeys (up to 25%) utilising cross-border public transport services by 2023. It will also increase the number of cross-border journeys made by walking/cycling (up to 10%).'

Priority Axis 4: Health & Social Care (€62.4m)

The health and social care services across the region face challenges in meeting rising demand within a constrained budget environment. Cross-border cooperation will contribute towards the more efficient delivery of health services in border regions. Cooperation across the region is essential to obtain the necessary critical mass for healthcare trials.

Coordination and sharing of e-health solutions can fast-track implementation of this technology, facilitating the delivery of high quality services.

This objective will, through collaboration on a cross-border basis, improve the health and well-being of people living in the region by enabling them to access quality health and social care services in the most appropriate setting to their needs. It will result in an 'increased number of 'episodes of care' delivered on a cross-border basis.'

It will provide e-health interventions to support the independent living in caring communities for 4,500 patients; 12 new cross-border area interventions to support the positive health and well-being and prevention of ill health for 15,000 beneficiaries; and develop two new cross-border area community support services to support 4,000 disabled people who are socially isolated etc.

15.7.2. APPLICATION ASSESSMENT UPDATE

All of the INTERREG VA Programme calls are now closed. The INTERREG VA applications have been processed with many already in receipt of a letter of offer.

Further details are outlined in table 1 overleaf.

Table1⁸⁵

Specific Objective		Theme Value ERDF + Match (€)	No. Projects Approved	Total Value Projects Approved (€)	To be Committed (€)
1. Research & Innovation	1.1 Health & Life Sciences and Renewable Energy	52,941,176	7	54,659,136	-
	1.2 Enhance innovation capacity of SMEs	18,705,882	1	16,671,744	2,034,139
Theme Total		71,647,058	8	71,330,880	316,178
2.Environment	2.1 Recovery of protected habitats & species	12,941,176	2	14,001,045	-
	2.2 Manage marine protected areas & species	12,941,176	4	17,996,125	-
	2.3 Improve water quality in transitional waters	35,294,118	1	35,047,604	246,513
	2.4 Improve freshwater quality in river basins	23,529,412	2	18,702,357	4,827,055
Theme Total		84,705,882	9	85,747,131	-
3.Sustainable Transport	3. Cross-border Sustainable Transport	47,058,824	4	46,810,963	247,861
Theme Total		47,058,824	4	46,810,963	-
4.Health	4.Cross-border Health & Social Care	62,352,941	9	52,702,269	9,650,672
Theme Total		62,352,941	9	52,702,269	9,650,672
Overall Total		265,764,705	31	256,591,243	9,173,462

⁸⁵ Table data updated May 2019

15.8. PEACE IV PROGRAMME (2014-2020)

The **€270m PEACE IV** Programme 2014-2020 provides opportunity for continued EU assistance to help address the peace and reconciliation needs of the region. In total 85% of the Programme, representing €229m is provided through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The remaining €41m, representing 15%, is match-funded by the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

The content of the new PEACE IV Programme has been agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government and the European Commission. It has four core themes where it will make real and lasting change: **Shared Education; Children & Young People; Shared Spaces & Services and Building Positive Relations.**



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1: SHARED EDUCATION (€35.3M)

The objective will provide direct, sustained, curriculum-based contact between pupils and teachers from all backgrounds, through collaboration between schools from different sectors in order to promote good relations and enhance children's skills and attitudes to contribute towards a cohesive society.

It will result in 'an increase in the percentage of schools that have been involved in shared education with another school within the past academic year'.

It will facilitate the involvement of 350 schools in shared education initiatives; train 2,100 teachers in shared education methodologies; and involve 144,000 participants in shared education classrooms.

15.8.1. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Action 2.1 Children & Young People aged 14-24 (€37.6m)

The objective will enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society.

It will target young people aged between 14-24 years who are disadvantaged, excluded or marginalised, have deep social and emotional needs and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, violence or dissident activity. (Phase one of the project will target 3,400 young people who are most marginalised and disadvantaged).

Action 2.2 Local Authority Children & Young People (€17.1m)

The objective will bring about change in the form of clear, meaningful and sustainable 'distance travelled' for individual young people in terms of good relations, personal development and citizenship.

It will result in 'the percentage of 16 year olds, who socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community; who think relations between Protestants and Catholics are better than they were five years ago; and who think relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in five years' time'.

Phase one will target 21,000 participants aged 0-24 years completing approved programmes that develop their soft skills and a respect for diversity.

15.8.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3: SHARED SPACES AND SERVICES

Action 3.1 Capital Build (€52.9m)

The objective will create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared spaces and services. It will create up to eight new shared civic spaces that will be used by all sections of the community; this will involve changes in both attitudes and behaviour with a corresponding reduction in segregation.

Action 3.2 Local Authorities Shared Spaces Projects (€28.8)

This part of the Programme will support a number of local initiatives with the aim of making public spaces in cities, towns and villages more inclusive; this will often involve addressing sensitive topics around parades, flags, emblems, graffiti and other issues which can serve to intimidate and make some members of society, whether based on religion, race or other factors, feel unwelcome in some areas.

It will result in 'an increase in the percentage of people who would define the neighbourhood where they live as neutral; an increase in the percentage of people who prefer to live in a mixed religion environment; and a reduction in the percentage of people who would prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people of their own religion'.

Action 3.3 Victims & Survivors (€17.6m)

In recognition of the need and demand of those who have suffered from the trauma of the conflict, the Programme will develop the capacity for services to meet the needs of victims and survivors.

It will add value by investing in cross-border health and well-being services that develop proven expertise within the region and increase the capacity and the quality of care in the sector for victims and survivors and their families. The objective will be delivered by the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS).

The funding will support 6,300 individuals in receipt of advocacy support and 11,350 individuals in receipt of assessment, case work support and resilience support.

15.8.3. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4: BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONS (€51.7M)

Action 4.1 Building Positive Relations at a Local Level (€35.3m)

This objective will promote positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance. All projects will involve people from diverse backgrounds; in particular, cross-border activity will be supported and facilitated. The support will be used to create 17 local action plans that will result in meaningful, purposeful and sustained contact between persons from different communities.

Action 4.2 Building Positive Relations at a Regional Level (€16.4)

This objective will support groups particularly impacted by the legacy of the conflict such as victims and survivors and those communities with low social capital as well as those identifiable groups and networks dealing with specific legacy issues such as young and older people, women, the faith community, those suffering from physical or mental disability arising from the legacy of violence, ex-prisoners, displaced persons and former members of the security forces. The support will be used to fund up to 20 regional level projects that will result in meaningful, purposeful and sustained contact between persons from different communities.

This objective will result in 'an increase in the percentage of people who think relations between Protestants and Catholics are better than they were five years ago; an increase in the percentage of people who think relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in five years' time and an increase in the percentage of people who know quite a bit about the culture of some ethnic minority communities'.

15.9. LOCAL AUTHORITY FUNDED PEACE IV PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

The 17 Local Authorities across Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland have been invited to develop an Action Plan for their area, which addresses three out of the four PEACE IV Programmes core objectives. These are Children and Young People (Action 2.2), Shared Spaces & Services (Action 3.2) and Building Positive Relations (Action 4.1), as detailed in the sections above.

The financial allocations for each Local Authority is based on per capita (Census) and deprivation (NI Multiple Deprivation Measure and Trutz Haase Deprivation Index). Further details regarding the financial allocations is outlined in Table 2 overleaf.

Table 2⁸⁶

Local Authority Area	Peace Action Plan €
Antrim and Newtownabbey	3,828,145
Ards and North Down	3,940,912
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	6,116,245
Belfast	17,198,354
Causeway Coast and Glens	4,468,181
Derry City and Strabane	7,964,210
Fermanagh and Omagh	3,367,286
Lisburn and Castlereagh	2,993,261
Mid and East Antrim	3,697,122
Mid Ulster	3,940,349
Newry, Mourne and Down	5,608,870
Louth	3,129,717
Leitrim	1,821,934
Sligo	860,505
Cavan	3,128,824
Donegal	5,546,207
Monaghan	3,038,568

⁸⁶ Table data updated May 2019

15.10. PEACE IV APPLICATION ASSESSMENT UPDATE⁸⁷

Due to the late adoption of the PEACE IV Programme, progress is not as advanced as INTERREG VA. However, much work has been undertaken to accelerate implementation where possible. An overview of the progress to date is provided in the below table.

Specific Objective		Theme Value ERDF + Match (€)	No. Projects Approved	Total Value Projects Approved (€)	To be Committed (€)
1. Shared Education		35,294,118	2	33,146,798	2,147,320
2. Children & Young People	2.1 Children & Young People aged 14-24	37,647,059	12	42,123,718	-
	2.2 Local Authority Children & Young People	17,058,824	17*	17,028,142	30,681
3. Shared Spaces & Services	3.1 Shared Spaces Capital Development	52,941,176	9	59,426,786	-
	3.2 Local Authority Shared Spaces Projects	28,823,529	17*	28,448,834	374,695
	3.3 Victims & Survivors	17,647,059	1	15,779,572	1,867,487
4. Building positive Relations	4.1 Local Authority Action Plans - Positive Relations	35,294,118	17*	35,171,712	122,405
	4.2 Regional Level Projects	28,728,426	19	23,284,151	5,444,275
Overall Total		253,434,308	94*	254,409,714	-

* Each Local Authority Action Plan addresses three out of the four PEACE IV Programme core objectives however these have been incorporated into one letter of offer.

⁸⁷ Table data updated May 2019

16. CO-OPERATION IRELAND, OPENING STATEMENT, MAY 2017



Opening Statement to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

The Future of Community, Social and Economic Development and Co-operation in Border Counties

May 2017

16.1. INTRODUCTION

Co-operation Ireland is the leading peace-building organisation on the island of Ireland. Established in 1979 as Co-operation North, we have worked for over 35 years to promote interaction, dialogue, and practical collaboration within Northern Ireland and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Our work is overseen by an independent, voluntary board comprised of key individuals from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and beyond who have a genuine interest in helping communities to strengthen ties and move beyond the divisive legacy of the conflict. Members include: Christopher Moran (Chairman), John Bruton, Peter Robinson, David Campbell, Sir Jonathan Philips, Jim Clerkin, Ossie Kilkenney, Paula Dobriansky, Trevor Ringland, Pat Doherty, Briedge Gadd, Noreen Wright, Terence Brannigan, Henry Mitchell, James Walsh, Terry Crossan, Daithi O'Ceallaigh, Mary Heaney, and Tom Hartley.

Our vision is of a peaceful and stable island where people of all backgrounds live and work together for a better future. In pursuit of this vision, we work in partnership with others to sustain peace and help to build a shared and cohesive society. Our role involves developing programmes and initiatives to address emerging challenges to peace, to build relationships, and to facilitate co-operation across the island.

We also seek to create a supportive environment for co-operation and peace-building by building capacity among other actors, influencing policy, and developing collaboration at a strategic level⁸⁸.

Co-operation Ireland has delivered and supported a range of initiatives under the INTERREG and PEACE Programmes to support socio-economic development and peace-building in the border region. This included our work as an Intermediary Funding Body for Measure 3.1 (Social and Community Infrastructure) of the INTERREG IIIA Programme in the period 2000-2006⁸⁹ This paper

⁸⁸ See <http://www.cooperationireland.org> for further information on our work.

⁸⁹ Co-operation Ireland administered over €10m of funding for cross-border projects under Measure 3.1 which aimed to create a sustainable cross-border community infrastructure focused on social and economic development, to strengthen cross-border networks, and to develop cross border competency in public services.

draws on our knowledge and insights of key challenges facing the border counties and the opportunities and benefits of cross-border approaches in furthering regional development.

This paper has been prepared as our opening statement to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It sets out a brief overview of the consequences of partition and the Northern Ireland conflict for the border counties, before going on to consider the implications of the UK's pending withdrawal from the European Union for economic, social and community development in the region. It concludes by making some suggestions for how cross-border co-operation in the support of local development can be sustained post-Brexit.

16.2. BORDER COUNTIES: FROM PARTITION TO PEACE

Partition of the island in 1922 had 'direct, immediate and negative effects' on economic and social development in the border counties (Harvey et al, 2005).⁹⁰

The imposition of a customs border disrupted trade and commerce, with towns cut off from their natural hinterlands. The region on both sides of the border was peripheral to the centres of government in Dublin and Belfast and became characterised by back to back development, limited investment, and high rates of deprivation and socio-economic disadvantage.

The negative impacts of the border were heightened during the Northern Ireland conflict. The southern border counties were directly affected by the violence, with paramilitary activities and the militarisation of the border leading to a climate of fear and suspicion. The closure of border roads disrupted daily life in cross-border communities and led to a fracturing of social relationships. Community relations in the region were strained, with minority communities on both sides of the border feeling isolated and under threat.

Over the past three decades the ending of the conflict and the process of European integration helped to mitigate some of the most damaging impacts of the border and facilitated the economic and social development of the region. The removal of customs and regulatory barriers as a result of the creation of the EU Single Market helped to revive cross-border trade.⁹¹ The dismantling of military structures and opening up of border roads allowed people to move freely throughout the region again. EU funding, in particular under the INTERREG and PEACE Programmes, provided investment in infrastructure and supported new initiatives to support economic, social and community development.

Cross-border engagement and co-operation has been at the core of this process of renewal in the border counties. Flagship initiatives have included providing cancer treatment services on a cross-border basis in the North West, promoting sustainable tourism by reopening the Ulster Canal and creating a cross-border Geopark, and developing strategic co-operation among local authorities in the region, including, for example, the North West Gateway Initiative. PEACE and INTERREG funded projects have helped to restore cross-border links at community level, address

⁹⁰ Harvey et al, 2005. *The Emerald Curtain: The Social Impact of the Irish Border*. Carrickmacross: Triskele Community Training and Development.

⁹¹ For example, total cross-border trade in manufactured goods increased from 1645m in 1995 to 3071m in 2014 (down from a pre-Crash high of 3799m in 2007). Source: http://www.intertradeireland.com/researchandpublications/trade-statistics/total_cross_border_trade/

conflict legacies, and foster social development. For example, Measure 3.1 of the INTERREG IIIA Programme (2000-2006) supported a range of initiatives including the creation of cross-border networks in the voluntary sector, the development of new community and social services, and the building of community capacity. However, the potential for cross-border co-operation to support progress and development in the region is now overshadowed by the UK's pending withdrawal from the European Union.

16.3. IMPLICATIONS OF BREXIT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE BORDER COUNTIES

The form and content of the post-Brexit relationship between the UK and the European Union is unknowable at this time. Encouragingly, both parties to the negotiation have recognised the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland. In their opening positions, both the UK and EU commit to protecting the peace process and share the aim of avoiding the return of a hard border. However, based on the stated negotiation objectives of the UK government, the risk remains that the withdrawal process will have significant negative implications for economic, social, and community development in the border region.

The cross-border dimension is central to the growth and sustainability of local economies in the border region, with many local businesses trading and operating on both sides of the border.⁹² However, the UK's intention to withdraw from the Single Market and, in particular, to pursue its own trade agreements outside the EU (necessitating withdrawal from the Customs Union, at least in its current form) risk the reintroduction of significant barriers to cross-border trade. Even if the imposition of tariffs can be avoided, the return of customs controls would impose an additional bureaucratic burden on firms trading across the border. For example, the need to comply with Rules of Origin procedures and delays at custom checkpoints would have a direct cost on traders and damage competitiveness. In the longer-term, any divergence between UK and EU standards and regulations would reduce access to cross-border markets, particularly for smaller firms.

Many firms operating across the border have integrated supply chains, sourcing inputs in one jurisdiction for processing in the other. The viability of such arrangements will be undermined by any restrictions on cross-border movement of goods. The agriculture sector in the region is particularly exposed, with the milk and meat-processing industries closely integrated on a cross-border basis.⁹³ More broadly, concerns have also been raised by logistics firms about the transiting of goods through the border region, with many key routes crossing the border several times. What arrangements will be put in place for goods transiting across the border from one destination in the Republic to another? This would have particular implications for access to the North West.

Community and social development in the border region will be severely impacted by any restrictions on freedom of cross-border movement. While both the UK and Irish governments

⁹² For example, 34% of firms in Derry City & Strabane Council area and 38% of firms in Donegal trade cross-border, compared to 25% of firms on the island as a whole (Derry City & Strabane Council and Donegal County Council, 2017. Initial Analysis of the Challenges and Opportunities of the Brexit)

⁹³ An estimated 600m litres of milk are exported from Northern Ireland to the Republic for processing each year, approximately 25% of the North's total milk output. See http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2017/03/04/ireland-forgotten-frontier-brexit/?WT.mc_id=tmg_share_em [Accessed 10.03.17]

are committed to retention of the Common Travel Area, it is uncertain what changes, if any, will be made to current rights to travel to and work, study, and reside in the other jurisdiction. Even if current rights are maintained, any border controls will greatly disrupt everyday life in the region. While figures vary, an estimated 23,000 to 30,000 commuters cross the border each day for work⁹⁴ and many thousands more regularly travel between both jurisdictions for shopping, cultural and social reasons.

Barriers to movement would also undermine the potential of cross-border co-operation in improving access to health and social services across the region.

Joined-up approaches across the border hold out the promise of providing more efficient and viable services in sparsely populated areas by widening catchment areas. While much work remains to be done in this area, initiatives such as the cross-border radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin Hospital and the range of services delivered by CAWT (Co-operation and Working Together) demonstrate the feasibility of cross-border service provision. The potential to access services on the other side of the border also contributes to the sustainability of rural communities in the region.

One of the successes of the peace process has been the extent to which the border had become largely irrelevant to everyday life. However, the UK's withdrawal from the European Union will make the border visible again, with unpredictable consequences for political attitudes and identities in the region. A renewed focus on the border risks polarising Nationalist and Unionist communities and damaging slowly improving relations. While the risks should not be overstated, the recreation of a physical border control infrastructure could become a target for paramilitaries opposed to the peace process. The return of customs may also increase incentives for smuggling, leading to greater presence of paramilitaries and criminal gangs in the region.

⁹⁴ O'Kane, Anne Marie, 2016. The Referendum on UK Membership of the EU: Freedom of Movement of People. Border People Briefing Paper, Centre of Cross Border Studies.

16.4. CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION AFTER BREXIT

Given its tangible benefits, cross-border co-operation in the border region will continue after Brexit. However, the ending of the UK's membership of the European Union risks creating new barriers and disincentives to collaboration. These include:

- Cross-border co-operation has been greatly reliant on funding support from EU programmes, including, in particular, PEACE and INTERREG.⁹⁵ Post-Brexit, the continued eligibility of Northern Ireland partners to access EU funding is in doubt.
- Cross-border co-operation has been 'normalised' and detached from political debate by locating it within the wider narrative of European integration and collaboration. The extent to which collaboration has become broadly acceptable across the political spectrum has been one of the quiet success stories of the peace process. However, by removing the common context provided by the European Union, there is a risk that cross-border working will once again become politicised. In particular, Unionist concerns over the direction of travel of cross-border initiatives are likely to be heightened by the renewed prominence of arguments for reunification in public debate.
- Over the longer-term, divergence in policy and regulations between the UK and the EU may create unforeseen barriers and disincentives to co-operation. In many areas of collaboration, the existence of common EU standards has proved an important enabling factor. For example, the joint staffing of cross-border initiatives could be complicated by divergence in employment law.

⁹⁵ The European Regional Development Fund contributes €229m to the current PEACE IV Programme (2014-2020) and €240m to INTERREG VA (2014-2020).

16.5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross-border co-operation, as it developed through the process of European integration and ending of the conflict, played a key role in helping to address some of the most damaging aspects of partition in the border region. While all parties to the Brexit negotiations wish to minimise disruption on the island, the fear remains that unintended consequences of the withdrawal process could potentially lead to the re-imposition of a hard border which will hinder economic, community and social development in the border counties and risk rewinding much of the progress of recent decades.

We make the following Recommendations to help address some of the risks identified above.

The Irish government should seek agreement from the European Union and UK for a mechanism to allow Northern Ireland continued access to EU funding programmes for territorial co-operation. If this does not prove possible, equivalent funding for peace building and cross-border co-operation should be provided by the Irish and UK governments. It is critical that any UK contribution is additional to the Northern Ireland block grant.

As formal cross-border linkages are potentially weakened post-Brexit, spaces for informal relationship building and dialogue will become more important. Co-operation Ireland already provides opportunities for North-South engagement and collaboration in specific sectors through initiatives such as the Local Authority Forum (local government), Pride of Place (community groups), and NSUPEP (teachers and educationalists).

Spaces such as these will need to be expanded to enable cross-sectoral conversations among stakeholders from across the border region, and across the island, about emerging impacts of Brexit and to provide a forum for problem-solving. The Government's All-Island Civic Dialogue could provide a useful starting point for further development.

There is much we can learn from practical experiences and models of cross-border collaboration between EU members and neighbouring non-members in other regions of Europe. For example, regions of Norway⁹⁶ and Switzerland⁹⁷ enjoy extensive collaboration with their EU neighbours, including in areas such as health care, rural development, and cross-border transport. The establishment of working groups as part of the Civic Dialogue might provide a useful vehicle for identifying and transposing relevant learning.

⁹⁶ For example, Norway and Finland have concluded formal agreements for cross-border collaboration in the provision of health care in the Teno River Valley region.

⁹⁷ A number of Swiss cantons are members of the Tri-national Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine. This is one of the most developed cross-border territories in Europe, with collaboration around research, renewable energy, transport, and SME development.

17. INTERTRADEIRELAND, OPENING STATEMENT, MAY 2017

InterTradeIreland's

Response to

the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs,

Peadar Tóibín TD Uasal,

to address the Committee on

**"The future of community, social and economic development
and cooperation in border counties".**

10 May 2017

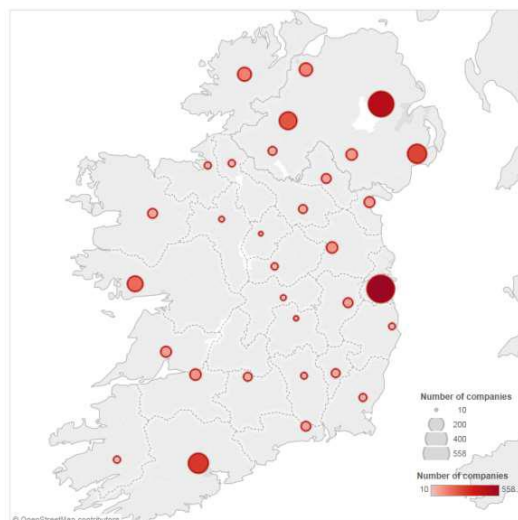
17.1. INTRODUCTION

InterTradeIreland welcomes the opportunity to contribute to address the Committee on "The future of community, social and economic development and cooperation in border counties".

InterTradeIreland helps businesses explore new cross-border markets, develop new products, processes and services and become investor ready. We provide practical crossborder business funding, business intelligence and meaningful contacts to SMEs across the island, North and South, looking to grow their businesses. To date 32,000 small businesses have been supported by InterTradeIreland to identify and develop all-island trade and innovation opportunities. InterTradeIreland enables businesses to capitalise on the possibilities that exist on the island of Ireland, where total cross-border trade in goods and services exceeds €6.8bn annually.

17.2. INTERTRADEIRELAND'S REACH

InterTradeIreland as an all-island body engages with and provides opportunities in trade and innovation for businesses across the island. The map below shows the outreach of InterTradeIreland that covers every county on the island.



17.3. INTERTRADEIRELAND'S SUCCESS TO DATE

Since its inception 16 years ago InterTradeIreland has contributed to the enhancement of economic cooperation across the island through the following achievements:

- 32,000 SMEs have benefitted from our cross-border information and advice service
- c.6,000 SMEs have taken part in our all-island programmes
- Generating c.€1bn worth of trade and business development value
- Over 9,000 jobs in SMEs
- Impact of Expenditure ratio 12:1

A significant number of the jobs created are in small rural businesses. As a result of programmes like Fusion with 70% of the graduates being retained by their host company, these jobs result in significant capability building in small local businesses that traditionally find it hard to compete for skilled labour.

17.4. CASE STUDIES

17.4.1. GALLAGHER'S BAKERY, ARDARA, CO. DONEGAL

- Gallagher's bakery supplies bread products and speciality lines, including gluten-free products to commercial customers across Ireland and further afield.
- Their 18 month FUSION project with Loughry's CAFRE College in Cookstown was to reduce the waste associated with the gluten free baking process by gaining a better understanding of the chemistry involved and the interactions between the ingredients.
- The FUSION project has allowed the company to reduce the waste incurred by almost €250k.
- This project has increased the profitability of the business and it intends to expand the waste reduction of the business.

17.4.2. SHALVEY POULTRY, COOTEHILL, CO. CAVAN

- Shalvey Poultry is a cooked meats' manufacturer producing primarily chicken and turkey products to companies such as ready-meal and pasta manufacturers, sandwich makers, soup makers and distributors.
- After taking part in the Acumen sales and marketing development programme the company now carries out 25% of its business in Northern Ireland and a further 25% in Great Britain.
- The company has also increased sales by over €500k since its participation in the Programme.

17.5. BREXIT

The biggest challenge for the economy, North and South is to navigate the changing trading relationship that will follow Brexit. Currently 98% of businesses have no plan in place to deal with the consequences of Brexit. As an implementation Body, InterTradeIreland is preparing to help North/South trade, innovation and business development linkages continue to flourish in whatever trading relationships emerge from the UK EU negotiations. Since November 2016 InterTradeIreland has established an internal Brexit Team to provide a suite of advice and supports to businesses. These include:

Brexit Briefing Events. To date 7 Brexit Briefing events have taken place. These have been located in Dundalk, Cookstown, Monaghan, Lismaskea, Cavan, Offally and Mayo. These are taking place with local communities across the island and InterTradeIreland. More briefing events are planned for the coming months and InterTradeIreland has received a number of request from Local Enterprise Organisations and other organisations for events to take place.

- Brexit Fact Sheet
- Brexit Readiness Voucher
- FAQs
- Tariff Information and Advice
- Specialist Brexit advisor
- Sector Brexit advisory panel.
- 1 to 1 advisory service

While InterTradeIreland's focus is on advising and supporting businesses deal with the challenges and opportunities from a changing trading relationship the need to maintain free movement of goods and people especially in border communities where functional economic areas often transcend the political border is a key concern that emerges in discussions at our events.

18. CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES, OPENING STATEMENT, DECEMBER 2018



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

Meeting with the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development

12 December 2018

“Supporting communities and sustaining small rural business within the border region after Brexit”

Statement by the Centre for Cross Border Studies

On behalf of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, I would like to thank the Chair and members of this Committee for the invitation to meet with you on the subject of supporting communities and sustaining small rural business within the border region after Brexit.

16.1. INTRODUCTION: ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES

16.1.1. Since its creation in 1999, the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS) has pursued its central mission of contributing to the increased social, economic and territorial cohesion of the island of Ireland. It achieves this by promoting and improving the quality of cross-border cooperation between (a) public bodies, and (b) between public bodies, business and civil society. Complementing this strategy, CCBS also works to improve the capacity of people involved in social and economic development to engage in mutually beneficial cross-border cooperation. Finally, it addresses information gaps and other barriers that constrain cross-border mobility and cross-border cooperation through research, provision of resources, tools and other support. Throughout its existence, therefore, CCBS has been deeply concerned with community, social and economic development and cooperation in the border counties.⁹⁸

16.1.2. CCBS's pursuit of its mission has been framed by two primary public policy imperatives: the commitment to cross-border and North-South cooperation integral to Strand II of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and the European Union's

⁹⁸ For more information on the Centre for Cross Border Studies, see <http://crossborder.ie/>.

Cohesion Policy with its focus on social, economic and territorial cohesion, and supported by the EU's Territorial Cooperation and Structural Funds programmes.

16.1.3. In light of the significant potential impacts on cross-border and wider North-South cooperation, CCBS has for some time now been devoting much of its energies and expertise to considering the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union, and to engaging with relevant political representatives and decision-makers on the island of Ireland, Great Britain and in the European Commission to raise our concerns and suggest potential means of mitigating any adverse effects.⁹⁹

16.2. THE BREXIT STAKES FOR COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES IN THE BORDER REGION

16.2.1. Even as we rapidly approach the date on which the United Kingdom will officially leave the European Union, it is still unclear as to what the scale and nature of the impact will be on border communities and businesses. This is because the political context in Westminster does not guarantee that the UK will not leave the EU without an agreement which, in the view of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, would have the most adverse impacts on socio-economic relations within and between these islands, on the operability of the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts, and on the nature of the UK's borders – including the border on the island of Ireland.¹⁰⁰ It is for these reasons that after the publication of the draft Withdrawal Agreement the Centre for Cross Border Studies, in line with many others, stated that “no deal” must not be an option.

16.2.2. What is at stake here is not only the economic future of communities and small rural businesses in the border region which, in many cases, already have to deal with exceptionally low rates of urbanization relative to the rest of the island of Ireland, limiting the number of towns available to facilitate economic development, and contributing to low levels of employment in technical and professional occupations.¹⁰¹ What is also at risk if not properly mitigated for is social cohesion within the border region after Brexit, particularly if relevant policy and community development initiatives on either side of the border are undertaken back-to-back, thereby failing to grasp opportunities for cross-border cooperation.

⁹⁹ CCBS evidence to Parliamentary Committees can be found at <http://crossborder.ie/category/research-and-policy/policy/consultation-responses/>, while CCBS Briefing Papers on various aspects of Brexit can be accessed at <http://crossborder.ie/category/research-and-policy/policy/briefings/>.

¹⁰⁰ See “Centre for Cross Border Studies Statement on draft Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union” (20 November 2018), <http://crossborder.ie/site2015/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CCBS-Statement-on-draft-EU-Withdrawal-Agreement-of-14-November-2018.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Stephen Roper, “Cross-border and local cooperation on the island of Ireland: An economic perspective”, Mapping Frontiers, Plotting Pathways Working Paper No. 7 (2006), <https://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforInternationalBordersResearch/Publications/WorkingPapers/MappingFrontiersworkingpapers/Filetoupload,175403,en.pdf> [last accessed 15/03/2017].

- 16.2.3. The gravity of the economic threat to border counties was underlined by the Department of Finance's 2016 analysis of sectoral exposure to Brexit, which noted that "In terms of regional impacts, the most exposed manufacturing sectors have a comparatively large share of employment outside of Dublin", and that "The highest share of total employment in the exposed sectors in a particular region is found in the Border Region".¹⁰² Arguably, and in the event agreement is reached between the UK and the EU, the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland – if it were to become operational in the absence of the conclusion of a UK-EU free trade agreement – may mitigate some of the exposure faced by businesses in the border region.
- 16.2.4. Currently, through EU funding programmes such as PEACE, INTERREG and LEADER, businesses and communities in the border region can avail of support to engage in mutually beneficial cross-border cooperation initiatives. The benefits of these programmes have not simply been in terms of economic development or the provision of vital cross-border infrastructure, but also their contribution to supporting cross-border cooperation as part of the ongoing peace and reconciliation process on the island of Ireland. They have given life to the formal structures created under Strand 2 of the Good Friday Agreement, encouraging the establishment of multi-level cross-border networks where partnerships between public bodies, local authorities, civil society organisations and others on either side of the border have brought about positive change.

¹⁰² Department of Finance, UK EU Exit – An Exposure Analysis of Sectors of the Irish Economy (October 2016), p.vi, http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/An_Exposure_Analysis_of_Sectors_of_the_Irish_Economy_%20_final.pdf [last accessed 15/03/2017].

16.3. BEYOND BREXIT

- 16.3.1. Brexit will not alter the fact that the United Kingdom will remain a co-guarantor, along with Ireland, of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. This means that, in terms of maintaining the conditions for North-South cooperation that will assist in supporting communities and small rural businesses in the border region post-Brexit, the UK Government must not shirk that responsibility to a non-operational Northern Ireland Assembly or Executive, and that it develops policies that encourage and fund local authorities and others in Northern Ireland to engage in cross-border cooperation with their counterparts across the border. This is to satisfy not only the letter, but also the spirit of Strand 2 of the 1998 Agreement.
- 16.3.2. Therefore, to ensure that North-South and cross-border cooperation measures can continue to be applied post-Brexit to support communities and small rural businesses in the border region, the UK Government must allay concerns raised by its apparent disregard of the fact that the Northern Ireland Executive has not been functioning for some considerable time, including in its recent Technical Explanatory Note on the North-South cooperation mapping exercise. Here, in reference to Article 13 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the draft Withdrawal Agreement, the UK Government states that “arrangements for North-South cooperation remain a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive and the Government of Ireland to determine”.¹⁰³ It is essential the UK Government fully assumes that, in the absence of a functioning Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive, arrangements for North-South cooperation become a matter for the UK Government alongside the Irish Government. They cannot be left in abeyance due to political stalemate in Northern Ireland.
- 16.3.3. Proper development of relevant post-Brexit policies and related funding by the UK Government should, for instance, provide the necessary supports for local authorities and others in Northern Ireland to avail of the opportunities for North-South cooperation presented by Ireland’s National Development Plan 2018-2027, which would address the needs of communities and rural businesses in the border region. To this end, it is essential that the UK Government’s proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund, designed to replace EU Structural Funds, should encompass Northern Ireland’s need to engage in cross-border and North-South cooperation. As it is currently framed, this is not the case.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ HM Government, “Technical Explanatory Note: North-South Cooperation Mapping Exercise” (7 December 2018), paragraph 5, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-explanatory-note-north-south-cooperation-mapping-exercise?utm_source=49a11224-cccf-4e30-9659-fc9e6cef2e14&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate [last accessed 09/12/2018].

¹⁰⁴ See the Conservative and Unionist Party, “Forward, Together: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future. The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2017” (2017), p.35, <https://www.conservatives.com/manifesto> [last accessed 09/12/2018]; and written Ministerial Statement made by James Brokenshire (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government), HCWS927 (24 July 2018), <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-07-24/HCWS927> [last accessed 09/12/2018].

- 16.3.4. To fully support communities and small rural businesses in the border region post-Brexit, it is essential that EU funding for North-South and cross-border cooperation is secured for the next programming period. We note the reference in the preamble to the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the draft Withdrawal Agreement to “the Union and the United Kingdom’s commitments to the North-South PEACE and INTERREG funding programmes under the current multi-annual financial framework and to the maintaining of the current funding proportions for the future programme [emphasis added]”. However, we are concerned that although the European Commission’s Fact Sheet on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland refers to the “continuation of PEACE and INTERREG for Northern Ireland and the border regions of Ireland beyond 2020 under a single programme PEACE PLUS”, the Political Declaration on future UK-EU relations refers simply to the UK and EU’s “shared commitment to delivering a future PEACE PLUS programme to sustain work on reconciliation and a shared future in Northern Ireland”. There is no reference here to the Border Counties of Ireland. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that legal guarantees are given that any future PEACE PLUS programme will encompass the border counties of Ireland, and will be a significant contribution (of at least 15% of any total budget) to cross-border cooperation.
- 16.3.5. Given the potential of the current LEADER programme to support cross-border cooperation activities in relation to rural development, it is also important that a similar support is provided in the post-Brexit context, either as part of any proposed PEACE PLUS programme, or as a discrete programme supportive of rural development as one of the areas of North-South cooperation identified as part of the North-South cooperation mapping exercise.¹⁰⁵

16.4. CONCLUSION

These are only some of the very headline issues in relation to supporting communities and small rural businesses in the border region following the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union. Many imponderables still exist due to the unstable political landscape in Westminster, meaning that we cannot be sure of the kind of Brexit we will be left with, or whether we will have any Brexit at all. Whatever the case, I can assure the Committee that the Centre for Cross Border Studies will remain committed to supporting, promoting and advocating for cross-border cooperation as part of the ongoing process of peace and reconciliation, and as a means of providing practical benefits to communities and businesses on both sides of the border.

¹⁰⁵ Rural development is listed as item 15 in Annex A of the North-South Mapping Exercise.

16.5. CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES, ADDENDUM, MAY 2019



“Supporting communities and sustaining small rural business within the border region after Brexit”

(May 2019)

Addendum to statement by the Centre for Cross Border Studies to the meeting with the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development of 12 December 2018

16.5.1. A number of dates for the UK’s withdrawal from the EU have come and gone since the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS) met with the Committee in December 2018,¹⁰⁶ with the current “deadline” now being 31 October 2019. However, the fact that the UK did not “crash out” of the EU on the 29th of March (or in April or May) because extensions to the Article 50 process have been granted does not diminish the risk of a “no deal” outcome, with all the negative consequences that would have on communities and small rural businesses in the border region. Indeed, as the political context in Westminster has not only failed to reveal any greater degree of consensus around the UK’s withdrawal than was the case in December 2018, but could instead be said to have shown little sense of added urgency in using the extended Article 50 negotiations to find a solution, it could be argued the risk of a “no deal” outcome (even if one delayed to a later date) has increased.

16.5.2. As CCBS noted in its meeting with the Committee in December 2018, Brexit – and particularly a “no deal” Brexit – will undoubtedly impact on the economic future of communities and small rural businesses in the border region. However, CCBS’s concerns have increased since December in relation to the risks posed to social cohesion in the border region. Whilst CCBS does not mean to suggest any correlation between recent incidents of violence taking place in Northern Ireland (including the tragic death of Lyra McKee) and the UK’s decision to withdraw from the EU, we nevertheless fear the consequences of Brexit will add to the current instability, unless mitigating measures are put in place. Although such instability may have its origins and focus in Northern Ireland, it will inevitably have repercussions and be felt in the border counties of Ireland. Moreover, whereas the economic impacts of the

¹⁰⁶https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_rural_and_community_development/submissions/2018/2018-12-12_opening-statement-dr-anthony-soares-deputy-director-centre-for-cross-border-studies_en.pdf

UK's departure from the EU could be reduced to a considerable degree if the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland contained within the Withdrawal Agreement were to become operational in the absence of a UK-EU free trade agreement, it is not certain that it would have the same effect in relation to social cohesion.

16.5.3. CCBS has seen little evidence that the UK Government has formulated concrete measures to address the economic and social consequences of Brexit in the border region, which will have effects across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. This is particularly the case in relation to measures whose full potential can only be realised on a cross-border basis. Thus, we continue to see no progress in ensuring the UK Government's proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund, designed to replace EU Structural Funds, will encompass Northern Ireland's need to engage in cross-border and North-South cooperation.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, we are yet to receive clear indications from the UK Government of how the current EU support programmes for rural development, most notably the LEADER programme, will be replaced by UK-funded programmes with a cross-border dimension.

16.5.4. Given the vital importance cross-border cooperation will continue to have for economic development and social cohesion in the border region, CCBS welcomes the commitments made by the Irish Government and the EU in relation to a future PEACE PLUS programme, whatever the outcome of the UK's current negotiations on its withdrawal. However, further to what it stated in its evidence to this Committee in December 2018, and mindful of the fact that the proposed PEACE PLUS programme will incorporate both the current PEACE and INTERREG programmes, CCBS calls on guarantees being given that a significant proportion of its total budget will be dedicated to genuine cross-border cooperation initiatives involving the border counties of Ireland and Northern Ireland. That proportion should be calculated on the basis that all interventions funded under the current INTERREG programme are of a cross-border nature (although Western Scotland is also included in the current programme for Ireland-Northern Ireland-Scotland), and that CCBS had recommended in its response to the SEUPB's consultation on the draft 2014-2020 PEACE and INTERREG programmes that at least 15% of the budget for the PEACE programme be dedicated for cross-border projects.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ See the Conservative and Unionist Party, "Forward, Together: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future. The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2017" (2017), p.35, <https://www.conservatives.com/manifesto> [last accessed 09/12/2018]; and written Ministerial Statement made by James Brokenshire (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government), HCWS927 (24 July 2018), <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-07-24/HCWS927> [last accessed 09/12/2018].

¹⁰⁸ CCBS had stated: "given the importance of cross-border activities in terms of affording the required distinctiveness from other regional programmes, and in offering added-value to the objectives of the PEACE programme, the Centre for Cross Border Studies recommends that 15% of the total budget be ring-fenced for cross-border projects"; "Response to SEUPB Consultation on PEACE and INTERREG 2014-2020" (July 2014), p.13, <http://www.crossborder.ie/site2015/wp-content/uploads/CCBS-Response-to-SEUPB-Consultation.pdf>.

16.5.5. In order to properly support communities and small rural businesses in the border region to overcome the challenges posed by Brexit, it is essential that this Committee, along with other relevant Committees, individual legislators, and the Irish Government, continue to engage in dialogue with political leaders, civil servants, business bodies, trade unions and civil society organisations in Northern Ireland, as well as with the UK Government. It is particularly essential that such dialogue does not focus primarily on economic matters (as important as they are), and instead includes a substantial social dimension. It is also crucial that such dialogue encompasses the development of programmes such as PEACE PLUS, bringing in as many actors as possible with knowledge of the border region and of cross-border cooperation. Without such a dialogue, it is unlikely that future support programmes will adequately meet the needs of communities and small rural businesses in the border region.

For further information on the issues raised here, please contact:

Dr Anthony Soares, Acting Director, Centre for Cross Border Studies

Email: a.soares@qub.ac.uk

Telephone: (0)28 3751 1550

17. NILGA, OPENING STATEMENT, DECEMBER 2018



Meeting with the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development

12 December 2018

“Supporting communities and sustaining small rural business within the border region after Brexit”

Statement by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Good morning Senators and Deputies. I am Councillor Seamus Doyle, a member of NILGA and a member of Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council.

The Northern Ireland Local Government Association, NILGA, is the only functioning cross party political body in Northern Ireland at present.

Throughout the hiatus in regional government at Stormont, NILGA has sought to build consensus and represent all of Northern Ireland’s main political parties at local government level in Westminster, Dublin and Brussels.

Northern Ireland’s councils have built a strong track record in delivering economic growth and fostering peace and reconciliation. Northern Ireland and the border corridor in particular will be the region most affected by Brexit and its outworkings and we are working intently to prepare our councils and to attempt to minimise any negative effects for local areas.

Brexit is a major concern for our councils. We are all too familiar with the risks we are facing:

- The unbinding of our close ties with our neighbours on an economic and social level which will widen the gap between our communities and impinge on our way of life
- Different rules and regulations creating havoc for business, the environment and ordinary people which will create difficult conditions for our small businesses and tourists, resulting in a downturn in both economies
- Pressure on our agriculture, health, manufacturing and hospitality sectors if people don’t want to live in Northern Ireland

But in this difficult situation we find ourselves in, our communities and councils will find ways to continue our strong tradition of cooperation. We are feeling optimistic about the future of cross-border cooperation following recent meetings with the regional assemblies in Brussels and follow-up meetings at home and we are planning future collaborative work together. This will include:

- Sharing information and tools to ensure local authorities North & South are prepared for Brexit
- Embedding entrepreneurialism in our local authorities
- Investigating joint opportunities for training and development
- Building regional relationships to improve cross-border spatial development and regeneration

In economic policy terms, the emergence of city and growth deals can be a real gamechanger for Northern Ireland. NILGA's paper of May 2018 highlights the interconnectedness of our economies in particular the links with the National Development Plan 2040 and the cross-border linkages with the Derry and Newry areas – indeed in the Derry City Region area 40% of the population lives in Donegal. It goes without saying that investment in one jurisdiction will reap benefits for the entire region, whether that be investment in jobs, broadband, education or infrastructure. This is what we must focus our minds on to ensure growth of the entire island.

These are my opening remarks on behalf of NILGA and my colleague Lisa O'Kane will address any questions from the Committee.

18. EAST BORDER REGION, OPENING STATEMENT, DECEMBER 2018

Presentation to the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development:

Pamela Arthurs, Chief Executive East Border Region.

12th December 2018.

In the first instance might I thank the Chairman and members of the Committee for inviting me here today to discuss "Supporting communities and sustaining small rural business within the border region after Brexit".

18.1. INTRODUCTION

Let me first briefly explain my organisation. EBR is a local authority led cross border organisation, 3 Local Authorities in Ireland and 3 in N Ireland, whose mission is to "promote cross border economic development which benefits the people of the region"

Formed in 1976 EBR has always worked under the back drop of the European Union. The initial impetus for cooperation came from locally elected politicians on both sides of the border who realized that there would be merit in working together for mutual benefit.

Since the introduction of the EU INTERREG Programme in 1990, EBR has drawn down millions of Euro for a host of projects which have benefitted communities and small rural businesses along the border corridor. Currently EBR is a partner on the INTERREG VA Co Innovate project. InterTradeIreland leads this large strategic SME project which will complete in 2022. The aim of Co Innovate is to assist 1409 small businesses in the border region and west coast of Scotland. We all know that the border region is dominated by small rural businesses, in particular micro business (10 employees or under) which require this assistance not only to create new jobs but as importantly to sustain existing jobs. There is no doubt that the myriad of EU funded projects which have been drawn down have significantly contributed to the growth of border business over the past 25 years.

Brexit, however, will be a game changer. What Brexit has done already is to highlight many needs which already exist as well as causing problems in the future. Small rural businesses have already been affected. The drastic fall in sterling after the referendum and the ongoing uncertainty around Brexit which has dominated our landscape since the vote in June 2016 is not good for business. Couple this with the lack of a Government in N Ireland and border businesses are certainly suffering. Whilst the Irish government has put in place measures to support rural business the same opportunities do not exist for businesses in N Ireland.

18.2. LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO BREXIT.

Particularly with the absence of a Government in N Ireland Local Authorities along the border felt it necessary to articulate and lobby for the needs of the 1million constituents of the border region.

“Brexit and the Border Corridor on the island of Ireland: Risks, Opportunities and Issues to Consider” was commissioned by the 11 Local Authorities which make up the border corridor. This report clearly identified that the economy of the border region currently lags behind the economies of both Ireland and N Ireland. It also outlines that the border will be most detrimentally affected as a result of Brexit and that regional disparities exist along the border and that areas most reliant on Agriculture will suffer. Also note that some farmers in N Ireland who receive 87% Single Farm Payment are currently better off due to the decline in sterling. Where will this money come from in the future? Some of the groups represented here today responded to a consultation around a Future UK Prosperity fund. Despite our efforts the report hardly recognized the need to fund cross border activity.

Dan O Brien, Chief Economist IIEA stated at a Brexit event in Dublin on 4th December 2018 that ‘whilst employment growth over all in Ireland is good, employment in the border region has faltered’ since June 2016.

This is a reflection of the damage that Brexit has already done. Business in the region is less confident and more reluctant to expand as the future is so uncertain. Current developments at Westminster have compounded the problem.

18.3. WHAT CAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES DO?

Local Authorities on both sides of the border have a duty of care to the citizens of the border region. Local elected members in N Ireland are the only political voice at present. Border Local Authorities want to work with both Governments to develop and propose creative solutions for border management post Brexit. Local Authorities have an excellent track record and have been working on a cross border basis for over 40 years in EBR/ICBAN and NW Region. This, despite political problems at a national level.

In order to assist rural communities and business it is essential to address the structural weaknesses in the border region as outlined below. Intervention is needed now.

- Upgrading infrastructure, both transport and broadband. This would assist connectivity in the region.
- Ongoing business support measures to assist business prepare for and deal with the impact.
- Focus on relevant skills levels in the region
- A Brexit Transition Programme along the lines of a Territorial Cooperation Programme to assist the border region to adapt to the challenges of Brexit. This needs to be broad based as Brexit will impact every sector.
- Continuation of EU funding Programmes, or alternative funding Programmes to assist the communities. This includes the broad range of funds Horizon 2020, Rural Development, Erasmus etc.

Mitigating risks and / or taking opportunities will, by necessity, mean defending some of what is currently in place e.g. funding streams. However, it will also mean that how some things are done will have to change. As the border corridor with its peripheral position already lags behind other regions, the braking of past patterns is necessary. New policy, thinking and new methods of cooperation and partnership between Local Authorities and with central Government will be essential for border management to work in the wake of Brexit.

The success of any future regime for the management of the border will be judged not only on how well it answers the political and economic dilemmas caused to the region by Brexit, but also how far it allows the current level of co dependence which exists across border areas to continue.

In my view any solution must be 'bottom up, needs based, driven and delivered locally'.

Thank you

Pamela Arthurs

19. IRISH CENTRAL BORDER AREA NETWORK, OPENING STATEMENT, DECEMBER 2018

TEXT OF STATEMENT BY SHANE CAMPBELL, IRISH CENTRAL BORDER AREA NETWORK

TO COMMITTEE FOR RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,

12/12/2018

ON

'SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINING SMALL RURAL BUSINESS

WITHIN THE BORDER REGION AFTER BREXIT'

ICBAN is the local authority led partnership for the area known as the Central Border Region. The member Council areas of the partnership include: Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo. The Partnership was formed in 1995 and works to develop common solutions to area-based challenges. The 25-member Management Board of the organisation are drawn from Council elected members and are representative of the main political interests in the area.

It is recognised that Brexit represents the single greatest challenge to cross-border cooperation since the ending of The Troubles. Community uncertainties around what impacts this will have, have been identified (in joint studies conducted between ICBAN and QUB <http://icban.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Brexit-at-the-Border-FINAL-Jun-18.pdf>) as already impacting on the lives of border citizens and businesses. As a consequence, many individual and organisational plans are being postponed as the shape of the final outcome is awaited. The most recent study referenced here has identified that the most important consideration is protecting the hard-won peace.

The agreed focus by the ICBAN Management Board is to work to negate any negative impact of the Brexit process on the citizens and businesses of the Central Board Region. The area is recognised as predominantly rural in nature with only a few larger settlements. Small businesses are the backbone to the local economy and there are many interlinked examples of border businesses drawing upon labour market and supply chain supports from both jurisdictions, relying of course on an open border and common arrangements.

Of course, no one knows what Brexit will yet look like but in an understanding that it has been impacting and will create change, the following brief comments are made with regard to supporting and sustaining communities and small businesses in the area post Brexit:

There is the continuing need to ensure free movement of people, goods and services. The consequences of significant disruptions could be devastating on the area, and in the rural community context this includes ensuring access to health and education services straddling the border.

Brexit has served to challenge the community cohesion of the area, with a resurgence of national identity. It is therefore more important than before to prioritise North-South Co-operation and cross-border co-operation regardless of Brexit outcomes, and in so doing to help work against any drift to back-to-back development again. For example in reference to the National Development Plan, and in

the absence of a Regional Development Strategy review in NI, cognisance should be taken of Local Development Plans and how NI Councils through these are reaching out to neighbouring Councils, and secondly of the merits and value in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy being developed for the Northern and Western Area being influenced by those NI Local Development Plans.

Connectivity Infrastructure is key to this largely rural area in enabling access to services. This includes both digital communications and roads-based transportation, issues on which the area's local authorities are consistent. Delivering on the National Broadband Plan ambitions is critical, and as interested commentators on the subject we would encourage that if the NBP cannot be advanced further to delivery in its current format, that an alternative solution is found. It is not too late for considerations to be given to where North-South alignments could benefit, given that the need and stage of development to enhance broadband connectivity is at a similar stage of development north of the border. Indeed, it could be very timely to yet look at potential all-Island solutions.

In the absence of a rail network in the North West quadrant of the island, strategic road corridors are key for transportation access and movement. It would be therefore helpful if both Governments formally recommitted to the long-planned N2-A5 Dublin to Derry dualling project, highlighting the priority nature of this. The importance of the A4-N16 Sligo to Ballygawley and Belfast route is important for East-West navigation across the northern part of the island and needs support from both governments.

There are many best-practice regional examples where government has helped as a catalyst to spur on a renewed regional economy. Whilst recognising that local efforts are key to such; the Central Border Region would benefit from bespoke government intervention and support to help kick-start a necessary regional response for an area that is lagging economically. Through ICBAN the 8 local authority areas are keen to work together and the initiative by Monaghan and Mid Ulster Councils to create a Common Statement on Planning, is an example of some of this self-help in action.

Whilst national governments and political attention continues to be focused on Brexit, and while it is expected that this would continue for some time yet, the delivery of local services to citizens of the border region must continue to be a priority.

In the vacuum of a working NI Executive, local authorities in NI continue to play a key role in the democratic functioning of government. The work of local authorities in engaging with their counterparts across the border will be vital in the future to help ensure that, through Community Planning and its focus on the economic and social elements of well-being, that the impact on local services can be minimised.

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There are many best-practice regional examples where government has helped as a catalyst to spur on a renewed regional economy. Whilst recognising that local efforts are key to such; the Central Border Region would benefit from bespoke government intervention and support to help kick-start a necessary regional response for an area that is lagging economically. Through ICBAN the 8 local authority areas are keen to work together and the initiative by Monaghan and Mid Ulster Councils to create a Common Statement on Planning, is an example of some of this self-help in action.

Whilst national governments and political attention continues to be focused on Brexit, and while it is expected that this would continue for some time yet, the delivery of local services to citizens of the border region must continue to be a priority. In the vacuum of a working NI Executive, local authorities in NI continue to play a key role in the democratic functioning of government. The work of local authorities in engaging with their counterparts across the border will be vital in the future to help ensure that, through Community Planning and its focus on the economic and social elements of well-being, that the impact on local services can be minimised.

Continued direct interventions into promoting cooperation in the Region will be needed, through the delivery of PEACE, INTERREG or LEADER funds, in arrangements between UK and EU, or in the absence of these ensuring that these are directly replaced. These EU supports have been vital for communities and businesses of the Region and without these it will be incumbent on the Irish and UK governments to replace these.

Infrastructure supports are critical for the area to ensure the region maintains its competitiveness. However, the form of support should not be focused on infrastructure alone and instead there should be provision also for the softer people-to-people and community-based initiatives also. These will help ensure that ambitions in terms of reconciliation and the development of good relations can be delivered.

Policy and delivery must continue to support the regeneration and revitalisation of border towns and villages in the border area. Many communities, small towns and villages have declined in recent years, due to out-migration and other factors. Brexit serves to be the latest challenge, and as the

focus of community life these settlements and the services access provided through these must receive a renewed focus to help maintain service delivery in 21st Century.

There is a need for government, telecoms providers and the Regulator to ensure that inadvertent roaming charges will not be reintroduced, and which would serve to disenfranchise cross-border travellers, as a result of the UK leaving the Single Digital Market.

20. RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK, OPENING STATEMENT, DECEMBER 2018



Rural Community Network
SUPPORTING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Meeting with the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development

12 December 2018 (updated May 2019)

**“Supporting communities and sustaining small rural business
within the border region after Brexit”**

Statement by Rural Community Network NI

On behalf of Rural Community Network, I would like to thank the Chair and members of the Committee for the invitation to meet with you to discuss future support for communities and small rural business within the border region post Brexit.

20.1. ABOUT RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK

Rural Community Network (RCN) is a regional voluntary organisation established in 1991 by local community organisations to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty, disadvantage, equality, social exclusion and community development. Our vision is of vibrant, articulate, inclusive and sustainable rural communities across Northern Ireland contributing to a prosperous, equitable, peaceful and stable society. Our mission is to provide an effective voice for and support to rural communities, particularly those who are most disadvantaged.

RCN is a membership organisation with approximately 250 member groups across Northern Ireland. Its Board is representative of its membership base with more than half of its representatives (12) elected democratically from the community. The remaining representatives are a mix of organisations that provide support or have a sectoral interest within rural communities.

RCN's aims are:

- to empower the voice of rural communities to promote, support and celebrate community development practice in rural communities
- to actively work towards an equitable and peaceful society
- to support rural communities to realise their potential and ambitions

Further information on our work is available at www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org

20.2. THE CHALLENGES OF BREXIT FOR BORDER COMMUNITIES

Many central border communities are on the periphery of both jurisdictions and citizens in this region need to be better connected to opportunity, either locally through more dispersed and better funded rural development, or through easier access to opportunity in major towns and cities. Many of these communities are still recovering from the legacy of the conflict and the uncertainties caused by Brexit have led to fears about how the UK leaving the EU will impact on the daily life of citizens. Broadband connectivity and a decent road network are a pre-requisite to encourage young people to remain in, or return to, these rural communities. The closure of public services, such as schools and GP surgeries can lead to a vicious circle where young people and young families see no future in those communities leading to further decline.

20.3. THE NI RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2014-2020

The 2014-2020 Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme is worth up to £623M over 2014-2020. c £186.5M was contributed by the EU matched by £436.5 M of NI Executive funding. LEADER funding is worth approx. £70M in the current programme 2014-2020. This funding has been dispersed to farmers, rural businesses and rural communities partly through the LEADER approach. The Rural Development Programme has been a key policy driver for rural communities across the EU as well as providing a ring-fenced funding pot that can only be spent on development of rural communities. Rural Community Network representatives sit on the NI Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee which along with representatives from other rural development organisations, local government, farming organisations, environmental organisations and the agri-food sector.

20.4. THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT AND THE EU/UK WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT

The Good Friday Agreement Annex to Strand 2 specifically named the Peace Programme, INTERREG and LEADER II and their successor programmes as areas of potential North South co-operation. The December 2017 UK/EU Withdrawal Agreement recognises the need to protect the 1998 Agreement 'in all its parts' at paragraph 42. However, paragraph 55 states that both governments will honour their commitments to the Peace and Interreg funding programmes under the current multi-annual financial framework and states that possibilities for future support will be examined favourably. It concerns us that specific reference to LEADER was omitted from the Withdrawal Agreement. We have sought clarification on this issue but have received no satisfactory response from officials in NI Government Departments.

20.5. POST BREXIT RURAL DEVELOPMENT?

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has established a Brexit rural society working group which has produced an issues paper on rural society in NI which has been submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in London. However, in the view of RCN, Northern Ireland has barely started discussing what a future policy or programme for Rural development post Brexit will look like. DAERA has undertaken an extensive public stakeholder engagement on farm support policy post Brexit. As part of that stakeholder engagement DAERA officials explicitly stated that farm support policy and rural development would be “de-coupled” as their view was that “rural society” would be a separate work stream within the Department. Our concern is that rural development is very far down the agenda amongst the myriad other issues affected by Brexit. This is further exacerbated by the absence of a functioning Assembly.¹⁰⁹

20.6. THE UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

From work with rural development networks in the UK including Action for Communities in Rural England and Scottish Rural Action RCN learned that Westminster intends future “rural development” type funding to be distributed through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)¹¹⁰. This was confirmed by Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food George Eustice who said that LEADER type funding would transfer to the UKSPF at a meeting of the Agriculture Bill Committee in the House of Commons in October:

“I turn to our plan for delivering for these areas, which is the shared prosperity fund. It will have a rural strand. The shared prosperity fund will replace the plethora of EU structural funds. We are working very closely with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and other Government colleagues to ensure that there is a rural programme within that shared prosperity fund and to ensure, for example, that LEADER and other grants have some kind of successor scheme.”.¹¹¹

DAERA officials were previously unaware of the fact that the UK government intended to incorporate a rural strand into the UKSPF. The UKSPF will be managed jointly between UK by the Department for Housing, Communities & Local Government in England along with the Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy. In England Local Development Partnerships will distribute UKSPF money and delivery will be aligned to the new England Industrial Strategy. Plans for the UKSPF are still at an early stage and we understand that the relevant Departments intend to bring forward their plans to public consultation early in 2019. Agriculture and Rural Development are devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly so there may be scope for Northern Ireland to deliver a post Brexit rural development policy and programme that differs significantly from that proposed in England. The

¹⁰⁹ DAERA is shortly to launch a public stakeholder engagement exercise on a future environment strategy for NI. This was announced at an engagement event “NI Strategy for a Better Environment” on 7 May 2019.

¹¹⁰ Ministerial Statement on UKSPF by James Brokenshire <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-07-24/debates/18072456000031/LocalGrowth?highlight=uk%20shared%20prosperity%20fund#contribution-6E462400-8677-4B4A-8A52-28DF798BC178>

¹¹¹ Evidence given by Minister George Eustice at the 6th sitting of the Agriculture Bill Committee on 30.10.18 [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-10-30/debates/bacd62cf-f47b-442e-a74b-736578c5268e/AgricultureBill\(SixthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-10-30/debates/bacd62cf-f47b-442e-a74b-736578c5268e/AgricultureBill(SixthSitting))

absence of a functioning Assembly means that this is another aspect of post Brexit planning in which Northern Ireland is being left behind.¹¹²

RCN is concerned that if any future Rural Development type programme is incorporated into the UKSPF it will represent approximately 2% of any notional UKSPF compared to the amounts of funding typically distributed by the EU Structural Funds. Any future "rural development strand" will be relatively easy to cut if budget pressures force a reduction in allocation to the UKSPF. There may be no guarantee that any part of the UKSPF will be ring fenced for rural communities.

20.7. POST BREXIT OPPORTUNITIES

Governments North & South and in the UK need to put in place policies and programmes that sustain North/South networking and co-operation. Brexit and the absence of the Assembly risks a regression into back to back development which marginalises border communities.

Agriculture & Rural development policy are devolved matters a functioning Assembly could shape any future rural development policy to more effectively meet the needs of rural communities and reduce bureaucracy.

The NI Executive has committed significant match funding from the Northern Ireland block grant in previous programme periods. From a budgetary point of view previous allocations of funding from the block grant means that Northern Ireland won't be beginning from a "standing start" in funding a successor rural development programme.

Any new policy or programme for rural development in Northern Ireland needs to be as compatible as possible with LEADER in the border counties to enable learning, sharing and important co-operation projects to continue.

For further information on the issues discussed in this statement contact:

Aidan Campbell policy officer

twitter @ruralcommnet

facebook rural community network

¹¹² Whitehall officials conducted a pre-consultation workshop in Belfast in January. This was a workshop attended by NGOs, NI Departmental officials and representatives from local government. A short presentation set the UKSPF in the context of the UK Industrial Strategy. The key objective of the UKSPF was identified as: "The UKSPF will tackle inequalities between communities by raising productivity, especially in those parts of the UK whose economies are furthest behind." Officials also stated that the UKSPF fund would respect the devolution settlements across the UK and engage with devolved administrations to ensure the UKSPF worked for all parts of the UK.

21. CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES, INFORMATION SESSION, DECEMBER 2018

21.1. DR ANTHONY SOARES, CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES



“Working with Our Neighbours”:
Cross-Border Cooperation in national, regional
and local development

Information Session
hosted by the
Joint Committee on Rural
and Community
Development

12 December 2018



Speakers

Welcome: Joe Carey TD, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Rural & Community Development

Anthony Soares, Deputy Director, Centre for Cross Border Studies

Pamela Arthurs, Chief Executive, East Border Region

Shane Campbell, Irish Central Border Area

Lisa O’Kane, Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Aidan Campbell, Rural Community Network



Introductory remarks, Anthony Soares



- ▶ *Thinking* about our neighbours
- ▶ Thinking *with* our neighbours
- ▶ *Working* with our neighbours
- ▶ ... *a two-way process*



Cross Border Local Authority Cooperation
Ireland/N Ireland
Pamela Arthurs
Chief Executive, East Border Region
12th December 2018

EAST BORDER REGION

European Union
European Regional
Development Fund
Investing in your future



Context: IRL/NI Cross Border Co operation

- 40 years old – relatively young

Origins in Local Authorities in 1970's

Elected members realised:-

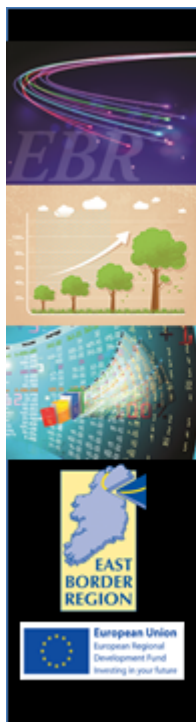
- 'back to back' development not working.
- There were areas of common concern north/south
- Strength in working together
- The Border area - more disadvantaged on both sides

1976: East Border Region Committee

1975: NWRCBG

1996: ICBAN

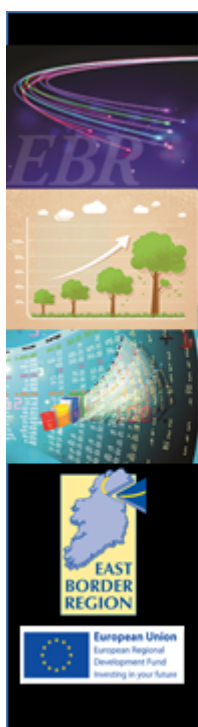
Border Corridor necklace in 1996:



Local Authority Cross Border Cooperation

Aim:

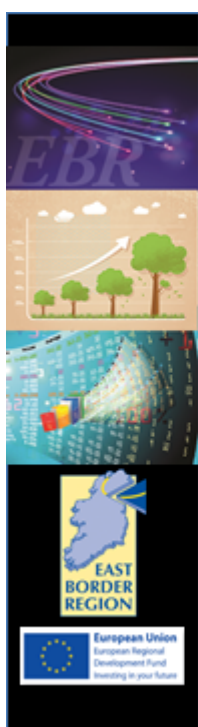
- to promote cross border economic development which benefits all of the people of the cross border region.
- Visionary – first cross border political organisations.
- Daunting – Hostile political climate
- No support in Dublin or Belfast.
- No financial support



1980's

Local Authorities

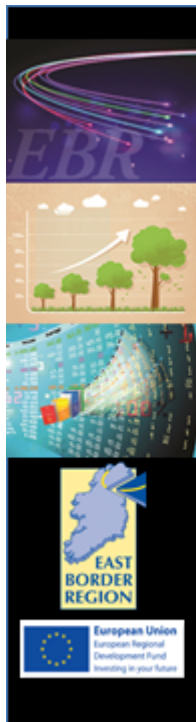
- Trust and relationships – elected members and officials developed
- Cllrs and officials became familiar with differences across the border
- Cllrs and officials – cross border working – practical. Eg Roads
- New areas of common concern emerged.
- Common work plans were developed
- Realisation that strength in working together
- No money!!



INTERREG Funding 1989

- First time outside finance available for cross border activity
- EU funding encouraged LA's to be more outward looking - share and learn from colleagues in other areas - AEBC
- Realised that the Irl/N Ireland border area suffers similar problems to other border regions in Europe
- One advantage – same language.

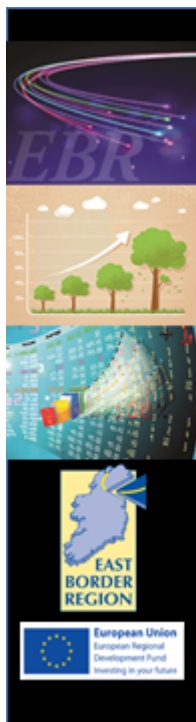




INTERREG IIIA 2000-2006

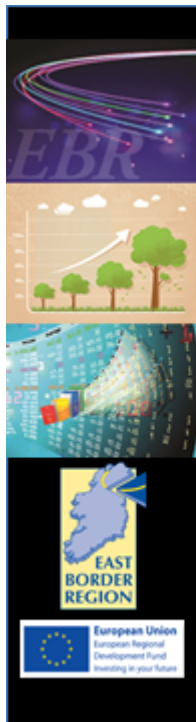
- Border Corridor Strategy – set agenda for INTERREG IIIA
- Cross Border groups - Implementing Bodies – awarded €59m
- Bottom up
- Needs based
- Local decision making

High Point – genuine cross border collaboration and impact.



INTERREG IVA VA

- More centralised Programmes
- Government departments north and south set priorities
- Global economic downturn
- No local decision making
- 'people to people' projects not funded
- Contrary to spirit EU wide guidelines



EU Territorial Cooperation Programmes

PEACE and **INTERREG** enabled the transformation of the Irl/N Ireland border area.

- Border area however still lags behind economically
- Continued interventions required

European Union

'constant backdrop to cross border cooperation since 1976'



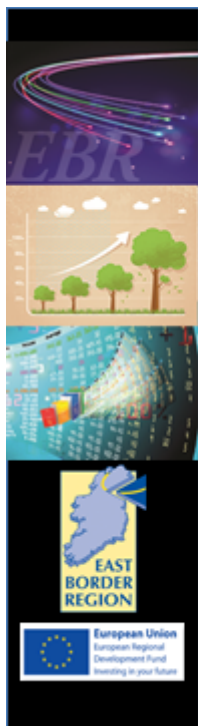
Brexit



Referendum 23rd June 2016

'game changer for cross border cooperation'

Ireland/ N Ireland Border will be most impacted by Brexit



- Cross border cooperation not a priority
- Funding? to date mainly from EU
- UK Prosperity Fund/ Irish equivalent?
- Negative impact – economic – political and social
- Polarised communities
- Return to 'back to back' development
- No government in N Ireland
- Need corresponding NI plan to NDP



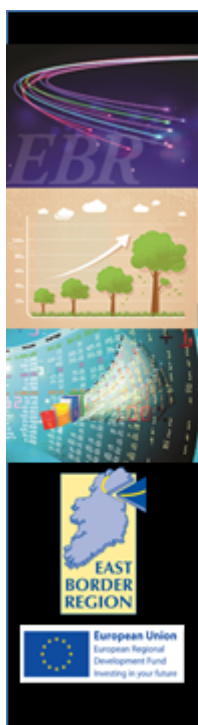
Local Authorities: Key asks:

- As Local Authorities along the Border we want to be part of the solution not the problem
- The goals of peace and reconciliation contained in the Good Friday Agreement/Belfast Agreement must be maintained
- “Seamless and frictionless” border
- There is a functioning Economic Area straddling the Border, and also sub-sets with the Corridor (North West, East around the Dublin economic corridor) If Brexit is not handled properly there is a real possibility that this will be jeopardised



Key areas for support:

- Investment in Infrastructure (real and virtual):
 - Roads/rail/broadband/telecoms/access/connectivity/Energy
 - Education/Skills Development/R&D
 - Health
 - Tourism/Greenways/Blueways/product development
- Investment in Business
 - The majority of Border Businesses are not prepared for Brexit (NI in particular)
 - SME's backbone of Border Corridor
 - Funding to assist with preparation for Brexit
 - Information/advice regarding tariffs



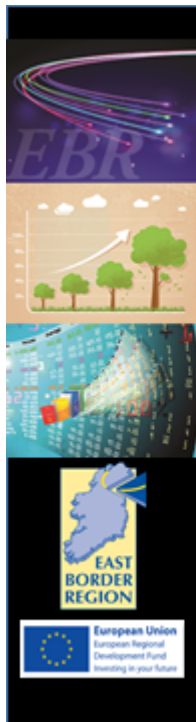
Key Areas of support:

- Agrifood Industry - particular challenges; supply chain (80% of end products rely on cross border interaction)/exchange rates/compliance
- need properly funded transition arrangements
- Continuation of EU Funding which has helped transform the Border Region: INTERREG/PEACE/Horizon 2020/Erasmus/Rural Development etc...
- Support for continued cross border collaboration amongst key stakeholders; Local Authorities, Cross Border Networks, Chambers, Educational Institutes etc..



Local Authority Cross border Groupings

- Critical for future cross border cooperation.
- Political mandate
- Provide local solutions
- Provide mechanism for whole region not just Local Authorities
- Politically neutral
- Could play a key role in the design, development and implementation of any dedicated intervention following Brexit.



Local Authority Cross border Groupings

- Strategic in approach
- Proactive – agenda setting
- Capacity building
- Strong networks, regionally, nationally and at EU level
- Strong track record
- Cross border expertise
- Strong cross party/border lobby

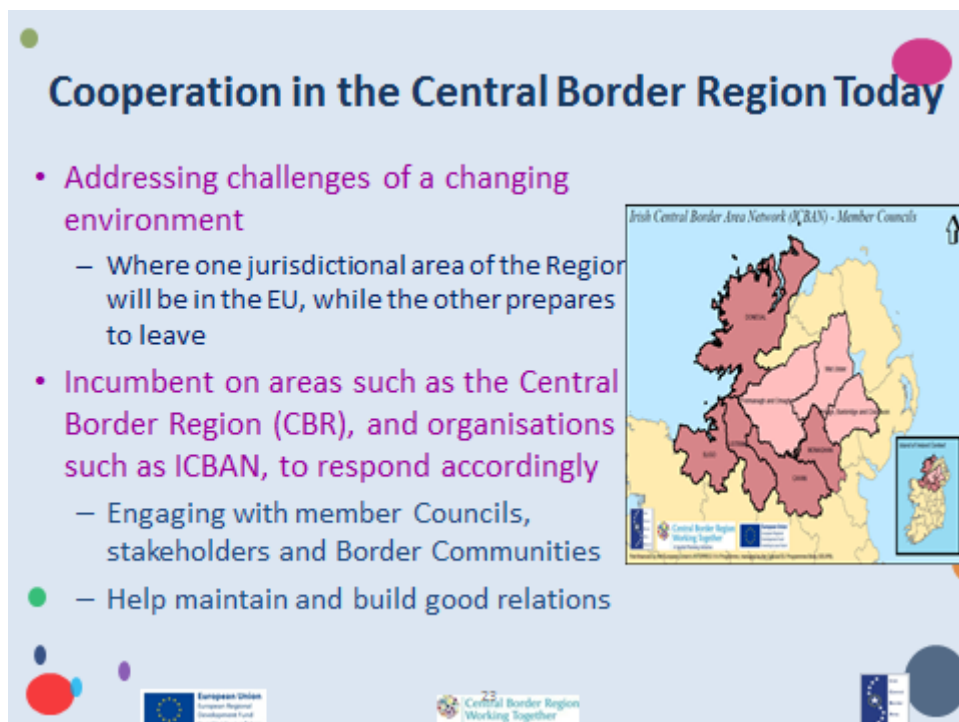




Conclusion

- Cross Border Co-operation is not easy!
- Challenging times
- Whatever the outcome of Brexit East Border Region we has the expertise to be part of any new process in respect of cross border co-operation
- Practical, decentralised, needs based approach required (similar to INTERREG IIIA model)
- East Border Region core value remains consistent:
- **`to promote sustainable, cross border economic development which benefits the citizens of the region`**

21.2. SHANE CAMPBELL, IRISH CENTRAL BORDER AREA NETWORK



Knowns and Unknowns

- Existing Govt Policies
- Councils' role in enterprise development
- Fragility of UK Government
- EU funds to finish, except maybe:
 - Peace – the EU likes it
 - Horizon – the UK likes it
 - INTERREG maybe
- Might be a NI Executive again by 2020?
- Brexit impacts on tariffs and EU funds?
- NI as a 'common regulatory area'?
- NI Brexit dividend via UK, Ireland (EU)?
- UK Regional Policy impact on NI?
- Tories' 'Shared Prosperity Fund'?
- Irish Govt's 'Border Focal Point' and 'Special Compensation Fund'?



Engaging Border Communities & Stakeholders



- Need to maintain a hard-won peace
- Reconciliation is a work in progress
- Cohesion challenged by high-level political pressures
- Continuing engagements, joint-working, dialogue between Local Authorities (LA)
- Renewed commitments to LA cross-border cooperation



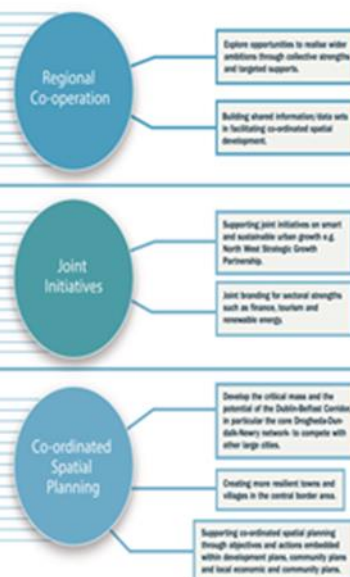
The Developing Discussion Within ICBAN

- Some issues best served border-wide
- Some issues best addressed sub-regionally
- Recognition that cross-border co-operation is more important than before
- *'The harder the border, the greater the need to cooperate'*

National Planning Framework 2040

- "The NPF supports further growth and investment in the county towns in the central border counties and strengthening accessibility from and to the central border area"
- "Building up the economic, infrastructural and developmental ties will be supported through local leadership and co-operation arrangements such as the co-ordination of statutory planning functions and corresponding infrastructural investment"
- Specific reference to Central Border Area
- Sets out three key areas of focus include:
 1. Regional co-operation arrangements
 2. Joint initiatives
 3. Co-ordinated spatial planning

Figure 8.2 | Areas for Cross-Border Local Co-ordination



Examples of Cross-Border Cooperation Between Local Authorities in CBR

1. 'Statement of Common Good'
2. UNESCO Global Geopark
3. Cross-Border Community Planning Linkages



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund
Investing in your future



Three key areas for
collaboration

Sperrin Mountains

Lough Neagh and Lough
Beg

Monaghan Borders

1. Statement of Common Good:
Slides Courtesy of Mid Ulster District
Council and Monaghan County
Council, 30/11/2018

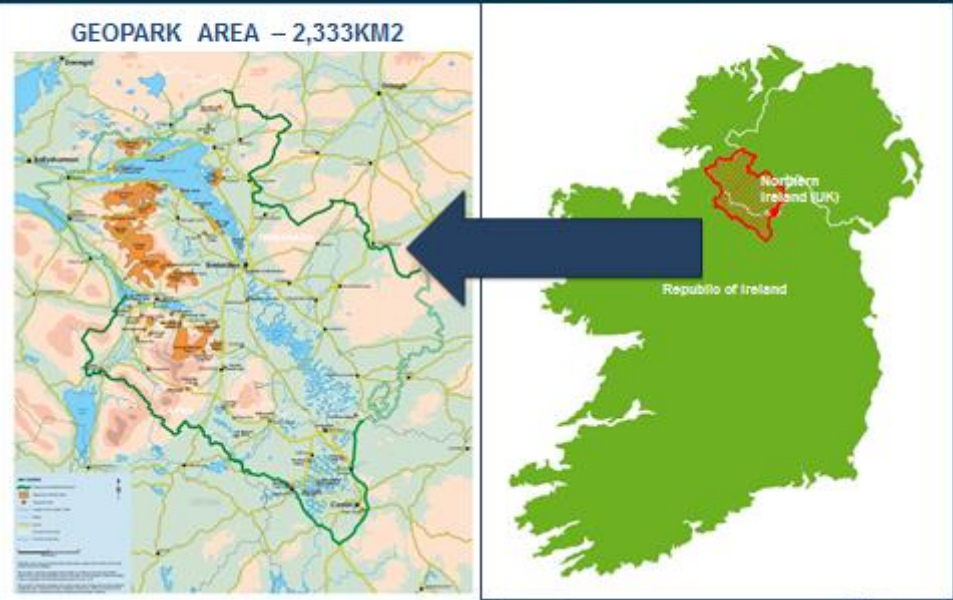
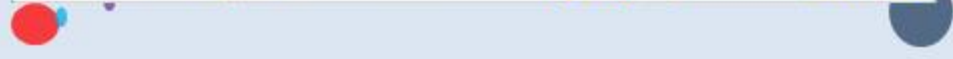


Common Issues

- Protection of landscapes through appropriate environmental designations;
- Protection of River Corridors from inappropriate development and safeguarding the Ulster Canal;
- Management of Minerals Development and the use of Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development;
- Improvement of road linkages and infrastructure;
- Improve energy infrastructure and provision;
- Improve broadband provision;
- Protection of water quality;
- Protection of sites of environmental/heritage/biodiversity importance.

Cross Border Forum Statement of Common Ground

1. Provide appropriate policies to facilitate *improvements to the transport infrastructure* to enable faster and safer travel across the central border region;
2. Encourage the delivery of enhanced *cross border connectivity* to include cycling and walking routes, as well as blueways and greenways.
3. Promote the *growth of the region's main towns* as the key hubs for housing, services and employment, complemented by a network of small towns and villages;
4. Provide appropriate policies *to resist major retail development outside of the towns*;
5. Support the delivery of a stable power network through a 'North-South Interconnector' scheme and also the accompanying distribution and transmission networks to enhance the security of electricity supply in the region;
6. Support the delivery of stable and secure digital communications infrastructure, including fibre optic technology, to *improve broad band provision* across the region;
7. Provide appropriate policies to encourage *renewable energy schemes*, in order to support a reduced carbon footprint for the central border region;
8. Provide appropriate policies and/or designations to *protect our most sensitive landscapes* from inappropriate development;
9. Provide appropriate policies to *protect our most sensitive areas from mineral development*;
10. Provide appropriate policies to afford *protection to our existing peat resources* from commercial extraction.





Marble Arch Caves
Global Geopark



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí



Cavan
Comhairle Contae
Cavan
County Council



Marble Arch Caves
Global Geopark



Marble Arch Caves
Global Geopark



Geopark Management Team
Geopark staff
Area Engineer
● Cavan & Fermanagh Tourism Officers
● GSNi
● Heritage Officers

Joint Operational Committee
Councillors from both local authorities
Directors of Service
Geopark Manager

Oversight of Geopark





3. Cross-Border Community Planning Linkages

- 'Community Plans' common to all 8 member Councils
- Mapping initiative by ICBAN, summer 2018
- Common opportunities in economic, social and environmental
- A Forum being established
- How can Border region residents access services in the other jurisdiction in future?



Common Characteristics

- Bottom-Up, local initiatives
- Mix of Economic, Social and Environmental Well-Being
- None are funding led
- Advancing despite complexities of cross-border working
- In absence of a common strategic, over-arching context



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund
Investing in your future



A Place for Communities and Businesses

- This largely rural border region is a place of opportunity
- It can be central to harnessing the major global opportunities and meeting the challenges of the C21st.
- Role of place-making as a core goal for the region....capitalising on existing local strengths
- Local government as key drivers of this
- Collaboration is happening to ensure those opportunities are maximised...but where is the coherence/ overview?
- As the transition of this region continues, is there a more strategic role for the cross-border partnerships?

Slide courtesy of ICLRD, 30/11/2018



Where Next? What Direction?

- Need to navigate a rapidly changing environment
 - Central Border Area under intense pressure
 - Pre-existing infrastructure deficits
 - Lack of attention from the NPF
 - Brexit: challenging confidence, cohesion, interventions
 - LA leadership in tackling the challenges
 - Political and executive dialogues are happening
 - But cooperation is difficult:- Incentives needed
-
- Other Regions and cross-border areas are benefiting from Govt. leadership initiatives and strategies
 - For how much longer will Central Border communities be without such?



A Final Word to a Youthful Voice

“It’s all well and good putting in these ‘It’ll sort us out for a few years’ ideas...but there’s no point in doing that if it’s not going to last and it’s going to have to be changed again.”

*(‘Brexit at the Border’ Study, 2018:
Monaghan Youth Focus Group 1, Ref: 42.16)*



21.3. LISA O'KANE, NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
(NILGA)



Working with Our Neighbours:

**Cross-Border Cooperation in national,
regional and local development**

Lisa O'Kane, Programmes Manager- NILGA

the voice of local government



11 councils





On the radar

- Brexit
- Shifts in governance and policy delivery terms
- City and Growth Deals - new powers, incentives & “localism”
- Devolution within Northern Ireland
- Local Government Elections of May 2019



What are councils doing?

- **Understanding community and business needs**
- **Maintaining status quo, looking for opportunities**
- **Planning for future growth**
- **Assessing supply chains**
- **Safeguarding core services**
- **Continuity planning**
- **Collaborating, sharing knowledge and being good neighbours**



Opportunities for cross-border collaboration

- Continuing **council to council projects** & joint funding through Peace Plus, Shared Prosperity fund and individual council funding
- **Collaboration with Regional Assemblies** on spatial planning, smart specialisation, regional economic development infrastructure, community cohesion, entrepreneurial activities, training & leadership development
- **City & Growth Deals** – joined up thinking?
- **Irish Sea programme** funded by EU, UK & ROI?



The NILGA Response

- Continuing to work with MLAs via **Central – Local Government Political Partnership Forum**
- **UK Collaboration** WLGA, COSLA, LGA – Brexit preparedness, Shared Prosperity Fund
- Collaboration with **Irish Regional Assemblies**
- Maintaining EU links – EWRC, iEER / EER, CoR
- Working groups covering Brexit, Migration Policy, Skills & Demographic change, Environment

21.4. AIDAN CAMPBELL, RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK

Working with our Neighbours

Cross-Border Cooperation in national,
regional and local development

CCBS Seminar

Leinster House

12.12.18

Aidan Campbell Policy Officer Rural Community Network

Rural Community Network

- Founded in 1991
- 250 member groups across Northern Ireland
- Board democratically elected from our member base
- Our work is focused on two broad aims:
 1. To articulate the voice of rural communities on issues of poverty, equality and community development.
 2. To promote excellence in community development practice

Cross border co-operation and local development

- What's been done to date by community/voluntary organisations?
- Focus on RCN's Rural Enabler Project
- Examples and learning
- Benefits & challenges of cross border work
- Promoting cross border co-operation post Brexit

Types of work to date

- Very local work between groups both sides of the Border
- Work North and South but more on a "twinning" basis – important for breaking down barriers.
- Projects providing services primarily on one side of the Border but people from the other side facilitated to access
- Regional projects e.g. RCN & IRL Rural Enabler project,
- LEADER/LAG Co-operation projects – community partners on LAGs

Local Cross Border working

- Blackwater Regional Partnership - IFI funded
- 7 villages Emyvale, Glaslough, Tynan, Killylea, Aughnacloy, Caledon and Middletown
- Partnership between Dungannon South Tyrone, Armagh & Monaghan county Councils
- Focussed on education and training and heritage.
- Communities worked together and built relationships.
- Blackwater learning centre based in Truagh provides training, childcare & events for people both sides of the Border.

Regional cross border working & Community Sector – benefits

Regional level Rural Enabler Project – Peace III funded

The benefits were

- Built relationships
- Better overview of how the conflict impacted across NI & Border counties
- Developed new ways of working
- Deeper understanding of the dynamics of border communities
- Deeper understanding of government and politics in the South
- Good to hear how other see us - feedback

Challenges?

- Practical challenges of employing/managing staff in 2 jurisdictions
- ICT – lack of internet connectivity very frustrating
- Very different experience of & attitude towards the Troubles
- Legacy of the Troubles/sectarianism permeates Northern society
- Issues were much more hidden in rural communities in the border counties – especially for minority communities.
- Understanding policy context of 2 jurisdictions on a range of issues

On reflection....

- Have we taken our eye off the ball?
- Less cross border work between NGOs in the past 5 or 6 years? With honourable exceptions
- Peace 4 is located primarily with Councils
- Did we become complacent and assume the Border was fading away?
- Have we ignored other aspects of cross border development and focussed on peace building?

Post Brexit promoting cross border work

- Governments must implement commitments in Withdrawal Agreement to future PEACE & INTERREG programmes.
- But what about LEADER and any future rural development programme
- No return to the borders of the past
- Essence of community development is learning
- UK is leaving the EU NOT Europe

Thanks for Listening

For further Information:

W www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org

E aidan@ruralcommunitynetwork.org

T 004428 8676 6670



@RuralCommNet



<https://www.facebook.com/RuralCommunityNetworkNI/>

22. CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES, LONGFORD WOMEN'S LINK, RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK, OPENING STATEMENT, 12 JUNE 2019



Meeting with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development

12 June 2019

The "Towards a New Common Chapter" project

22.1. CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES, OPENING STATEMENT

Dr Anthony Soares, Acting Director, Centre for Cross Border Studies: On behalf of the Centre for Cross Border Studies and the other organisations here present, I would like to thank the Chair, Vice-Chair and members of this Committee for the invitation to meet with you to discuss the "Towards a New Common Chapter" project, and the resulting New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands.

If the Chair is in agreement, I will begin by saying offering a brief overview of the Centre for Cross Border Studies and the "Towards a New Common Chapter" project before Tara Farrell, Deputy CEO of Longford Women's Link, and Aidan Campbell, Policy and Public Affairs Officer at Rural Community Network, tell you about their own organisations and their involvement in the project. But before doing so, I would like to draw your attention to the New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands, of which you should have a copy, as this will be the ultimate focus of our conversation here today and where rural concerns are particularly evident.

Since its creation in 1999, the Centre for Cross Border Studies has sought to contribute to the increased social, economic and territorial cohesion of the island of Ireland by promoting and improving the quality of cross-border cooperation. The Centre's pursuit of its mission has been framed by two primary public policy imperatives: the European Union's Cohesion Policy with its focus on social, economic and territorial cohesion, and the commitment to cross-border and North-South cooperation integral to Strand 2 of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Throughout its existence, therefore, the Centre for Cross Border Studies has been deeply concerned with community, social and economic development and cooperation particularly on the island of

Ireland, but also between the island of Ireland, Great Britain and beyond. This concern informed the Centre's desire to initiate the "Towards a New Common Chapter" project.

The "Towards a New Common Chapter" project began in late 2014, and has been made possible with the generous support of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund.¹¹³ The project has looked to support and inspire grass-roots community commitment to cross-border cooperation in all its dimensions: cooperation at the border (where rurality is a predominant characteristic), wider North-South cooperation, and East-West cooperation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain. It has worked towards a "bottom-up" vision of the importance and role of cross-border cooperation within and between these islands, whilst also noting the need for community groups to possess the necessary skills and capacity to not only engage in their own cross-border initiatives, but also to enter into more productive dialogues with relevant local, regional and central government policies and strategies.

The New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands that you have before you is the result of a series of intensive conversations between a range of community groups from Northern Ireland and Ireland, and more recently with groups from England, Scotland and Wales. The New Common Charter represents a shared desire to maintain and strengthen relations between communities across these islands, to work together on issues of common concern, and to advocate for the provision of the requisite structures and means to cooperate within and between these islands in whatever circumstances may arise.

In light of this Committee's specific interests, and given that the sets of relations envisioned within the New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands are both the product and supportive of rural communities, we would ask members to support it and work with us in ensuring all administrations across these islands put in place policies and funding structures to encourage cross-border and cross-jurisdictional cooperation at grassroots community level. We hope that today's meeting will offer an opportunity to discuss in greater detail the work undertaken as part of the Towards a New Common Chapter project, and how members of this Committee and political representatives more generally can champion the objectives of the New Common Charter for Cooperation. These are outlined in more detail in the series of recommendations within the supporting information provided to the Committee. They include how capacity-building measures should be introduced to improve how all levels of government and public bodies across these islands engage with community organisations in the development of policies and strategies with a cross-border or cross-jurisdictional dimension, and that such policies and strategies should be rural-proofed. The Charter also calls for a comprehensive assessment of the current funding landscape for cross-border and cross-jurisdictional cooperation initiatives aimed at community organisations, and what that landscape should look like going forward. Crucially, we would also like to see concrete support in advancing the work undertaken in the "Towards a New Common Chapter" project, bringing it to a wider audience, and perhaps looking towards a platform for cross-border, cross-jurisdictional dialogue for community organisations that recalls the structure provided for

¹¹³ For more on the "Towards a New Common Chapter" project, visit <http://crossborder.ie/towards-a-new-common-chapter/>.

governments and administrations across these islands through bodies such as the North South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council.

These are issues we may explore further during today's meeting, but I will hand over now to Tara Farrell of Longford Women's Link.

22.2. LONGFORD WOMEN'S LINK, OPENING STATEMENT

Tara Farrell, Deputy CEO, Longford Women's Link: Longford Women's Link is a social enterprise founded in 1995 and providing services to 900 women and 130 children in Longford annually including education, entrepreneurship, community employment and domestic violence via our unique model of Integrated Service Delivery. We engage in widespread regional and national advocacy – represented on the board of NWCi and I sit on the board of Irish Rural Link and am the current chair of AONTAS the national adult learning organisation. Our flagship programme, the Women's Manifesto Programme is a unique model of local democratic participation which aims to support women in Longford and other counties to play an active and meaningful role in their local decision-making structures and we have identified barriers to accessing these structures which are critical factors in preventing full and equal participation of rural women in their communities. Just last month, we launched the SHE Project with 50:50 North West, supported by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government which aims to change the face of local government in rural Ireland, supporting women in rural Ireland to play an active role in public life. The Women's Manifesto Programme was supported by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust from 2012 until the cessation of the Trust's funding support in Ireland in 2016. Longford Women's Link and the Women's Manifesto Programme have been active members of the Towards a New Common Charter initiative since 2015 and see it as a key all-island programme of sustained engagement as we move beyond the Brexit referendum. We believe that working at the grassroots level, as this programme most definitely does, is absolutely critical if we are to see meaningful cooperation and community development alongside an empowered civic society across these islands. We have seen with Brexit what happens when civil society is largely excluded from central discussions and we believe the voices of grassroots women, especially in rural areas not only need to be heard but are essential in building inclusive and resilient communities. There is significant potential within the New Common Charter to do this.

22.3. RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK, OPENING STATEMENT

Aidan Campbell, Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Rural Community Network: Rural Community Network (RCN) is a regional voluntary organisation established by community groups from rural areas in 1991 to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty, disadvantage and equality. RCN is a membership organisation with 250 member groups across Northern Ireland. RCN adopts a community development approach to its work and employs a team of staff with a broad spectrum of skills.

Our Vision is of vibrant, articulate, inclusive and sustainable rural communities across Northern Ireland contributing to a prosperous, equitable, peaceful and stable society. Our Mission is to provide an effective voice for and support to rural communities, particularly those who are most disadvantaged.

RCN's work is focused on three broad areas, supporting and developing good practice amongst rural community groups, articulating the voice of rural communities and promoting reconciliation. We provide information and training on community development, funding opportunities, and governance. We have also worked with our members and other groups to implement the Social Value Engine, developed by our partners Rose Regeneration, to allow grass roots groups measure the social impact of the work they do. We have a strong focus on policy issues that affect rural areas and lobbied for the introduction of legislation on rural proofing of government policy. The Rural Needs Act NI 2016 introduced a statutory duty on government departments and local authorities to rural proof policy and service delivery. We monitor the roll out of the Rural Needs Act and continue to challenge duty holders on their implementation of the legislation. RCN is represented on the Joint Forum between Government and the Community and Voluntary Sector which raises issues of concern from across the Community and Voluntary Sector with Departmental officials. RCN also sits on the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee.

RCN supports the New Common Charter as it provides a framework to encourage co-operation amongst civic society groups on the island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. Many of the challenges rural communities face are similar. RCN has a long tradition of partnering with like-minded NGOs in Britain, Ireland and further afield. We delivered the Rural Enabler project in partnership with Irish Rural Link, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in NI and the then Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the Republic of Ireland. This was a Peace III funded project based in Northern Ireland and the 6 border Counties of the Republic of Ireland. We are currently completing a project with partner networks in the UK and Ireland which is developing key asks for future rural development policy post Brexit. We know and value the importance of engaging with partner organisations across the UK and Ireland and further afield. We hope to continue to develop and deepen these links in the future and the New Common Charter will support us in doing so.

22.4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE NEW COMMON CHARTER

22.4.1. *About the Centre for Cross Border Studies, Longford Women's Link, and Rural Community Network*

1.1. Since its creation in 1999, the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS) has pursued its central mission of contributing to the increased social, economic and territorial cohesion of the island of Ireland. It achieves this by promoting and improving the quality of cross-border cooperation between (a) public bodies, and (b) between public bodies, business and civil society. Complementing this strategy, CCBS also works to improve the capacity of people involved in social and economic development to engage in mutually beneficial cross-border cooperation. Finally, it addresses information gaps and other barriers that constrain cross-border mobility and cross-border cooperation through research, provision of resources, tools and other support. Throughout its existence, therefore, CCBS has been deeply concerned with community, social and economic development and cooperation particularly on the island of Ireland, but also between the island of Ireland, Great Britain and beyond.¹¹⁴ This concern informed CCBS's desire to initiate the "Towards a New Common Chapter" project.

1.2. CCBS's pursuit of its mission has been framed by two primary public policy imperatives: the commitment to cross-border and North-South cooperation integral to Strand II of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and the European Union's Cohesion Policy with its focus on social, economic and territorial cohesion, and supported by the EU's Territorial Cooperation and Structural Funds programmes.

1.3. Longford Women's Link (LWL),¹¹⁵ a dynamic social enterprise founded in 1995, links women with the resources to make their community safe and equal. LWL identifies and addresses key inequalities that prevent women in Longford achieving their full social/economic potential and its work provides real and tangible opportunities for women and their families. Services provided to approximately 900 women and 130 children in Longford/Midlands (2018) enabled women to access a wide range of programmes and supports yielding real benefits for their families and the wider community. LWL provides women-centred services (Education, Training, Group Support, Childcare, Domestic Violence, Counselling, Female Entrepreneurship, Community Employment, Local Democracy, capacity-building and local/national advocacy). Key to the delivery of LWL's services is its unique model of Integrated Service Delivery (ISD).

1.4. LWL have identified barriers to accessing both local and national decision-making structures which are critical factors in preventing full and equal participation of rural women in their communities. LWL's flagship programme, the Women's Manifesto Programme is a unique model of local democratic participation which aims to support women in Longford and other counties to play an active and meaningful role in their local decision-making structures. The Women's Manifesto Programme was supported by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (UK) from 2012 until the cessation of the JRCT funding support in ROI in 2016. LWL/Women's Manifesto have been active members of the Towards a New Common Chapter initiative since 2015 and see it as a key all-island

¹¹⁴ For more information on the Centre for Cross Border Studies, see <http://crossborder.ie/>.

¹¹⁵ For more information on Longford Women's Link, see <http://www.lwl.ie/>.

programme of sustained engagement as we move beyond the Brexit referendum. LWL believes that working at the grassroots level, as this programme most definitely does, is absolutely critical if we are to see meaningful cooperation and community development alongside an empowered civic society across these islands. LWL engages at a national level in a number of areas - CEO Louise Lovett is on the board of NWCI and Deputy CEO Tara Farrell is the Chairperson of AONTAS as well as a member of the Steering Group of The Next Chapter (Irish Rural Link, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and Politics Plus) through her board membership of Irish Rural Link.

1.5 Rural Community Network (RCN) is a regional voluntary organisation established by community groups from rural areas in 1991 to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty, disadvantage and equality. RCN is a membership organisation with 250 member groups across Northern Ireland. RCN adopts a community development approach to its work and employs a team of staff with a broad spectrum of skills.

1.6 Our Vision is of vibrant, articulate, inclusive and sustainable rural communities across Northern Ireland contributing to a prosperous, equitable, peaceful and stable society. Our Mission is to provide an effective voice for and support to rural communities, particularly those who are most disadvantaged.

1.7 RCN's work is focused on three broad areas, supporting and developing good practice amongst rural community groups, articulating the voice of rural communities and promoting reconciliation. We provide information and training on community development, funding opportunities, and governance. We have also worked with our members and other groups to implement the Social Value Engine, developed by our partners Rose Regeneration, to allow grass roots groups measure the social impact of the work they do. We have a strong focus on policy issues that affect rural areas and lobbied for the introduction of legislation on rural proofing of government policy. The Rural Needs Act NI 2016 introduced a statutory duty on government departments and local authorities to rural proof policy and service delivery. We monitor the roll out of the Rural Needs Act and continue to challenge duty holders on their implementation of the legislation. Our range of policy interests include rural development, social housing and the delivery of public services to dispersed rural communities.

1.8 RCN is represented on the Joint Forum between Government and the Community and Voluntary Sector which raises issues of concern from across the Community and Voluntary Sector with Departmental officials. RCN also sits on the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee.

1.9 RCN supports the New Common Charter as it provides a framework to encourage co-operation amongst civic society groups on the island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. Many of the challenges rural communities face are similar. RCN has a long tradition of partnering with like-minded NGOs in Britain, Ireland and further afield. We delivered the Rural Enabler project in partnership with Irish Rural Link, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in NI and the then Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the Republic of Ireland. This was a Peace III funded project based in Northern Ireland and the 6 border Counties of the Republic of Ireland. We are currently completing a project with partner networks in the UK and Ireland which is

developing key asks for future rural development policy post Brexit. We know and value the importance of engaging with partner organisations across the UK and Ireland and further afield. We hope to continue to develop and deepen these links in the future and the New Common Charter will support us in doing so.

22.4.2. INTRODUCTION TO THE “TOWARDS A NEW COMMON CHAPTER” PROJECT

2.1. The “Towards a New Common Chapter” project began in late 2014. It was initially made possible by the generous support of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, with further subsequent funding gratefully received from the Community Relations Council and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Reconciliation Fund.

2.2. Part of the original rationale for undertaking the “Towards a New Common Chapter” project, which is ongoing,¹¹⁶ was to address the need for cross-border cooperation to be independently valued and enacted at the grass-roots level, with communities from both sides of the border on the island of Ireland jointly setting their own priorities and advocating for their inclusion in regional and local strategies. Without this engagement in cross-border cooperation, it was felt that it would continue to be hostage to what is at times an unstable political environment and the time-limited pursuit of European funding, and therefore hamper the ability of cross-border cooperation to properly contribute to peace and reconciliation and to wider socio-economic development.

2.3. Inspiration for the project came from the commitment to cooperation by the Governments in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland expressed in the chapter of agreed text that appeared in Northern Ireland’s Structural Funds Plan and Ireland’s National Development Plan for the period 2000-2006 – the Common Chapter.¹¹⁷

2.4. However, the 2000-2006 period also saw the collapse of the power-sharing institutions in Northern Ireland as well as the suspension of the North-South Ministerial Council, and their restoration in 2007 following the 2006 St Andrew’s Agreement did not result in the revival of the Common Chapter. The failure to reintroduce the Common Chapter has been interpreted by the Centre for Cross Border Studies as threatening the marginalisation of and political commitment to cross-border cooperation, particularly at times of political or economic crisis.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ The Towards a New Common Chapter project was originally expected to have a duration of three years, but in light of the uncertainties created by the UK’s decision to leave the European Union, it was judged that an additional six to twelve months would be necessary.

¹¹⁷ Northern Ireland Structural Funds Plan 2000-2006: ‘Northern Ireland: - a Region achieving Transition’ (2000); Government of Ireland, Ireland: National Development Plan 2000-2006 (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1999). In the Northern Ireland document the agreed text appears under the section entitled “Co-operation with the Republic of Ireland” (pp.87-96), while in the Irish document it comes under the chapter “Co-operation with Northern Ireland” (pp.177-186).

¹¹⁸ In 2014, for example, before this very Committee, CCBS stated: “Since the demise of the Common Chapter, the limited but nevertheless important references to cross-border cooperation have dwindled and all but disappeared from major policy documents. Unless there is a clear policy imperative supported by resources – and it is made clear to civil servants and other public officials that it is part of their job – even the most motivated people will, with the increasing pressures of austerity, see cross-border cooperation as an unaffordable luxury”. Centre for Cross Border Studies, “Submission to the Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement” (26 June 2014), p.3; <http://www.crossborder.ie/site2015/wp-content/uploads/CCBS-Presentation-to-GFA-Committee-26-06-2014.pdf>.

2.5. Therefore, whilst it has not sought to replicate or supplant the place of the “old” Common Chapter, the “Towards a New Common Chapter” project has looked to support and inspire grass-roots community commitment to cross-border cooperation in all its dimensions. It has worked towards a “bottom-up” vision of the importance and role of cross-border cooperation within and between these islands, whilst also noting the need for community groups to possess the necessary skills and capacity to not only engage in their own cross-border initiatives, but also to enter into more productive dialogues with relevant local, regional and central government policies and strategies.

2.6. However, involving local communities in the design of policies to ensure the inclusion of cooperation initiatives does not only assume a particular level of capacity, but also returns us to the fundamental question of whether there is genuine understanding or acceptance of the need for such cooperation. The underlying imperative for cross-border, North-South and East-West cooperation may be woven into the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, articulated by the Common Chapter while it existed, and enacted through cooperation initiatives at central and local government levels, as well as by a range of non-governmental institutions and organisations, but what is the level of wider support for cooperation? For those grass-roots community groups who have been involved in cross-border cooperation efforts, what has been their experience and what suggestions do they have for the future of cross-border cooperation? And what understanding do community groups based away from the border have of cross-border cooperation and do they value wider North-South and East-West cooperation?

22.4.3. Implementation of the “Towards a New Common Chapter” project

3.1. To begin answering these questions, the “Towards a New Common Chapter” project initially sought to engage with two constituencies in particular: women’s groups and Protestant/Unionist community groups from both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. The inclusion of women’s groups was in line with the argument put forward by the Centre for Cross Border Studies in its response to the consultation on Ireland’s second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2015-2018,¹¹⁹ which concluded that “the under-representation of women [...] will continue to hamper progress in relation to peacebuilding and reconciliation”.¹²⁰ Therefore, in undertaking this project it was felt that it was essential that women’s groups should have equal representation in reflections on cross-border cooperation and on the development of a shared vision for its future. Involving Protestant/Unionist community groups, on the other hand, was seen as addressing the need to engage those who may have specific concerns around cross-border cooperation at the Northern Ireland-Ireland border, as well as a broader vision of cooperation encompassing the East-West dimension.

3.2. The project was structured into five core stages:

Stage	Goal
1. Critical engagement with “old” Common Chapter and identification of cross-border needs	A grassroots cross-community and cross-border agenda for CBC
2. Development of vision for future CBC (in its three dimensions)	Production of draft of New Common Chapter
3. Community-led consultation and advocacy with other CSOs	Production of New Common Chapter
4. Community-led East-West engagement	Support for New Common Chapter from community organisations in GB
5. Community-led advocacy with policy-makers	Support for New Common Charter from political actors and policy-makers

We are now in the project’s concluding stage, with the groups from the island of Ireland having agreed an initial draft of the New Common Chapter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands at the end of the second stage, which was then taken to groups in England, Scotland and

¹¹⁹ Government of Ireland, Ireland’s second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2015-2018 (2014), <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfaewebsitesmedia/ourrolesandpolicies/ourwork/empoweringwomen-peaceandsecurity/Irelands-second-National-Action-Plan-on-Women-Peace-and-Security.pdf> [last accessed 15/08/2017].

¹²⁰ Centre for Cross Border Studies, “Consultation Response: Ireland’s Second National Action Plan – Women, Peace and Security” (August 2014), <http://www.crossborder.ie/site2015/wp-content/uploads/WPS-Consultation-Response-by-CCBS.pdf>.

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Wales, before a final version was decided upon at a meeting in Belfast of representatives of community groups from all the jurisdictions which drew the fourth stage to a close. That final version is now entitled the New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands.

3.3. The first two stages involved a series of workshops, with an evaluation seminar at the conclusion of each. The opening stage consisted of four core workshops (the majority being of a cross-border nature), before an evaluation seminar bringing together all the participating groups to determine whether there was sufficient consensus to progress towards the drafting of a New Common Chapter in Stage 2. The programme of work developed for the first stage was as follows:

Workshop 1	Introducing the “old” Common Chapter
Workshop 2	Critique of “old” Common Chapter
Workshop 3	Analysis of principles of integrated cross-border cooperation
Workshop 4	Identification of areas of need capable of being addressed on a cross-border basis (North-South and East-West)
Evaluation Seminar (December 2016)	Evaluation of progress and way forward

With the participating groups having agreed that sufficient progress had been made, the second stage was then devoted to the drafting of a New Common Chapter, with groups once again working on a cross-border basis. That draft was then presented to and discussed with other community groups in Northern Ireland and Ireland in the third stage.

3.4. What was made possible by the “Towards a New Common Chapter” project was the provision of a space where critical and at times difficult conversations could take place over the value and potential roles of cross-border cooperation. Crucially, those conversations were themselves cross-border in nature, bringing together community groups from both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland and, later, groups from Great Britain. These cross-border spaces for community dialogue are not always available, particularly where the focus is on cross-border cooperation itself and those taking part in the conversation represent smaller or grass-roots community organisations.

22.4.4. Main conclusions and recommendations

4.1. This project has revealed a sense amongst the participating groups of the lack of an appropriate platform (or platforms) for dialogue to take place between smaller or grass-roots community organisations in particular from across these islands. Whereas governments and devolved administrations may come together in structures such as the British-Irish Council, and larger institutions and organisations from across these islands may also exchange views and at times cooperate in line with their specific interests, the sentiment coming through in this project is that there is an absence of a sustained channel for grass-roots community organisations from across these islands to enter into dialogues that are cross-border and cross-sectoral. The result is a lack of knowledge of communities from other jurisdictions within these islands and the wider contexts they operate in, their hopes and the challenges they face, and which may in fact be ones that are shared across these islands. In turn, this lack of knowledge leads to missed opportunities to cooperate for mutual benefit.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given to providing the means to expand the reach of the New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands in order to test the degree of wider support for its objectives among community organisations across these islands.

Recommendation: A mechanism for dialogue and cooperation between grass-roots organisations across these islands should be developed, mirroring and perhaps interacting with the British-Irish Council.

4.2. The discussions that took place as part of the “Towards a New Common Chapter” project also noted a desire for grass-roots community organisations to participate more directly in the design of policies and strategies with a cross-border or cross-jurisdictional dimension (or which should have such a dimension) undertaken by local, regional and central governments, and by other public bodies relevant to community organisations. The view was that policy-makers from local, regional and central governments may come together on a cross-border basis to develop strategies and policies, and may even consult with their respective communities, there are not always opportunities offered for communities to come together on a cross-border basis to engage in discussion. However, there was also recognition that grass-roots community organisations may not have the necessary capacity or skills to engage with policy-makers in relation to cross-border issues.

Recommendation: An assessment should be undertaken of the current levels and means of local, regional and central governments' engagement with community organisations in the development of policies and strategies with a cross-border or cross-jurisdictional dimension.

Recommendation: A capacity-building programme should be put in place to provide community organisations with the necessary skills to engage productively with local, regional and central governments on cross-border or cross-jurisdictional issues.

4.3. Prior to its final version, drafts of the New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands contained a section indicating the participating groups' views on what cross-border cooperation should not be about. Groups had stated that in order for cooperation within and between these islands to be successful, it should not:

- Be the unique preserve of any one government, agency, group or community;
- Be used for party-political purposes;
- Involve policies or projects imposed on communities and that are irrelevant to them;
- Operate on the basis of religious or cultural labelling, use assumptions about a community or group, or involve tokenism or quantitatively-driven targets;
- Be short-term, short-sighted or unsustainable;
- Be driven by the need to achieve large impacts in a way that privileges the involvement of larger institutions and organisations and dismisses the value of micro-community initiatives and their potential to contribute to significant positive change;
- Be overly theoretical, complicated or dismissive of community-led approaches;
- Be funding-led; and
- Deny equality of opportunities to people with different religious belief, political opinion, of different racial groups, ages, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, with or without a disability, with dependants or without.

These calls are in reality aimed at policy-makers and funders, but were ultimately not included in the final version of the New Common Charter, as the groups expressed the view that although they were of significant importance, they should be included in a separate document, such as guidance principles for policy-makers and funders in their engagement with community organisations.

Recommendation: Policy-makers at local, regional and local government levels and funders involved in the development of policies, strategies or funding programmes with a cross-border or cross-jurisdictional dimension should undertake specific skills development to maximise their engagement with community organisations.

4.4. Crucially, groups participating in the “Towards a New Common Chapter” project were clear on the lack of funding programmes supportive of cross-border or cross-jurisdictional cooperation between community organisations. It was generally recognised that the principle source of such cross-border cooperation initiatives was the European Union, with the Irish Government’s Reconciliation Fund, and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust being some of the other notable funders. Without the necessary funding support, any desire among community organisations to maintain and strengthen relations within and between these islands will remain generally unfulfilled, with the resulting consequences of growing divisions and misunderstandings.

Recommendation: A review of current funding sources for cross-border and cross-jurisdictional initiatives should be undertaken to properly understand the level of support offered outside EU programmes.

Recommendation: All administrations and funding bodies across these islands should ensure they provide adequate support to cross-border and cross-jurisdictional initiatives led by community organisations.

23. THE CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES: “A NEW COMMON CHARTER FOR COOPERATION WITHIN AND BETWEEN THESE ISLANDS”

A New Common Charter for cooperation within and between these islands

“An initiative to empower civic society to drive cross-border, North-South and East-West cooperation across these islands.”¹²¹

Introduction

The vision for cooperation within and between these islands by grassroots community organisations we propose below was developed in the light of our critical engagement with what had been known as the “Common Chapter”. Following the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the devolved administration in Northern Ireland gave its approval to a section on cooperation with the Republic of Ireland in the Northern Ireland Structural Funds Plan 2000-2006. The same text was contained in the Republic of Ireland’s National Development Plan 2000-2006 in a section on cooperation with Northern Ireland. This replicated text – the “Common Chapter” – set out the two Governments’ priorities for cooperation and how funds (particularly European Union funds) would be used to support it. It was understood that cross-border cooperation for the island of Ireland had three dimensions:

- cooperation along the border corridor and between Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland;
- North-South cooperation within the island of Ireland; and
- East-West cooperation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain, Europe and internationally.

Within the 2000-2006 period for which these plans were designed devolution in Northern Ireland was suspended, and following the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2007 the Common Chapter was not revived.

What follows below, therefore, is the result of a sustained process of engagement by grassroots community organisations from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with the notion of cross-border, North-South, and East-West cooperation, and conversations with counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales. This has led to a vision of cooperation and what it should entail.

It comes about in recognition of the need for cross-border and cross-boundary cooperation to be independently valued and enacted at the grass-roots level, with people and communities setting their own priorities and advocating for their inclusion in regional and local strategies. Without this engagement, it will continue to be hostage to the political environment and the time-limited pursuit

¹²¹ This has been developed as a result of the “Towards a New Common Chapter” project, led by the Centre for Cross Border Studies (www.crossborder.ie), and generously funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Community Relations Council, and Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Reconciliation Fund.

of European funding, hampering the ability of cross-border and cross-boundary cooperation to contribute to the development of meaningful and productive relations among people and communities within and between these islands.

In a rapidly changing context, it is essential that community organisations are ready to contribute to the shaping of development plans at local and regional levels, and to identify and exploit possibilities for North-South and East-West cooperation that will be of benefit to them.

A New Common Charter

Recalling the “Common Chapter” on cross-border, North-South and East-West cooperation that existed in Ireland’s National Development Plan and Northern Ireland’s Structural Funds Plan, **we hereby propose a New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands** by grassroots community organisations that promotes social justice and equality, but do so:

- Acknowledging and respecting the differences that make these islands what they are, while also recognising and cherishing the relations between the people and communities that live in its different nations and regions;
- Recognising, valuing and accepting languages whose roots may cross the borders within and between our islands;
- Recognising that faith traditions are organised and followed by people and communities within and across these islands;
- Valuing the musical, literary and other artistic and cultural traditions and their expression that have spread across the world and whose development has been assisted through relations within and between these islands;
- Realising that whilst we can compete against each other, sport and sporting organisations also unite us within and between these islands; and
- Recognising that our islands are connected by family bonds that cross the borders that separate them.

We hereby propose a New Common Charter for Cooperation by grassroots community organisations within and between these islands which values how it can:

- Maintain and strengthen family ties and friendships that cross borders;
- Allow for the sharing of local resources and services across boundaries;
- Increase opportunities for the sharing between people and communities of information, knowledge of policy and best-practice within and across these islands;
- Widen our evidence-base to include what is happening across the borders that separate us;
- Improve policy-making by matching it to the realities on the ground and identifying cross-border opportunities to collaborate to solve shared problems or exploit common resources;
- Promote cross-border friendly relations between people and communities that give insight into the views of those from within and across these islands, and allow for difficult conversations to be had;
- Promote a civil society that values diversity and in which there is the ability to disagree respectfully;
- Facilitate the exploration and celebration of a community's culture and heritage with a view to future cooperation;
- Increase the protection and enjoyment of the environment;
- Encourage and develop community leadership;
- Contribute to our common safety and wellbeing;
- Explore economic opportunities;
- Discover and enhance tourism potentials;
- Exploit mutually beneficial links in education, including adult and community education, as well as higher education; and
- Engage with and support human rights, particularly for the most isolated and marginalised in our communities.

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We believe that grass-roots community cooperation within and between these islands can usefully contribute to the following issues:

- Building inclusive communities;
- Capacity-building for community leadership in cooperation, especially for emerging leaders;
- Exploiting the potential of cross-border tourism, especially rural tourism, which includes not only the Northern Ireland-Ireland border, but also the Wales-England and Scotland-England borders;
- The exploration of histories and heritage that cross borders within and between these islands;
- Improving women's representation in decision-making structures;
- Promoting the need for affordable, accessible quality childcare and social care support;
- The promotion and support for gender equality proofing and gender budgeting;
- Advocating for the provision of affordable, accessible and regular transport services, especially in rural areas and border regions;
- Promoting the need to facilitate educational opportunities within and between these islands, including through the removal of any undue administrative and/or financial obstacles that may discourage the movement of learners across these islands;
- Advocating for the improvement of the value given to and the quality of vocational and non-university paths to careers; and
- Promotion and support for rural proofing and regionally balanced budgeting and resourcing.

We hereby commend this New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands, and call on community organisations, representative bodies and networks across these islands to indicate their support by undersigning it and promoting its contents.¹²² We also call on political representatives across these islands to support and facilitate the achievement of this New Common Charter's objectives, ensuring that community organisations are encouraged and given the means to cooperate within and between these islands.

¹²² To show your support for the New Common Charter, email Anthony Soares at the Centre for Cross Border Studies (a.soares@gub.ac.uk). Your organisation's name and logo will be added to the list of supporters appearing on the project website (<http://crossborder.ie/towards-a-new-common-chapter/>), and included in the network receiving updates on the New Common Charter's progress and work on the next steps.

COMMITTEE DEBATES

24. COMMITTEE DEBATE, 29 MARCH 2017 - BORDER

COMMUNITIES AGAINST BREXIT, ISME

**AN COMHCHOISTE UM EALAÍONA, OIDHREACTH, GNÓTHAÍ RÉIGIÚNACHA,
TUAITHE AGUS GAELTACHTA**

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS, HERITAGE, REGIONAL, RURAL AND GAELTACHT

Dé Céadaoin, 29 Márta 2017

Wednesday, 29 March 2017

The Joint Committee met at 2.10 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Ciarán Cannon,

Deputy Michael Collins,

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae,

Deputy Niamh Smyth,

Senator Mary-Louise O'Donnell.

In attendance: Senator Gerard P. Craughwell.

DEPUTY PEADAR TÓIBÍN IN THE CHAIR.

24.1. BORDER COUNTIES: DISCUSSION

Chairman: We are now going to consider the topic of the future of community, social and economic development and co-operation in Border counties with representatives of Border Communities Against Brexit and the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association, ISME. It should be noted that the committee invited the Confederation of British Industry in the North of Ireland to address us on this topic today, but the confederation has declined. I suggest that we send a letter to it asking it to come in future and leave our timetable open for it because I think its input would be very valuable in this regard. Is that agreed? Agreed.

I welcome the following witnesses to the meeting: Mr. John Sheridan and Mr. J.J. O'Hara, representing Border Communities Against Brexit, and Mr. Neil McDonnell, chief executive officer, representing ISME. Cuirim míle buíochas rompu as teacht isteach inniu.

Before we begin I would like to draw the witnesses' attention to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, they are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their

evidence to this committee.

However, if they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I wish also to advise witnesses that the opening statement and other documents submitted to the committee may be published on the committee website after the meeting.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I call on Border Communities Against Brexit to address the committee.

Mr. John Sheridan: I thank the Chairman and the committee for having us here. Brexit is a momentous occasion and I hope it will not be repeated anywhere else in Europe. The fastest way to do this is probably to introduce myself, as on the presentation, and Mr. O'Hara will probably do the same and then we will go straight into any questions the committee has.

As is in the presentation before members, my name is John Sheridan. I am a farmer on the very south-western corner of Fermanagh. Most of the farm is located in the International Geo Park, Marble Arch, which is jointly managed by Fermanagh-Omagh and Cavan district councils. It is the only one of its kind in the world. In the context of rural affairs, that geo-park accounts for approximately 30% of the tourist business in our area and directly employs approximately 70 people in our locality. Its significance, of course, is that the Border divides the geo-park between Fermanagh and Cavan.

There is no such thing as a soft border and any level of borderisation will be a hard border by stealth, thereby putting a fragile peace process at risk. At risk also are our markets for beef and lamb in the red meat industry, which we farm. The land is all in a special area of conservation, a European designation of the highest order. There is also concern about the loss of funding to our schools and colleges, effects on our European health cards and free skies agreement, as well as the creation of an "us and them" factor throughout Europe. This could be the beginning of a slippery slope towards the division of Europe and we all know this is the longest period of peace that Europe has ever had.

This will ruin rural communities in my mind and those in our grouping, Border Communities Against Brexit. It will harm our heritage so through Border Communities Against Brexit we call for the Good Friday Agreement to be properly addressed and implemented. We are convinced we have a right to a special designated status for the economy of the island of Ireland without affecting its Constitution.

Mr. John James O'Hara: I run a tourism and technology business and our main business is a bed-and-breakfast and holiday village. We do tours from Ireland and Scotland. Tourism Ireland sells the whole of Ireland as a united product. We see a huge problem coming down the road as

to who will fund Tourism Ireland. It came from the Good Friday Agreement to sell the island of Ireland as a product on the international stage. As a tourism business in Leitrim, we work closely with that body on an international basis. When selling a tourism product, one needs a two-year lead time. When funding was cut in 2008, 2010 was the worst year for tourism numbers. We need to know who will be funding Tourism Ireland on an international stage and how we will sell Ireland. Will it be marketed as half in the European Union and half outside of it? A tourist looks at a tourism product over a two-year period, identifying the product and developing a budget before visiting. We see massive problems coming down the road for our business.

Tourism Ireland has cut its forecasted percentage by 6% and we can respect why it has done so. This is a main product for rural Ireland along the Wild Atlantic Way.

We sat here before discussing tourism policy in trying to get the Wild Atlantic Way up and running four or five years ago. We now have a very good product, with the Wild Atlantic Way on the west coast and Ireland's Ancient East on the east coast. The product now takes in the entirety of Ireland. A tourist might come to Dublin, Shannon, Knock or Belfast but takes in the entirety of Ireland. As a small business approximately six miles outside Sligo, we see tourists as a major rural commodity. People staying with us eat in the local village and drink in the local pub.

We have approximately ten staff and the business developed from nothing. The other part of our business is technology and how we sell a product internationally. We attended meetings in Italy earlier this year and the issue arose. People asked if this would be a safe part of the world. It is the reality and the question must be asked of whether people see the Troubles returning along the Border. People want to come to a very safe area and they do not want to come where there could be trouble, especially if the product is on an international market.

Mr. Neil McDonnell: I do not intend to read our very short presentation to the committee as only some issues in it are different from the concerns we expressed in other committees. Our Brexit concerns are pretty consistent across the economy. With a particular relevance to this committee we noted first the community programmes available to people in the Border area that are EU-funded. We have asked whether there will be a commitment from Dublin and London to continue funding those community programmes in the absence of EU funding for them on the Northern Ireland side.

We also make the point that the levels of deprivation are known to be higher in the Border, midlands and west region, and the greatest protection against deprivation is a job. The greatest threat is economic. Notwithstanding what the committee heard about hard borders - it goes without saying that a hard Border would have a significantly negative effect - soft borders can be put in place with excessive administration, taxes and tariffs.

The next point is not part of our submitted presentation because we only completed the results of an ISME survey on the likely impact of Brexit yesterday. I have sent a copy to the committee. Of course, it is not possible to get material, accurate information on the effects of Brexit because we do not know what Brexit will look like. It is possible to ask firms and small and medium enterprises to establish their exposure to Brexit, which we did through six very simple questions to which we had a very high response rate. Of note to the committee is that while most companies did not forecast a reduction in headcount, 17% of companies did so.

Most companies had no plans to relocate their business into the UK as a result of Brexit but 11% of member companies did. We see that as a significant number given the sectoral breakout of our companies.

There is another sensitive topic not in our paper. I am aware that many committee members, as part of the Oireachtas and individual parties, have made public utterances in support of special economic zone status for Northern Ireland. We are all in favour of that but we must impress on members that in order to avoid social dumping in this jurisdiction, it is important from an employment law perspective that Northern Ireland workers are either in or out; they cannot be a little bit of both. Employers in the North cannot have an *à la carte* approach to what set of employment standards they will follow. It is not in the interests of employers or employees for this to be the case. Therefore, it is very important that in service industries, for example, there is a clear understanding about whether the working time directive would continue to apply to workers who could ply their trade on both sides of the Border. I am very happy to take any questions.

Chairman: B'fhéidir go tosnóidh mé, más féidir. This is probably the biggest decision made affecting the island of Ireland for 30 to 40 years since our entry to the European Economic Community, as was the European Union. It is a decision into which we had no real input except for influencing people in Europe. I suppose we do not have a good record of that in this country, considering what happened with the banking crisis. As mentioned earlier, it also guts the Good Friday Agreement and that nascent all-Ireland economy which had started to develop over recent years. It creates a man-made barrier to the movement of people, goods and services. In a way the Border is already a man-made periphery. It has the effect of creating peripheries where none should exist. This will accentuate this periphery in a big way.

I remember a couple of years ago, we did work with the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Association, NIIRTA, and Retail Excellence Ireland. In one sector of enterprise, what they called "tourism shopping", where people were coming to the island of Ireland and going to the two different jurisdictions, they reckoned there was a potential increase of around €700 million. Opportunities like that, which were just waiting for the right development, are now off the table with these changes.

If the UK decides to include the North of Ireland in these changes to the movement of people, it will be detrimental to people travelling across the Border. An example might be people from Poland or Latvia who moved to Ireland and decide to move North but are prevented from so doing. The only solution to that scenario would be if the movement of people Border was moved to the Irish Sea.

In other words, people from the island of Ireland moving to Britain would be subject to the checks Britain believes necessary with regard to the control of immigrants, etc. What do the representatives from Border Communities against Brexit and ISME think?

Mr. John James O'Hara: There are 277 Border crossings. As the Chairman said, it would be best to move the Border to the Irish Sea. The Chairman is talking about small roads and even highways. We are talking about local people. We have held different events across the Border and a number of people have told us that their farm is half in the North and half in the South. There are more than 30 houses which are half in the North and half in the South. It can be seen on Google maps, where

a line goes straight through people's houses. Where do their houses stand in terms of the Border? It has to come down to real people. Many people travel north and south for work. I do not think we are getting the message across of people, such as a farmer who has to transport a round bale from Kiltyclogher in Leitrim two miles down the road but if there is a Border, he will have to transport it 11 miles. That is the reality of it.

Some of us are in business and some in farming but for people on the ground the reality of Brexit has started. I am in farming and last October-November in the local marts the price of cattle was down €150 to €200 a head because of the currency fluctuation with the buyer coming in from Fermanagh and Armagh. Take the example of a local farmer who has ten cattle. He is down €2,000 or €2,500. The reality of that is that he is down the equivalent of a couple of mortgage payments over the course of the year. Border Communities Against Brexit is talking about real people on the ground. We are the businesses and people who are already being hit financially by Brexit.

Chairman: People were calling for two steps to alleviate this. One is that the North might have special designation. Indeed, the Dáil passed a motion that the Government should work for that. Is Mr. O'Hara aware of any efforts on the Government's part to seek what was mandated democratically?

Mr. John Sheridan: By this Government?

Chairman: Yes.

Mr. John Sheridan: I have not seen it moved forward. The Taoiseach, Deputy Enda Kenny, said there would be no hard border but just this week we saw customs officials examining where checkpoints could possibly be located. Are we to wake up one morning, see the bulldozer outside and still be placated by being told that bulldozer is not going to do anything in respect of a Border checkpoint? Some people have suggested that instead of it being along the Border, a zone or a line, that a Border clearance centre could be, say, two, three or five miles in, but that is all borderisation by stealth. I agree fully with what the Chairman said.

The Border needs to be moved to the Irish Sea and the island needs to be one economy that works together as a proper integrated economy. It is already very much integrated in agriculture. We see the problems when people talk about social dumping. It does not work like that when one has a Border or two different regions.

The Chairman also mentioned foreign workers coming in. My colleague, Mr. O'Hara, mentioned that there were over 270 Border crossings on about 330 miles of Border, about one every mile. How can anyone effectively make that happen? It is nonsense.

Chairman: Does Mr. Sheridan believe it would have been useful for the Government to sit down with the British to draw up something like a memorandum of understanding to at least set out the two Governments' goals prior to any EU negotiations so that we would have publicly set out our objectives in partnership beforehand?

Mr. John Sheridan: Even more so, the Governments have a responsibility to sit down and do that under the Good Friday Agreement. It is a tripartite Agreement that involves Dublin, Westminster

and Europe. It looks as though they are all going to sit down together now. The Chairman is right that the Government and Westminster need to sit down and work out how to handle it.

Chairman: Mr. McDonnell said that 17% of businesses sought to change headcounts and 11% said they would possibly change location. That is startling information, especially given that he probably represents the sector of Irish enterprise which is most exposed to this particular issue. We hear that exports to Britain have reduced considerably in percentage terms over the last number of years. If the multinationals are stripped out, and focus on the indigenous sector where most of the employment lies, that figure is far higher.

Mr. Neil McDonnell: That is correct. We think our survey underestimates the Brexit effect because we are disproportionately represented in services, financial and insurance. They made up 68% of the respondents to this survey. The CSO tells us that they only make up 54% of the active enterprises in the economy. We also believe that services, financial and insurance, will be overall affected less than industry, construction and distribution.

Chairman: There has been much talk about Government agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, the local enterprise offices and so on using their energies to ameliorate the potential threats posed to the types of businesses ISME represents. Is that Mr. McDonnell's belief or could the Government do more?

Mr. Neil McDonnell: It is not unique to this committee but we have argued for some time that while IDA Ireland does an excellent job of attracting large foreign enterprises to Ireland, and Enterprise Ireland works really well with what it would refer to as its client companies among the high-tech, export-oriented sectors, I have heard estimates from very reputable bodies such as the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland that 600,000 of the 900,000 people working in active SMEs are not catered for by an industrial body that is tailored to indigenous enterprise. Given what is occurring because of Brexit as well as the potential rise of protectionism in the US, which perversely has a greater effect on our large enterprises, we understand they have a larger dollar exposure than the SME sector. Now is the time for a fundamental reappraisal of our indigenous industry. We believe that we need a dedicated body to do that or we need our own version of Enterprise Ireland, EI. We are not prescriptive, but we need that.

Chairman: Do the local enterprise offices not function in that space?

Mr. Neil McDonnell: Yes, they do, on a local basis, but that is the issue. There is nobody in charge on a strategic level of assisting small businesses. Some of the best material on this, from a small and medium enterprise, SME, perspective, comes from our own stock exchange, where the current chief executive says that tax policy and industrial policy in this State encourages SMEs or the owners of SMEs to sale, not scale. We need to scale if people are serious about increasing the levels of domestic employment in secure domestic businesses. Other countries are much better at scale than we are. We are getting that wrong.

The free movement question the Chairman asked my colleagues relates to one of the four freedoms. I have to make a clear distinction between that and whatever might happen for free movement of goods and services. It is a logical conclusion that, unless the UK Border Force moves into the Border counties and unless our immigration service takes up positions opposite it, the only

logical way to maintain freedom of movement on the island is for border control to move to the points of embarkation in Great Britain. That was the precedent established during the war, as I am sure everyone in here knows. I appreciate that there are political considerations on that north of the Border, but I do not see why that would be the case again in the new dispensation.

Chairman: This is my final question to both organisations. There is a view that the customs union may be up for renegotiation. While the current customs union will not exist as it stands, there may be deviations from it. If Britain left the customs union but remained in the customs union for agriculture, that would significantly alleviate our exposure to Brexit. That would be the most exposed indigenous sector. Has either of the witnesses' organisations given much thought to how that could be done?

Have they engaged with any of the State representatives? I know there have been quite a few conferences around the State where the Government has been collecting the perspectives of local organisations. Have the witnesses thought about or engaged with it yet?

Mr. John Sheridan: Can that happen if there is a change in UK customs? If Britain is outside Europe, then there will be tariffs above 50% on beef and lamb. There is going to be huge disparity if there is not a common denominator between the two. If that disparity exists, it is going to put up barriers. I would have thought that would still be an encumbrance on the South trying to get its beef into Britain. How would that work?

Chairman: My understanding is that there are countries that are not in the Single Market but are in the customs union, and vice versa. There are countries that are in a customs union for sectors, but not for all their different products. There are no tariffs and the country remains in the same regulatory space, etc., for the particular sectors in which it is in a customs union. For example, I understand that Norway is able to sell its fish within the European Union in the European Union's customs union space, etc., and therefore it does not have barriers to it in the fishing space.

Mr. John Sheridan: It has not been looked into. It opens up many possibilities. It leads back to a question of who does the certification on the product. It leads back to a question of whether there is going to be a system where farmers are paid basic payment in Europe in one part of Ireland while they can still trade agriculturally in the other part, but the same supports are not there for the directives according to which they must produce. That would probably create a bigger minefield.

On the 17% of companies forecasting job losses and the 11% planning to potentially relocate, one of the biggest pharmaceutical companies in the North, with 700 to 1,000 jobs, has already got a foothold in the South. The reason it is doing that is that if it is sitting in the North and out of Europe, then it cannot give that European certification and standard that its customers require. If it cannot do that, and if there are then checks on the product as it crosses either a visible Border or whatever else, then that could affect its vacuum packing, its refrigeration and its time limit in getting to the customer. The customer would quite likely then go ahead and say that it is not working. The company would have to move the whole production unit into the South and into Europe to keep that business.

On the same token, when "customs union" is said versus "free market", one has to remember that

the EU has to protect its markets. How would the customs union agreement in one place and a free market in another work?

How would the Chinese feel about Northern milk coming down into the South to be processed and put into baby food powder and then sent back to China? What would it have to say about that? Customers could be lost all over the place. I think it would be haywire.

On this migration of people over a porous Border, the farm I am on is now part of the geopark. It is part of what is called a "stairway to heaven". There is a stairway the whole way up to the international Border. At present, 24,000 people walk that stairway each year. That stairway goes up onto the international Border that covers five, seven, eight miles of mountain and heath. Who is going to know who is walking up or down those stairs? Is there going to be a customs post or immigration check at the end of that walk? After that, there are 330 more walks.

Mr. Neil McDonnell: The Chairman's colleagues on the Joint Committee on Jobs,

Enterprise and Innovation answered that and gave a very short guide to the World Trade Organization, WTO, rules. All but one category of trade attracting a tariff in excess of 10% are food categories. The people that will have to be asked the Chairman's question are not in this jurisdiction. He heard the question from a farmer. When it comes down to adjudication on these matters, if it is going to be within the customs union, it is subject to the adjudication of the European Court of Justice, ECJ. It would appear that the UK has set its face against the adjudication of the ECJ. It has traditionally had a cheap food policy and maybe it will decide that it will accept jurisdiction in certain categories for these very reasons. That is not going to be within our immediate gift here.

Mr. John Sheridan: I am sorry to interject but the obvious point in this regard is that if that happens and if Britain goes back to the cheap food policy it has historically always followed, it could go back to taking in Brazilian beef although I think that could take a while. If that Brazilian beef then filtrates into Southern Ireland and then on into Europe, the whole market and trust is going to be wiped out. How is that going to work? Haywire.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae: I welcome the witnesses.

Usually we ask questions and expect to get answers, but I can see the witnesses are asking as many questions as I am going to ask because we are in total limbo. I cannot give them answers. When they speak of Brazilian beef coming into England, if there is some deal done between England and Brazil, what is to stop it coming into the North of Ireland? If one does not have some kind of border control, it will be down here, down as far as Kerry where I come from, overnight. Whether hard border or soft border, I cannot see but that there will be a border.

There will have to be control, customs and all that goes with it. The South of Ireland is in Europe and all the Europeans have direct access to the South of Ireland. England voted for Brexit because they wanted to keep out a certain amount of those immigrants or whatever. Surely they will not accept that the immigrants whom they do not want to come into their country would be allowed in here to the South of Ireland and walk up over the Border into the United Kingdom. We are all in cloud cuckoo land if we do not realise that will be the case if it goes through. I, for one, hope that

Brexit does not go through or that England will pull back at the last minute or whatever, if they do not get the deal that they want or that they think they may get, but I suppose there is no hope of that. It is very serious, especially for farmers and those in rural areas. It may, as IBEC told us, help places like Dublin or the large urban areas but it will hurt us in the regions. Down in the distant districts, we are already struggling with infrastructure being one of the main issues. It is serious and it is impossible to contemplate what will be the outcome. If, as I believe, England voted to get out of Europe mostly because of immigration reasons, can they explain to me that there will not be a border to stop those who come to Ireland from going to the North of Ireland? What other way will there be? One could say it is fine to let England itself maintain the Border if it wants to but that could work against us if we do not have officials there to stop what we do not want coming in by way of agricultural or whatever produce from other parts of the world.

Mr. John James O'Hara: I will answer one point. The reality is the North did not vote for Brexit. Some 470,000 did not vote for Brexit. They wanted to remain in Europe. The reality is one should respect the remain vote. These are people on the ground every day. They want to be able to travel nice and free through both jurisdictions. To clarify something, the Six Counties did not vote for Brexit. If we have a border, it should be on the Irish Sea. It should not be any place within Ireland.

There has been a lot of work done over the past three years for an all-island beef food product label between both councils. As a tourism product, Ireland has to be sold as one product. It cannot be sold as two separate food products in any respect from any different part of it. Let us look forward and say that Ireland is a small island in a big wide world. As we are marketing tourism - here is a distinct point we came across - we are setting up agents through the United States as a tour company. We went across different parts of the United States and they did not know where Ireland was. The reality is this is a small island and to be cut in two is not an option. It is something that we need to move forward. We need to bring both communities together to try and bring that forward.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae: I thank Mr. O'Hara for that. That is what I wish for. We can ask the British Prime Minister, Mrs. Theresa May, to give back the Six Counties and make it part of the Thirty-two Counties again but, like the late Mrs. Margaret Thatcher previously, she will say, "Out, out, out." I cannot see how Mrs. May will agree to that.

Mr. John Sheridan: With the greatest respect, under the Good Friday Agreement, which did not exist in the late Mrs. Thatcher's time, the North is entitled to self-determination. As I stated already, it is the responsibility of Dublin, Europe and Westminster to ensure the Good Friday Agreement is fully implemented. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Mr. David Davis, MP, the chief negotiator on Brexit, has said that Westminster is quite happy if the North votes for self-determination to become part of Ireland and that is their right, and it will also be their right to automatically remain in Europe whatever time that would happen if it happened. He said that only yesterday.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I have a question. It is difficult to argue this because one is in the realms of Peter Pan and fantasy all rolled into one. What should we be doing that we are not doing? That is the first question. Today and next week, what should we be doing? Has there ever

been a precedent for borders in the middle of the sea? That is what they are suggesting. It is a good suggestion, that one push the border out or push it back to the British. Has that ever happened previously? Is there anything going on at present that we do not know about? It is a case of business education, exports and imports. It is enormous. It is lifestyle that we are talking about here, not only export and import. They mentioned something about companies now moving into the South. We are aware of people looking for passports and dual citizenship. Is there anything going on that we do not know about?

Returning to the North, are we suggesting that a united Ireland is the only realistic way forward? In one way, "It is the economy, stupid." Where do we find the €9 billion - which will rise to €12 billion by 2020 - cost of Northern Ireland for this idea that we would become united for the sake of the European cohort and then possibly remain disunited? I do not see how that can happen unless one is talking about a united Ireland. Then that raises the question of the Border poll and where that sits.

What the witnesses are saying is most sensible but I cannot see it. It is fitting a template on something to suit something else. Then, where does that leave Scotland? Is Scotland not in the same category? It is also on the same land mass as England. Scotland shares the same Brexit border there.

Mr. John Sheridan: With the greatest of respect, I note Scotland has a problem but we have enough to deal with at home at the present time.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I am merely making a comparison.

Chairman: The Senator might ask Mr. Sheridan.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I am not asking Mr. Sheridan to argue. I am merely making the comparison that he was making.

Mr. John Sheridan: We would say there already is an all-island economy. The committee has heard Mr. Neil McDonnell state one needs economy of scale now.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: But not an all-island-----

Chairman: Through the Chair.

Mr. John Sheridan: We have an all-island economy in milk. On the island, milk is completely integrated. Agriculture is very close to it.

This is a white page. Nobody knows. There are no rules withstanding this. Border Communities Against Brexit has never stated necessarily that it is looking for a united Ireland. The organisation is saying it is looking for a one-island economy and to leave the constitution with Westminster the way it is for the time being.

At the minute, it is to look after the economy of this island and ensure that it is not ravaged economically, particularly the North, because the North would be sitting between two stools. Does that answer the question?

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: It does. It is an interesting concept but it is a difficult one.

Can Mr. Sheridan go back about the border at the sea? Will he answer that? Would he also answer is there anything going on that we do not know about, not in a sinister but in a clever way?

Mr. John James O'Hara: To respond to the comments about a united Ireland, we are looking for the conversation to be moved forward. Tourism Ireland came out of the Good Friday Agreement. I think all of us here, even a Kerryman, would respect what Tourism Ireland has done. Tourism in the North is up 26%; tourism in Leitrim increased by 14% last year. The past five years have seen a year-on-year increase in our tourism product. Tourism Ireland is one example of a body that has worked very well selling a product on an all-island basis. We are a small island so we must seek to move the conversation forward. It might take three, four or five years, but under the Good Friday Agreement we have one example that has worked very well. Why not consider a food label next and move that forward?

It is a question of taking the matter at different stages to move it forward.

Leitrim Tourism Network, one body we set up, is about bringing businesses together. As we see it, the main thing is to get a conversation going. In our paper, which we have here and will give to the committee, we examine Irish Network. The idea of this is to work it out county by county on a 32-county basis. We started examining this project two years ago, even before Brexit was talked about. We did the tests in Leitrim Tourism Network. We sell different products together. I brought the committee a brochure, in case the members do not know where Leitrim is, to make sure we can get them there. The idea of it is that the conversations of all communities must be considered and taken on board. There will be many disagreements and agreements, but we are already working together along the Border counties. Leitrim Tourism Network works with tourism in the North. We move people to the Giant's Causeway and right into Scotland. We sell Scotland tours. I will show the committee a brochure on this. We sell Ireland-Scotland tours together because we identified a market about six years ago of people coming here for six to eight days and spending six to eight days in Scotland. In such cases it is natural to travel right around. We must examine what we have already done, move forward and try to take the next step.

Mr. Neil McDonnell: I reiterate to Senator O'Donnell that I understand that the Border did move to English, Scottish and Welsh seaports for the duration of the Second World War, from 1939 to 1946 even. This caused some consternation in parts of the community north of the Border but that was how it was done, so there is a precedent for it. Furthermore, short of unity, as Mr. Sheridan has mentioned, there are many imaginative solutions in this regard - I appreciate, for jurisdictions that are smaller than the North - such as in Greenland, the Isle of Man and Jersey. They have special status and recognition within the EU although they are not technically within the EU. On the flip side, people who have been to Cyprus may be familiar with the British sovereign base areas, which I understand, subject to confirmation, are British eurozone territories simply because they are located in Cyprus. We are only limited by our imagination and determination to put in place a solution.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I do not mean to create limitations; it was just a platform for hearing what the witnesses have to say. What they are saying is very refreshing and chaotic in its creativity, and they are quite right that we must find ways around the issue. There is cross-Border

co-operation even in health, the arts, culture and tourism - and milk. Starting with milk, even if one knew nothing, one could see this co-operation every day of one's life in what one eats and drinks. I also see it in education all the time. I therefore agree with the witnesses. It is just that we do not hear enough of people like them speaking publicly with creative solutions.

Mr. John James O'Hara: Senator O'Donnell referred to health. Sligo University Hospital and Altnagelvin Area Hospital work very closely together. Even the ambulance services work very closely together. It depends on whoever is on site first. There are many such precedents we can work off, and they work well. As a small island, we should be able to move forward.

Mr. John Sheridan: On that point, Sligo Institute of Technology along with the county council through its sporting centre and green energy were going to go forward and offer a link into the accident and emergency unit in Enniskillen and have that completely integrated. Energy is something we never even touched on. One thing must be kept in mind: this is a food island. Kerry chose this place to establish its centre of excellence with 1,000 jobs, each with a six-figure salary, and it did not do so just on a whim. This is why a sea border is needed. It must be protected from diseases such as foot and mouth disease and bovine spongiform encephalopathy, BSE. Ireland must protect the food niche for which it is known. After all, the Chinese Minister with responsibility for the environment was shot because she let melamine into the milk. Some 25% of the world's baby food is produced by five of the main processing companies on this island with Irish milk from Irish cows fed on Irish grass both North and South. Why would one want to ruin that, the tourist product, the health product and the whole lot?

Chairman: I wish to make a few points. The all-Ireland energy market Mr. Sheridan mentioned is one of those really positively integrated markets. If Brexit proceeds as the worst case scenario, the home market, to a certain extent, will reduce by approximately 30% to small businesses, and it is on the island of Ireland that small businesses first find their feet before even thinking of exporting or delivering to other markets.

The €12 billion Senator O'Donnell mentioned is a very, let us say, disagreed with figure in that it includes money that goes from the North into the British defence budget. For example, it includes money spent by the Northern population on Trident, etc. In addition, corporations that function in the North pay their taxes not in Belfast, but in London. For example, none of the corporation tax generated in the North of Ireland is included in that €12 billion, so that figure would be far lower if issues such as Trident, British defence and corporation taxes were taken out.

I think the key issue for people is that if there is regulation divergence North and South, it kills the ability to develop an all-Ireland market. I was lucky enough to be the rapporteur for the enterprise committee's report on the all-Ireland economy last year. I met with 100 different organisations. ISME and the CBI in the North were involved, as were different community organisations.

All those organisations said that if one plans, funds and delivers together, one reaps economies of scale and improves the level of quality for people, and this is what is being threatened. My fear in this regard is that it is happening on our island but we seem to have no influence over it whatsoever. That is the most frustrating element of it. We probably disagree with the politics of it, but I believe that one of the necessities is for this Government and this State to fight for that

special category status. They were mandated to do so by this Oireachtas. There is also an onus on us to negotiate with the British at some level, as the Spanish seem to be doing regarding Gibraltar, to set out our stall at least before the full negotiations get into swing in the European Union. Do the witnesses have any comments to make on those points? I apologise - was Deputy Smyth looking to come in?

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Yes. Excuse me, but I had to leave. I am delighted to see Mr. McDonnell, Mr. Sheridan and Mr. O'Hara here. As a Deputy representing Cavan-Monaghan, I know exactly what they are talking about. I feel so passionately about it. I am delighted to see them raising the concerns they have because on the ground it is exactly as they have put it. The European funding we have had over the past-----

Chairman: I ask Deputy Smyth to turn off her phone.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Is that mine?

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: There should be absolutely no technology in here-----

Deputy Niamh Smyth: It is not mine.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: -----bar our mouths.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: We have had European funding coming into towns such as Castleblayney, Clones and Ballybay. Those towns have been decimated over the years and they are just getting back on their feet and just beginning to see economic advancement. What might it mean for people on the ground and local authorities not to have EU funding? We know what PEACE funding has meant for cross-Border projects and community centres. We would not have basic things like playgrounds in our Border counties if this funding had not been available. I ask Mr. McDonnell to tease out the notion of social dumping, to which he alluded when he spoke about employers in the North of Ireland.

Mr. Neil McDonnell: The Chair spoke about the possibility of special economic status or a special zone being designated north of the Border. We would need to define that when we get into the social chapter.

If the British Government goes down the so-called "bill of rights" route, as it is suggesting it will do, will it lead to a deterioration in the standards of employment of workers? I will give a simple example from within the tourism industry here. Bus drivers, bar workers and restaurant workers on this side of the Border are subject to a 48-hour average working week, or a maximum of 60 hours in any one week. If they are going to be subject to competition from workers two miles away who are no longer bound by those rules, that will have implications for the cost structure, which is already under pressure. We have the second highest minimum wage in Europe. We have gone relatively far away from the North of Ireland because of the deterioration in the price of sterling. The gap has already widened from a wage perspective. Theresa May has said she will strengthen workers' rights. I will believe it when I see it. If the average working week increases to 50, 55 or 60 hours, the difference in the cost base of businesses that are very close together will stretch considerably.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Mr. O'Hara spoke earlier about the agrifood sector, which plays a

significant part in our economy in locations like Lakeland Dairies, Lough Egish, Bailieborough and Killeshandra. As we know, various stages of production take place on either side of the Border. Gallons of milk are going from one side of the Border to the other. As it stands, one does not know when one crosses the Border. If there is a change to a visible and tangible hard Border, who knows what that might mean for a company like Lakeland Dairies? It could wipe out my constituency and the whole Border region.

Mr. John Sheridan: Such companies would have to be given time to build processing facilities on both sides of the Border. It would make a mockery of the whole thing to need to have a processing facility for the milk in the North and a processing facility for the milk in the South. Certification issues would have to be dealt with to ensure customers accept milk from the North in the first place. The whole thing might end up with companies deciding to leave producers with milk they do not need. The main thing for them would be to keep their customers. Between 30% and 40% of the North's milk is going south. Some 30% of the North's lamb - 100,000 lambs a day - goes south. I will put this in perspective. I am involved in red meat production. There are over 1 million suckler cows in the South and 260,000 or 270,000 suckler cows in the North. The North's gross agricultural output is up to £5 billion, whereas gross agricultural output in the South is over €30 billion. We have one marketing body - the LMC, which does not really have an office outside the North - whereas Bord Bia has offices in 28 countries around the world. This is about the synergies of economies of scale and working together.

As someone who has lived on the Border all my life - I have probably spent as much time in the South as I have in the North - I truly believe it would be a shame to allow Brexit, which is being triggered today, to ruin this country.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Absolutely. It is soul-destroying to think this will happen, especially as we have come so far.

Mr. John Sheridan: So far.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Counties Cavan and Monaghan are unrecognisable compared to when I was a child. Nobody lived or worked in some towns because there was no purpose to doing so. There was nothing to keep us there. They are just getting on their feet. Certain towns and villages still have a long way to go. This could wipe us out.

Mr. John Sheridan: Yes.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: A special case has to be made for the Border counties.

Mr. John Sheridan: It is unfortunate that this is happening at a time when we have such a lifestyle, such quality food and so many comforts, especially by comparison with other parts of the world that are in a forlorn state. Maybe I am speaking more widely and going off the subject to a certain extent by mentioning that when we look across the rest of the world, we see wars, refugees and people dying on boats at sea. It is sad that we cannot work it out.

Mr. John James O'Hara: The reality is that we are going to go back 25 years. As we see it, our friends, cousins and neighbours are only down the road from us. We live just ten miles from the Border. The reality is that we have to work with everyone on an ongoing basis to make sure we do

not go back 25 years. We had to go through checkpoints when we were growing up. As we were involved in meat processing, we used to go over and back to Monaghan all the time. We used to be stopped at checkpoints so that our lorries could be checked. We went through all of that. The reality is that going back to the Border again and, as Mr. Sheridan said, going away from the peaceful way of life we have at the moment will bring trouble. We made that very clear when we were in Brussels. This reality must be accepted. We want to see our economy moving forward peacefully. When the world youth conference was held in Dublin approximately three years ago, it did a project involving people in different age groups with ten-year gaps between them. The same questions were asked of the 20 year olds and the 70 year olds. When they were asked about the North-South Troubles, the 20 year olds spoke about how technology moves forward and the 70 year olds spoke about what they went through during the Troubles. Young people have moved forward. Belfast, Derry and Sligo are vibrant places. The movement of people is great to see. Border Communities Against Brexit is trying to move the conversation forward in the way I have outlined.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses for taking the time to come to Dublin to discuss this issue at today's meeting. This committee and the other committees are hoping to get an opportunity to develop a joint cross-committee report on foot of our meetings and discussions with interested parties. We will seek to ensure the information the witnesses have delivered to us today will be part of that. We hope the voice of the Oireachtas, as expressed in the final report, will influence the direction the Government takes as it gets involved with our European partners in the negotiations.

Mr. John Sheridan: Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has already produced an economic report on the dangers Brexit will impose on the council area. On behalf of Mr. O'Hara, Mr. McDonnell and myself, I thank this committee for its work and its vision in trying to show why common sense has to prevail with regard to Brexit.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses again. Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.

The joint committee adjourned at 3.50 p.m. until 2.15 p.m. on Thursday, 6 April 2017.

25. COMMITTEE DEBATE, 06 APRIL 2017 - LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL, DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL, SEUPB

AN COMHCHOISTE UM EALAÍONA, OIDHREACTH, GNÓTHAÍ RÉIGIÚNACHA, TUAITHE AGUS GAELTACHTA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS, HERITAGE, REGIONAL, RURAL AND GAELTACHT

Déardaoin, 6 Aibreán 2017

Thursday, 6 April 2017

The Joint Committee met at 2.25 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Ciarán Cannon,

Deputy Michael Collins,

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív,

Deputy Niamh Smyth.

Senator Mary-Louise O'Donnell,

Senator Fintan Warfield.

In attendance: Deputy Declan Breathnach and Senator Frank Feighan.

DEPUTY PEADAR TÓIBÍN IN THE CHAIR.

25.1. DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION IN BORDER COUNTIES: DISCUSSION

Chairman: We will now consider the future of community, social and economic development and co-operation in Border counties with representatives of Derry City and Strabane District Council and Louth County Council. Later in the meeting we will discuss the same topic with officials from the special EU programmes body. I welcome the following witnesses: Mr. John Kelpie, chief executive officer and Mr. Michael Gallagher, strategy manager, representing Derry City and Strabane District Council; and from Louth County Council, Councillor Paul Bell, cathaoirleach, Ms Joan Martin, chief executive officer, Mr. Frank Pentony, director of service and Mr. Joe McGuinness, director of service. I wish to note for the record that we did invite Alderman Hilary McClintock, mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, and very much regret that she decided not to participate in today's discussion of an issue which is of such importance to Donegal, Derry and Strabane.

I draw the attention of witnesses to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to so do, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the House or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. The witnesses' opening statements and any other documents they have submitted to the committee may be published on the committee website after this meeting.

I invite Councillor Bell to make his presentation first as I am aware he is under time pressure.

Mr. Paul Bell: Louth County Council greatly welcomes this opportunity to address the committee on the future of community, social and economic development and co-operation in the Border counties. Communities throughout Ireland have faced difficult times over the past decade or so due to the prolonged economic crisis. Reductions in both central and local government support and funding, coupled with large gaps between vital programmes such as INTERREG, Leader and PEACE, have meant that it has been very difficult to either maintain or develop community infrastructure or facilities. The recent commencement of these programmes has been a tremendous boost for the people of County Louth.

People in border areas which are, by their nature, so often on the periphery and far from centres of government and power, have always considered that they suffer additional difficulty and disadvantage. The long recession has certainly exacerbated this problem and towns like Dundalk continue to suffer unemployment rates above the national average. The retail and hospitality sectors have been badly hit and our proximity to the Border, coupled with the everpresent challenge of fluctuating currency exchange rates, makes recovery that bit harder.

The decision of Britain to leave the European Union is an added challenge and at the present time, when so little is known with any certainty about what the final Brexit package might look like, there is widespread concern throughout the county in all sectors about the future. Cross-Border co-operation and cross-Border programmes have been an integral part of community, social and economic development in this area for many decades, including right throughout the Troubles. Most of the key programmes, such as INTERREG and PEACE, on which we rely so much, are at least partly funded by the European Union. While a reasonable degree of certainty has been brought to the current round of funding, a future without these programmes is almost unthinkable. If they cannot continue in their present form, similar replacement programmes must be developed and put in place by both Governments. Our own council's close relationship with councils in Northern Ireland dates back to the early 1970s and we would not like to see this valuable co-operation damaged or diminished, especially as a result of Brexit.

Chairman: Thank you. Is there anybody else to speak from Louth County Council?

Ms Joan Martin: To touch on some of what is covered in the document, we appreciate the fact that communities throughout Ireland have faced a difficult recession and are facing into a difficult future. I have tried to set out what differentiates the likes of Louth as a Border county. What I have said also applies to those areas of Donegal that lie close to Derry.

All of our community, economic and social development is now predicated on the Local Government Act 2014, which requires local economic and community plans to be in place. That is the statutory plan which is our bible, as it were, for action and development, not just for the county councils but for many of the agencies also. The likes of the education and training boards, the HSE, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, and all of the other agencies are part of that local plan, which is common throughout Ireland. The statement we submitted sets out some of the goals we are talking about.

They include strong, safe and flourishing communities; access to education; prosperous, inclusive communities and places; health and well-being; nurturing children; and an age-friendly society. Louth was the first age-friendly county in Ireland and every county in the Republic is now part of the age-friendly communities programme. That is an important part of the culture and ethos in Louth.

We also talked about our economic goals. Before this new statutory plan, Louth had an economic forum with a multi-stakeholder approach for many years. Building on the work of the Louth economic forum, the economic goals of our new statutory plan deal with areas such as foreign direct investment, sustainable development, education and training, future-focused innovation, indigenous tourism and heritage. Last week, I was at two tourism conferences and in both cases we were very conscious of the fact that Louth is not recognised as a major tourism destination. Tourism is one of the greatest hopes for economic development in our county. However, with Brexit there is the danger of a hard border turning us into a cul-de-sac instead of part of the Dublin-Belfast corridor. In addition, in Ireland's Ancient East, which is the counterbalance to the Wild Atlantic Way, Louth and Carlingford at the Border are at the extreme end of the Ireland's Ancient East map. We are always conscious that we are, in a way, hanging on the edge and in danger of falling off. These are the issues we face.

Following the end of the recession there has been a welcome return of a number of programmes that support community and economic development, such as the town and village renewal scheme and the recent renewal of the CLÁR. Such schemes from the Government are welcome. After ten hard years the smallest amount of funding can have a huge impact, particularly in smaller communities. What differentiates the Border area is the fact that for the past 20 years it has had considerable access to European funding. The INTERREG and PEACE programmes have been very important at every level, be it individual tiny communities, new businesses or soft support to try to build capacity or to deal with some of the challenges left from the Troubles. Those programmes have been at the heart of all our work. I have provided the committee with some figures relating to INTERREG. Under INTERREG IIIA, the cross-Border group we are part of supported programmes to the value of €25 million, and under the INTERREG IVA

programme, which is the last programme that finished, our group, the east Border region, was the lead partner on €24 million worth of programmes. With the uncertainty with Brexit and the impact on the Border, not to mind matters such as the milk industry, agrifood and all the issues people mention, the loss of these programmes could devastate communities and opportunities for education, such as the universities working together, business and business support.

An all-island competition that has a huge impact, but little money behind it, is the Pride of Place competition. I have such a soft spot for it I felt I had to mention it. That competition encourages the smallest communities to step forward and showcase what their communities are doing and achieving and all the work that is taking place in those communities. Again, I worry about Brexit and the impact it will have on the Border and cross-Border co-operation, as well as what will happen to such programmes.

I will not detail everything because we have mentioned a number of matters. However, I am anxious to mention one project that has been funded recently under the new INTERREG programme, the Carlingford Lough greenway. One hears a great deal about the famous Mulranny greenway in County Mayo, but there are many greenways in Ireland now. We have one along Carlingford Lough. Louth County Council had a project between Carlingford and Omeath on the southern shores of Carlingford Lough and our new project is a €3.5 million one under INTERREG VA, which will bring that greenway across to Newry. That is the true example of the value of programmes such as INTERREG and the type of value that comes from councils working together since 1974. Newry and Dundalk and Newry and Louth have been working together since 1974, throughout the Troubles and since then, both when there was no money and when there was money. We are very concerned that all of that good work and co-operation could be threatened by Brexit, its outcome and the loss of programmes such as INTERREG. INTERREG always had a section of the programme to deal with peripheral countries in order that countries at the edge of the EU always had access to funding. However, it is not the same.

We are delighted that the British Government in its letter triggering Article 50 specifically referred to the Northern Ireland issue, the importance of the cross-Border relationship and the many facets it encompasses. I have been referring to certain aspects of it and to programmes such as INTERREG. Ultimately, however, that greenway will allow somebody to walk or cycle from Carlingford in County Louth to Lough Neagh, between travelling on the greenway and accessing the towpath which runs from Newry. It is a phenomenal project that would never have happened without many decades of cross-Border work on building relationships and learning to work together. The INTERREG programme allows us the funding to take on significant programmes that can act as major catalysts to kick-start tourism in the Border area and in Northern Ireland.

In summary, successful communities in the Border area depend on a range of factors, including building capacity for self-help and development. They depend on a range of supports from local government, central government, other agencies and the EU to create wealth and opportunities for jobs, tourism and so forth.

They also need a predictable future within which they can plan and hope. Many of the ingredients are in place and there has been the welcome return of the programmes I mentioned. We have

great cross-Border relationships and co-operation. In our case that is not just through the east Border region that has been in place since 1974 but, in more recent years, through the formal international memorandum of understanding with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. We need all of these ingredients to remain at our disposal into the future.

The looming shadow and uncertainty of Brexit is probably the greatest area of concern. Everywhere one turns Brexit is on everybody's lips. As long as the uncertainty remains, and there was much talk about whether it would or would not happen, we will have no idea how it will look. We cannot be certain about anything. The 11 councils in the Border area, North and South, will hold a conference for our members in Enniskillen in a few weeks but, again, we will be talking about whether it will look like this or that. If I were to seek anything from the committee members and the Oireachtas, it would be continued pressure and a watching eye on what is happening in respect of the position of the Border area and Northern Ireland as the Brexit divorce proceedings, as people like to call them, go ahead. We must maintain pressure on those who are negotiating either on behalf of Ireland as part of the EU or on behalf of the British Government to ensure they remember these communities and businesses that are so worried and concerned and which could be devastated if the outcome is not the right one.

Chairman: Go raibh maith agat. Bhí an cur i láthair iontach suimiúil. I invite the representatives of Derry City and Strabane District Council to make their presentation.

Mr. John Kelpie: I thank the committee for its invitation to address it this afternoon. We are delighted to be here. Derry is the fourth largest city on the island, with an urban population of more than 100,000 people. It is situated in a unique cross-Border context. The wider Derry north-west city region comprises Derry, Strabane, parts of neighbouring councils in Northern Ireland and much of north-east Donegal, which is in the Republic. This wider city region, comprising between 350,000 and 400,000 people, is the only city region in these islands and one of the few across the whole of Europe which, post Brexit, will potentially straddle a border between the EU and a country outside the EU. At present the city physically straddles the Border, with between 5% and 10% of the urban population of the city of Derry currently living in the small towns and villages which surround the city, tight against the Border on the Donegal side. These Donegal towns have expanded to become actual suburbs of the city of Derry.

The city and wider regions have made huge progress in recent years, economically, physically and socially, but there is a very long way to go. In common with other Border areas we have the highest unemployment levels of anywhere in Northern Ireland and the UK and huge areas of social deprivation. Much of the progress in recent years in Derry, Strabane and Donegal, like other Border areas, has been with the assistance of EU programmes or the collaborative benefit of North-South co-operation. To build on this progress, Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council have embarked on a new strategic partnership, a place-based leadership model to drive the region forward and to positively address its key challenges in partnership with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government. These arrangements have seen the establishment of the north west regional development group, a cross-Border joint committee of both councils comprising senior council officers and elected representatives with delegated authority to take decisions on a cross-Border basis. This involves joint cross-Border working at

local level with a focus on economic development, physical regeneration and social well-being, the first, we believe, of its kind in Europe. The new partnership arrangements also include the north west strategic growth partnership, in which senior civil servants from all Departments on both sides of the Border work with the two local councils to deliver on the key strategic objectives.

These new arrangements are up and running, endorsed and supported by the 2015 Fresh Start agreement by both Governments, a unique model of integrated, local, regional and national cross-Border collaboration established under the mechanisms of the North-South Ministerial Council and endorsed by both Governments and all of our partners. We believe this is the future of cross-Border development and collaboration, the crux of the question posed to us by the committee today. The partnership seeks to finally unlock the potential of Derry and the north-west city region and to enable the region to eventually move to positively contribute to the economies on both sides of the Border. It respects the politics of the Border as it currently stands, but disrespects the Border economically.

Among the many risks in developing this collaboration the most recent, and largest, is Brexit. In recognition of this, Derry and Donegal have moved fast and together to quantify and articulate this risk and to suggest potential mitigation that is bespoke to the region. My colleague will take members through some of the highlights of this work to date.

Mr. Michael Gallagher: We began the report in August and I will go through the main conclusions, why we did it, who was involved and what we believe it tells us. It is a very early look at what the implications might be for the cross-Border region. We put together a team from Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, Trinity College Dublin and ourselves, with two research teams from Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council, and we began to gather all the information. One might think there is a lot of information out there but when one goes looking for that information it is not always available in a useful form. We wanted to determine how interconnected is the region and to this end, we looked at the region at a subregional level within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, NISRA, in the North and the Central Statistics Office, CSO, in the Republic have two different reporting structures but we think the population is approximately 350,000, of whom very many move across the Border on a regular basis for work, leisure, health care, education and many other things. Electronic data from counters on three roads between Derry and Donegal give an indication of the magnitude of this interconnectedness, with 50,000 journeys. There are approximately 12 crossings in total, not all of which are as big as those three, but it gives some idea. Over the course of a week there are some 300,000 crossings. If there was a delay to that it would be significant.

We also began to engage with key stakeholders, the chambers of commerce and those involved in manufacturing and agrifood on both sides of the Border and we got two different perspectives from these. The initial reaction in Northern Ireland was that the weakening of sterling was a good thing. The weakening of sterling is not about Brexit it is about a number of different things in the world of currencies. Sterling may remain at its current level or it may not but the problem is there is a sense of contentment among people in Northern Ireland involved in retail

and tourism in that, having been told they would go off a cliff edge, it does not actually look too bad. On the Southern side there was an immediate impact on tourism after some six weeks, solely as a result of the exchange rate.

We asked people what the impacts might be and we found a great many of them, which I will take members through. Labour market impacts for people in Northern Ireland were stark and the health sector, in particular, sources a lot of labour from the Republic of Ireland. In particular, many staff members of Altnagelvin hospital commute from Donegal and are worried about the future. The hospital worries about how non-EU staff will be affected and whether

they will want to be in the National Health Service. There is evidence already, across Britain and Ireland, that health service professionals are making plans to leave Britain. There are worries about both access and more specialist staff as well.

On the southern side, Letterkenny hospital has similar worries about locums travelling North and South, especially about the recognition of their qualifications. People are quite quickly coming up with answers to questions of how Brexit will affect them. People who live in the Republic of Ireland and send their children to the North for education in its large urban centres are wondering whether they will be able to continue to do this. In Donegal, they are worried about large-scale emigration to Northern Ireland and what that might do to the population and the housing market in Donegal. We estimate that between 2,000 and 5,000 people live in Border settlements in the Republic that have grown up since 2001. These are only a couple of miles from Derry and most of their populations are former Northern Ireland residents. The interconnectedness can be seen in traffic and in people moving for health and education.

It also can be seen in terms of trade. We have a large number of food manufacturers located within Derry who export throughout the Republic and vice versa, with bread makers in Donegal who export to Britain and Northern Ireland. They are wondering what the future relationship will look like and how it might impact on them. We also spoke to the port authorities in Derry to get some indication of the frequency of vehicles leaving the port. One business told us it had 40 lorries crossing the Border at Bridgend per day. We are beginning to get a picture of what the difficulties might be.

An area of interest for Donegal, though less so for Derry, is fisheries. We had long discussions around the fisheries sector and there are real worries in Killybegs about how it will be affected in terms of access to fishing grounds. I am sure the committee has heard representations from fishermen there on this issue. Those involved in fishing in Northern Ireland cannot wait for this to happen because they think they will have unfettered access to their own fishing grounds. There is a real issue around food processing. We have already heard about milk processing and we have a very large processing plant just over the Border beside Strabane, the LacPatrick Dairy in Artigarvan, which has just invested €40 million and is worried about how it will be affected. The vast majority of milk producers in the Republic have their plants in Northern Ireland and this company has plants in Coleraine and Monaghan. While they are not in as difficult a position as others, it demonstrates the complexities involved. When we spoke to them, they gave us the example of milk which can cross the Border five times in terms of the beginning of one process to the end of another. What will that look like if we end up with WTO tariffs which might be 30% to

40%? It would make things very difficult for those businesses.

Obviously, the overall context relating to Derry and Strabane is that the area is just coming out of recession.

We had been in the position of having a plan whereby we thought that if we did certain things we could improve the economic proposition and competitiveness of the region but out of the blue has come Brexit. Quantifying the overall impact for Donegal, there will probably be 7,000 fewer jobs in 2030 than there would have been on the basis of the projected growth rates. There will probably be approximately 2,600 fewer jobs in Derry. It is much worse overall in Derry because the job growth potential was much lower to begin with. We will have approximately the same number of jobs in 2030 as we had at the peak in 2007. Mr. Kelpie will conclude by setting out what we think we can do. We have a plan.

Mr. John Kelpie: I thank Mr. Gallagher for that and I thank members for bearing with us. We believe the implications of Brexit are very significant for the north-west city region. Weak subregional economies will become even weaker with Brexit. It is very likely that the great progress that has been made in the north west in recent years will stall or, indeed, go backwards. This cannot be allowed to happen. To mitigate, we must come out the other end of this with free movement of people, trade and services. We must continue to function as a cohesive, integrated, cross-Border and thriving city region in common with the requirements of the other Border corridor counties. Uniquely for Derry and the north west, there must be renewed impetus to address our infrastructure gaps and skills deficits. I refer to the long-awaited A5 and A6, rail and airport connectivity and, very importantly and key to the development of the north-west city region, the expansion of the University of Ulster at Magee College, which is now almost 55 years overdue. If these projects are not delivered, Derry city and the wider north west, including northern Donegal, will most definitely regress in a post-Brexit situation as the evidence we have shows. The region's potential will be greatly impeded and the benefits to the region and country as a whole will be lost.

The time to act is now. We know in the region what needs to be done to propel Derry and the north west on a positive future trajectory, providing economic prosperity and social and community cohesion and well being. We have the partnerships in place at local level and the impetus is there from both Governments through the new strategic growth arrangements and cross-Border working arrangements. We are on that positive, integrated trajectory as the fourth-largest city region on the island and today we ask the committee for its assistance in delivering this positive future in a post-Brexit era.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses for that insightful information. I open the floor to members for questions.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: What I wish to say is more of an observation than a question. I represent the Border constituency of Cavan-Monaghan. The wonderful relationship we have built up over the years is of huge concern to anyone who lives in the Border area. We do not even think about the Border, which is completely invisible and intangible in comparison with what it was historically. I can empathise hugely with the witnesses in that regard. It is wonderful to see the relationships and projects happening where that cross-Border connection exists in preparation for the complete

unknown. That is the situation in which we find ourselves. It is totally unknown territory. Louth County Council is represented here and I know we will be talking about INTERREG and PEACE funding again. Cavan and Monaghan County Councils have depended hugely on those specific projects and funding avenues to rebuild communities and the coalface of the Border area where, for the most part, we had ghost towns during the Troubles. The funding has contributed hugely to our local authorities. I can certainly empathise albeit I really do not have a question. It is wonderful to hear the stories set out here today. Please God, the future will be bright.

Chairman: I might pose some questions. Peripheries do not tend to do well economically. Peripheries are usually damaging. What we have here, however, is a man-made periphery to a certain extent. It was created and it should not be there. People in the South tend not to understand that the highest levels of deprivation, unemployment and depopulation are to be found along the Border. In the recent census figures, for example, Donegal was one of the few counties in the State that actually experienced a population decrease since 2011. It is very frustrating that, in the context of the Good Friday Agreement, 1 million Irish and, therefore, EU, citizens will potentially be left isolated outside the EU against their will. Consent has been one of the bedrocks of political developments in the North in recent years. If we do not have a customs union with Britain, if Britain does not have access to the Single Market and if there are changes in regulation, there will have to be checks of materials and people crossing the Border. There have been discussions and a number of areas have been selected for Border posts. Do the witnesses have that information? No. That is a good thing. We can mitigate against many of the difficulties that exist. One of the ways in which we can mitigate is through better planning and integration. There is currently a large project in the South called the national planning framework. What level of input and engagement have the local authorities had with that? We might go to the representatives from Derry City and Strabane District Council first.

Mr. John Kelpie: We have had a very strong engagement on the Ireland 2040 national planning framework consultation document as a city council but also - and probably more importantly - through a joint submission by Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council as part of the north-west city region approach. A consultation event was held in the city a number of weeks ago with representatives from Government Departments here and in the North. We have had a very positive engagement in that regard and have been placing ourselves strategically in terms of the consultation response, reinforcing much of the contribution we have made today. Derry and the north-west region is the second largest city in the North, the fourth largest city on the island and, actually, the third largest city within the jurisdiction of the national planning framework after Dublin and Cork in that it is truly a cross-Border region and not solely a city located in one jurisdiction or the other. That gives it a unique context and provides it with the greatest ever challenge it has faced.

Chairman: What about Louth County Council?

Ms Joan Martin: We have made a joint submission from the executive and membership of the local authority in Louth.

Chairman: It is not a Newry-Mourne one.

Ms Joan Martin: Not Newry, albeit our biggest concern about the discussion documents that came out in the national planning framework was probably the huge concentration on a number of cities which are either in the west or the south. We are talking about Galway down to Cork. We are not anywhere close to any of those. Our concern was that our peripherality was increasing greatly if that was the trend carrying through to the draft plan. The main thrust of our submission was that if Dublin is under pressure, towns such as Dundalk, Drogheda and, up the corridor, Newry are well placed with good infrastructure to provide sustainable development centres or nodes which can support Dublin. It is very much about the Dublin-Belfast corridor and the ability of towns such as Drogheda, Dundalk and so on to help sustain Dublin into the future.

Chairman: The Louth-Newry memorandum of understanding is the best-practice template of any of the local authorities having regard to integration. There is joint planning and even joint employment. There is quite a bit of joint work. Is that the same relationship that Derry City and Strabane District Council has with Donegal County Council? Has it happened as much in the west of the Border region?

Mr. John Kelpie: We have embarked on engaging in a completely new set of relationships in the north west, as the Chairman knows. As I said, they are endorsed in the Fresh Start agreement. My colleagues have mentioned the local community and economic planning process in southern counties. We have a similar process in the northern counties, the community plan. Both counties have developed a strategic plan to drive forward the economy, physical regeneration and social well-being.

We have set up a new strategic partnership model to work on the key strategic issues that affect both councils. The memorandum of understanding we have goes much deeper than that. We actually have a joint committee of the councillors of both councils. They meet regularly and have the delegated authority of both councils to take decisions on economic matters. They tie into a wider strategic partnership that comprises senior government officials from all Departments from both Governments, in both Belfast and Dublin. It is truly a unique place-based partnership model. It is one that we believe does not exist anywhere else in Europe and which is increasing its maturity. A key risk facing it is Brexit.

Ms Joan Martin: There may be differences but they are not as great as all that. Likewise, we have a joint committee of council. Our management teams also meet. There may not be government officials; that is one of the key differences. There are no delegated functions but there is a joint agreed action plan. Many of the same ingredients exist. I suppose the language is a little different. The biggest difference I noted when Mr. Kelpie was speaking relates to delegated authority. Ultimately, the decisions still come back to the individual councils. It is a very good model. Even though we have had ours for considerably longer, we have yet to exploit its potential fully. We are still at an early stage of reaping the benefits or the potential benefits. One of the fears I have about Brexit is that just when we are putting in place good models like this to develop our areas, obstacles will arise. The relationship may not be completely blocked off but it will not be as easy to work together. Doing so is very important.

Chairman: Investment is obviously one of the other mitigating factors involved. I had a look at

the figures released yesterday by the Construction Federation of Ireland on the level investment in each county in the South in 2017. Cavan came last. It got no funding at all in 2017 for infrastructural projects. County Louth was second from the bottom in the funding process, and Donegal was in the bottom half. It is clear, therefore, that current infrastructure expenditure is very low in the Border region. The region is the one quadrant of the island that has really poor transport infrastructure. Anybody who tips up to Derry or Donegal will realise there is no rail connection or dual-carriageway connection. This puts the whole region at a severe disadvantage. The southern Government did promise approximately €400 million for the A5 and for access to Donegal. That has been reduced to €70 million. I understand the A5 project would proceed if the investment figure were the original €400 million.

I would also like the delegates to talk about the dropping of the Derry-Dublin Bus Éireann bus route.

Mr. John Kelpie: I will first respond to the last point Ms Martin made. The various models that exist along the Border are at different stages of maturity. We each learn from the other through each iteration. It is certainly something on which we are partnering, and we are trying to learn from one another on how to take forward best practice.

As the Chairman rightly pointed out, the A5 is probably the single biggest infrastructure project in respect of which we require mitigation not only for the future, but also the present. The journey time for us this morning, of just over 150 miles, took almost four hours. That was not contending with rush-hour traffic. It meant leaving Derry city for Dublin this morning at 9.05 a.m. and pulling in here at 1.20 p.m. That is simply not an attractive proposition in terms of foreign direct investment or supporting and growing our SME base.

The rail route, as members know, goes through Belfast. If connections work, the journey takes in the region of five hours. The bus service has been substantially reduced in recent days. The journey takes, at best, three and three quarter hours to four hours, with a half hour stop in Monaghan. For a long number of years, we had twice-daily connections from City of Derry Airport to Dublin Airport. This was extremely efficient for business and helped to mitigate some of the land-based infrastructure link issues. However, as members probably know, that service no longer exists and it remains paramount to us to try to re-establish that twice-daily air link, at least until the road link is put in place. The Chairman is correct that this remains the single biggest infrastructural project we believe to be required to finally unlock the potential of the north west and bring it closer to the markets of Dublin. Dublin Airport is increasingly becoming a key economic link to the rest of the world, with close to 200 flights per week to North America. The vast majority of the foreign direct investors in the north west are US based. They are finding it increasingly hard to do business there because of the infrastructural deficit. It remains one of the key priorities for us.

Chairman: With regard to special designation, the idea of pushing the Border to the sea, to a certain extent, so there would be free movement of people, products and services on the island of Ireland, a special designation measure has been passed in the Oireachtas as an objective. Even the European Parliament has a version of special designation within its Brexit negotiation

guidelines. What is the perspective of the two councils? Perhaps we will start with Louth County Council.

Ms Joan Martin: As I said at the close of my statement, many studies on Brexit have considered various scenarios, as Mr. Kelpie mentioned. The worst-case scenarios are like Armageddon considering the impact they could have on the economy.

Any mechanism that can help to retain the status quo or a set of circumstances as close to the status quo as possible in terms of movement is desirable. Close to 20% of my staff live in Northern Ireland. All of these things are so important. Anything that will keep in place the status quo is beneficial. I do not care whether there is a mechanism or whether those concerned are innovative and come up with some new mechanism. Anything that can maintain the status quo, or circumstances as close to the status quo as allow goods and people to move back and forth, as they have been doing, is vital. We will certainly be pushing for people to lobby and keep the pressure on in this regard.

Chairman: Does Derry City and Strabane District Council have an opinion on that?

Mr. John Kelpie: The opinion is broadly in line with that of Louth County Council, which is that the free movement of people and unimpeded access across the Border, as currently exist, are the prize at the end of this. That, at least, maintains the status quo. Again, our opinion, given our very peripheral part of the country, is that others measures are needed in addition. The measures that were urgent prior to Brexit are more urgent during the Brexit process and will be so thereafter. That, of course, has now become one of the red risks in the risk register in terms of driving forward the economic prosperity project of the north west of the island.

Chairman: I will now pass on the baton.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: The Chairman's questions were fantastic.

Chairman: I thank the Senator.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: We learned so much. The Chairman might tell us what was meant by Border posts. What does he know that we do not know?

Chairman: There have been reports that individuals from the Department of Finance or Revenue Commissioners have done preparatory work to cater for the fact that it may be necessary to have some locations along the Border at which vehicles travelling up and down, be they goods vehicles or citizens' cars, will be checked for the contents. There has not been a crystallisation of that information in any way but it is understood that a preliminary process has started within the Revenue Commissioners on the selection of sites.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I thank the Chairman.

What I heard was very pessimistic. I know the witnesses come here with a tremendous sense of pessimism and foreboding. However, I also heard much creativity and ways out of the problems which they said have been exacerbated and which they are trying to get through. Now they have been halted. I also know and love the area, since my mother is from Omeath near Newry.

I know what the witnesses are talking about in that area. I have spent much time in Derry. This raises a question for me. Have the witnesses sat down and thought about a major communications strategy? I do not mean within their committees or different elements of Europe or this project and that. I mean a communications strategy for southerners. Many people who live in Dublin or in Kerry do not really get it where the Border is concerned, unless they have reason to go there or have business there. The average person went to Newry to shop, left Newry and came home. Those people perhaps do not get the problem. Do the witnesses have a communications strategy to communicate to the island, including the southerners, exactly what these problems are so that we understand it? I do not mean on specific specialised Seanad matters. We had the former Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, in the Seanad Special Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, which was brought about by Independent Senators. I do not mean that. That will happen anyway. I do not mean it even at a Government level. I mean it at a people level, at our level, and at the level of people in public service. Maybe the witnesses could answer that point.

The first of Ms Joan Martin's community goals, which I think are excellent, is for flourishing communities and access to education, well-being in children and friendly society. Which one of these is Ms Martin most concerned about? The second question is on economic goals. Which one of these is completely flourishing? Would Ms Martin also tell me why she feels that Carlingford - one of the most beautiful, extraordinary places near Omeath, which looks like parts of Switzerland - is not on a par with Omeath for tourism?

The other question arises from the communications matter. How do the witnesses intend to get their voices heard outside here - this is a wonderful platform - in places where they need to be heard? Can they also talk to me about Magee College? Most of us come to this politically. We come from different backgrounds, whether cultural, touristic or education, and bring that knowledge with us. I bring a huge knowledge of cross-Border education and health, because there have been many of those committees through the cross-Border association. I take on board what the witnesses said about specialists in health care and also what they said about housing and migration. Perhaps they could refer back to education and the expansion of Magee College.

There is much to ask the witnesses. It is really about trying to create a new world, or at least trying to hold on to the world that we had been creating before somebody came in with a big foot and said that is going to stop here. I understand that. I want the witnesses to look at and talk to me about their communications strategy for the public outside their own areas. Look at what happened with water.

I am not suggesting that should be a parallel or that it is right or wrong. I mention this regardless of whether I agree, because I have my own personal opinions, but an energy came with that where the people asked what they were going to get. It is an energy one needs to hold onto things, not just specificity around a political morass. Maybe the witnesses could address those points.

Ms Joan Martin: I suspect that one of the things that will come up at the upcoming conference with councillors in Enniskillen will be issues like the communications strategy. The difficulty with Brexit, as we alluded to ourselves, is that much of what we talked about and our pessimism is

possibly the worst-case scenario. The problem is that we do not know what it is going to look like. A strategy on how we will go forward will come out of next month with the councillors and the conference, either as individual parts of the Border area or as a united Border area. That is something that will come up at that conference.

On the goals that we have in Louth, nothing can happen for communities and people if wealth is not created. Things like entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise are probably at the heart of the community goals. People constantly get excited about foreign direct investment, FDI, and its importance, and ask why IDA Ireland is not bringing jobs. FDI is quite a small percentage of jobs. The greatest number of jobs are indigenous and small businesses created by people with entrepreneurial skills. That whole issue of developing entrepreneurship in communities and the whole enterprise area is very important. On the economic goals side, we would claim successes everywhere, and we would claim challenges everywhere as well. On broadband connectivity and on transport, when I listened to Mr. John Kelpie talking about the A5, we would always have infrastructural requirements in Louth. I was here not long ago with my colleague from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Mr. Liam Hannaway, talking about the Narrow Water Bridge project. We are blessed in Louth with general infrastructure like motorways and so on, and we have railway lines and so on. We also have very good broadband connectivity already. Broadband is already quite good for about 85% of our population. Our county is quite organised. Dundalk and Drogheda take up quite a large part of the population. We have had much success with our own broadband action plan, working with providers and having a committee that includes all the providers.

I was also asked about Omeath versus Carlingford. Carlingford has many medieval castles, gates, towers, bits of wall and so on that give it a level of tourist attraction that Omeath may not have as a natural blessing. It also has an incredibly active community, with groups and individuals in the community who have driven the tourism project.

That included people developing leprechaun hunts on one side - we have many leprechauns living on the mountain, apparently - or whether it was people who invested in bed and breakfast, in high quality restaurants and so on. We would say it is like a mini-Kinsale. People have made that happen. Omeath is probably the most peripheral part of County Louth. It is sitting on the Border. It has been very deprived. It needs more investment. It has had some but needs more. We intend to work more with the community there to see what more we can do. I do not know if it would ever be as successful with tourists as Carlingford. It does not have the same infrastructure or product range available. I remember when I was young, it was always packed on a Sunday. I do not know how much spending the visitors were doing.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I was not picking it out. I was just saying that Ms Martin made a comment on it.

Ms Joan Martin: The greenway will now go from Carlingford. It already goes to Omeath. Omeath will now become the centre of the greenway, because the greenway will continue. We had 80,000 visitors on that greenway last year. Some 80,000 people either walked or cycled it. That is a phenomenal number of people for something that has barely opened. It is the most incredibly

beautiful greenway, sitting right on the shores of the lough. It is things like that and those cross-Border projects that have the ability to be catalysts for enormous leaps forward in tourism numbers and economic development for the area. We might have created a pessimistic picture, but by nature and on a day-to-day basis, I am very optimistic. I am optimistic about the potential for the growth of tourism in Louth, because we are starting from a very low base. I am not as pessimistic as I might sound.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: I do not think Ms Martin was listening. I did not say that. I said it was pessimistic, but that it was also full of creativity and imagination. Please do not misquote me.

Mr. Paul Bell: There has been much conversation about the economics of the region. I think everyone on this side of the room remembers what it was like when there was a hard Border. What happened was that poverty and deprivation were locked in on both sides of the Border. Our big issue is the uncertainty about what Europe wants to do with the special situation that we face. Colleagues from Derry spoke about health services. I fear that a lot of health professionals, people giving care to people in Northern Ireland will start to move to Southern Ireland because of its connections with Europe. That will cause a social issue and will not be good for the health services and public services of the regions in particular.

On the communication issue, many people, especially further south of the country and perhaps even in Dublin, do not understand what a hard border looks like. That needs to be discussed. When we move around Europe, we are in a borderless zone and many of us have no experience of such a border. Denying free movement of citizens, goods and so on will cause poverty. It will set us back.

I would like the Government to immediately call on the European Commission or the European Union to state what it sees as the solution to these problems because the uncertainty is causing great concern among citizens, especially those who are seeking jobs or those who are in poverty.

Mr. John Kelpie: On a communications strategy, my colleague, Ms Joan Martin, alluded to the work taking place across the Border corridor. Ten councils are collaborating to produce information that we will share with the public and with whosoever will listen to promote a joined-up message about the implications for the Border corridor. We are meeting on 4 May to finalise that work. Specifically along the Border corridor, there are unique differences. As I outlined in my opening statement, we in the Derry city and Donegal area feel there is a unique integration that is slightly different from some other parts of the Border region. As Mr. Michael Gallagher said, we have produced this initial report which we are happy to share with all members and which has been our communication piece. On the morning of 24 June, both councils immediately came together, gathered all stakeholders together - the chambers of commerce and all the partners - and commenced this piece of work, the result of which is one voice for that north-west city region that has been communicated widely throughout that region. Regardless of whether one is having conversation with or seeking evidence from a member of a council on either side of the Border or a member of the chamber of commerce or the business community, we would hope that message is now clear and robust, particularly in terms of the potential mitigation we suggest is required. That

is the hope piece that was referred to.

We have a plan in the north west for economic prosperity. We are well down the path in this regard, we have the roadmap and we know how many jobs we can create through the initiatives we have in place. Brexit is simply a risk in developing that and we have put that into some perspective. We require the mitigation to ameliorate that risk. On the positive piece that was mentioned, the atmosphere in the north west is extremely positive because we can see the strategic future ahead. We need to deal with this matter along the way, among a number of others. The resilience of the institutions and partnerships and the people of the north west will see us through this period with the support of both Governments and the European Union.

Specifically in respect of Magee, the college is part of Ulster University and currently has approximately 3,500 full-time students in Derry city. For some considerable time, more than 50 years, Derry has campaigned strongly for that campus to grow. There has been a major breakthrough in that in recent years, Ulster University itself has strategically committed to the growth of the Magee campus within the city to 10,000 full-time equivalent students. That number of students is still considerably less than most other equivalent cities across the island but that is now a joined-up key project for the city region and will potentially significantly address the issues of peripherality to which the Chairman alluded. That project is in jeopardy, both with the political situation in the North and with the potential diversion of activities to deal with Brexit issues where there would have been more of a focus on regional development and other important significant issues.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I thank Councillor Bell, Ms Joan Martin, Mr. John Kelpie, Mr. Michael Gallagher, Mr. Frank Pentony and Mr. Joe McGuinness for their attendance. I apologise for the small turnout but the witnesses will appreciate that the comments, statements and remarks will all be fed into our work and we appreciate the journey they have all made.

With respect and dignity, my belief in Irish reunification has always been based on the amazing diversity we have on this island and on sharing that in a positive way but being from Dublin, this probably has been to the neglect of the Border regions, both in the argument for reunification and in the national narrative around Brexit. Regional parity is something that should flow from reunification but also is something we should prioritise as a matter of urgency. I will return the diversity issue later.

I wish Louth well in its bid for a UNESCO heritage site in Monasterboice to the north of Drogheda. I would be interested to learn more about that process, such as the length of time the process takes and whether there was engagement with other local authorities that also sought to have designated UNESCO world heritage sites. I also commend the work on the greenway. I am a huge fan and advocate. While the greenway obviously was built for both pedestrians and cyclists, was cyclist usage of 25% as expected or is that percentage low compared with the expectation? I would be interested to know whether it was built on the track.

On arts, culture, food and festivals, do the councils, including Derry and Strabane, have an arts officer?

I mentioned diversity. It is something that makes the North a remarkable place. Marriage equality

is obviously in the narrative in the North. There is not a corporation in Dublin that does not have an LGBT group or place a huge amount of value in diversity. As far as FDI is concerned, are there obstacles to attracting business to the North amidst a backdrop of resistance to marriage equality and full LGBT equality?

To add to earlier comments, I have only made the journey to Derry by car twice. It is completely scandalous that it takes so long. Returning to regional parity, I hope the first thing that follows Irish reunification is a high-speed rail network across this island to link our cities.

Chairman: Would the witnesses like to address these points?

Ms Joan Martin: Most of the Louth-specific questions related to page five of our statement on the tourism and heritage action plan. Louth County Council's bid for Monasterboice might be gilding the lily a little bit. Monasterboice is one of a number of Christian heritage sites that have been put forward as tentative world heritage sites by the Government, which is the first stage of going for UNESCO world heritage site status. There are clusters of such sites around the country. Monasterboice, with its significant tower and high cross, is part of that cluster. That is really as far as it has gone. The running on that is to be done by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

As for the greenway, the fact is that at the moment we are finding that 25% of users are cyclists. The expansion of the greenway under the INTERREG V programme to Newry was carried out under the sustainable transport priority of that programme. It is very much about modal shift. That particular greenway and the business case that was made for the INTERREG money was about trying to encourage people who perhaps worked in Newry and lived in Omeath or Carlingford to take to the bicycle instead of the car. Cycling in terms of modal shift, to get people out of cars, is something that we will work on further as the new part develops. Construction on that has not commenced yet. At the moment it is used for leisure cycling, where people are either there for the weekend and hire or borrow a bicycle, or come with their bicycle on the back of their car. Some of the schools in the area are using it to take kids on a cycle. The cyclists are all kinds of people, but there is that attempt with the greenway, as with other greenways, to achieve that modal shift, particularly now when we are trying to move into the sustainable transport end of things.

Mr. John Kelpie: On the Senator's question on diversity, it is fair to say that Northern Ireland has its challenges on this issue and has had challenges historically. It has made considerable improvement on that in recent years. There is still a long way to go. Sub-regionally, Derry city has been at the forefront of seeing the opportunities of embracing diversity, and the outworkings of that have been apparent to all who have seen the progress in the city, particularly in recent years.

The equality issues that the city of Derry face are mostly in the area of balanced regional development, namely, the infrastructure deficit, the skills gap that exists and the jobs deficiency. Those are the key equality issues that we currently struggle with in that part of the world and that we have expressed today.

We have an arts officer within the council, a cultural officer and an events officer. It may be recalled that Derry was the UK city of culture in 2013, which was a marvellous year for the city, which built

on all that positivity. There were more than 1 million visitors to a city of 100,000 people within 12 months. We are about to embark on a joint bid with Belfast for European city of culture in 2023, which, as we understand it, is a geographical designation, not necessarily a designation that depends on membership of the EU.

Chairman: Go raibh míle maith agaibh as na cur i láthair go léir. You have given us serious food for thought. The witnesses have taken long journeys to be with us today and we really do appreciate that. The contents of both the presentations and the questions will make their way into a report we will complete in the next couple of weeks and hopefully add to other committees that are focussing on this issue as well. We hope that some time in the future we will be in contact with you again as this issue develops.

I will suspend the sitting. We have another group appearing before us. I hope the members present will stay with us as it is necessary to have a decent group with us for the next session.

Sitting suspended at 4.05 p.m. and resumed at 4.17 p.m.

Chairman: I welcome the following to the meeting, Ms Gina McIntyre, chief executive office, Mr. Shaun Henry, director of the managing authority, and Mr. John Greer, head of unit joint secretariat, from the Special EU Programmes Body, Foras um Chláir Speisialta an tAontas Eorpach. I thank the witnesses for their attendance today. We appreciate it. I apologise to them that there are not more Deputies and Senators present. As I said earlier, the content that the witnesses give us will form a good chunk of our report on this area. I assure them that their engagement is equally important today.

Before we begin I would like to draw the witnesses attention to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to this committee. However, if they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence.

They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I wish to advise witnesses that the opening statement and other documents submitted to the committee will be published on the committee website after the meeting.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I call on the witnesses to make their presentations, which will be followed by questions.

Ms Gina McIntyre: I am delighted to have the opportunity to be involved in this discussion on the common themes for the future development of the Border area. We always welcome the opportunity to report on the progress of our programmes. The impact of the cross-Border EU funding programmes, for which we have responsibility, are PEACE IV and INTERREG VA.

Together, the programmes total over €0.5 billion and will run with activity until 2022. I am sure many committee members are familiar with the programmes, and in line with the topic to be addressed today my comments will be in the context of those EU funding programmes. Through the PEACE and INTERREG programmes we have managed funding for projects which have enhanced cross-Border co-operation in a wide range of sectors over 18 years, including enterprise, health and social care, public sector collaboration, renewable energy, and roads and transport. In the past we also funded programmes in telecommunications, tourism, cultural activity and rural development.

The Special EU Programmes Body, SEUPB, champions peace and reconciliation with an enduring legacy through local action plans, regional development initiatives and the key institutional capacity projects funded in the PEACE programme. There are also projects which have built positive relations. We also had quite a number of infrastructural projects in the area of shared spaces and dealing with the past. The reach of our programmes cannot be underestimated. When we speak about future development, for the next five years until 2022 we will fund many of the sectors mentioned. Funding for these programmes has been Brexit-proved in so far as possible, and we will continue to monitor developments in the negotiations with regard to the impact on our programmes. I have provided a progress report, but I would like to touch briefly on the most relevant aspects of the report relating to our programmes.

INTERREG is one of 61 programmes in Europe designed specifically to address issues relating to living in a border region. As the committee is aware, border areas are economically weaker, have underdeveloped infrastructure and have higher levels of unemployment. However, the people living in these regions are very mobile, crossing borders daily for work and day to day life. Therefore, partnership approaches in border areas are essential to overcome issues of peripherality and changing demographics.

The INTERREG programme, which is worth €283 million, was implemented first, and I am very pleased to report that more than 95% of its funding has been allocated and reserved for projects. The key areas in the programme include €70 million allocated to research and innovation to increase the capacity for cross-Border research in the region, with two specific target areas, namely, health and life sciences and renewable energy. Within this, a further €18 million is allocated to increase the capacity of SMEs in the region to make them more innovative in their research and innovation activity.

The environmental theme in the programme has been allocated €85 million, and we are looking at protecting and restoring biodiversity and common approaches to management of the marine environment. We also have an aspect of the programme, with almost €50 million allocated, dealing with sustainable transport projects. This is about support for greater connectivity between the regions. It will provide greenways and a multimodal transport hub based in the north west. A total of €63 million has been allocated to health and social care, and we expect this to target 50,000 people in Border areas and contribute to more efficient delivery of health services.

The PEACE programme aims to enhance social and economic stability, in particular through actions to promote cohesion between communities and on a cross-Border basis. Sectarianism, intolerance,

marginalisation and a lack of community cohesion are long-term underlying problems in Northern Ireland and the Border region of Ireland. Unfortunately, the issues continue to prevail even in the absence of violence. Following extensive public consultation, the PEACE V programme, which is worth €270 million, will invest in future generations, in particular children and young people, with an allocation for shared education, which is about direct and sustained curriculum-based contact between pupils and teachers on a cross-Border basis to promote good relations, and improving the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others from a different background, targeting young people who are most disadvantaged.

With regard to infrastructure projects, we hope to fund at least eight capital projects and we have €53 million for shared spaces and services.

This is about increased provision for civic shared spaces, which bring together people from both communities and mainly target derelict areas.

Victims and survivors have been allocated €17 million in recognition of the need and demand of those who have suffered in the trauma of the conflict. We are looking specifically at cross-Border health and well-being services to develop proven expertise in the region and increase the capacity and quality of care in the sector for victims, survivors and their families.

Almost one third of the PEACE programme is being delivered through local councils in every council area in Northern Ireland and the Border region. They have specific allocations and they will look at shared spaces and services, children and young people and building positive relations. The regional development measure is about supporting projects on a regional level, which will result in meaningful, purposeful and sustained contact between persons from different communities.

All of the projects in INTERREG and PEACE will involve co-operation between a wide range of many organisations. Over the coming year in particular, we will see activity from these projects coming to life. We are at the very early stages of project delivery, and I appreciate it may be difficult to get a feel for the programmes and what their outputs are at this time. Over the past two decades, EU programmes have improved cross-Border public sector collaboration, developed cross-Border reconciliation and understanding, and promoted joint approaches to social education, training and human resource development. Some examples are the cross-Border approaches to tackling contaminated water flows, cross-Border GP out of hours service, cross-Border council initiatives, and improved roads and transport links. The programmes have given a structure to building and maintaining a network of relationships between organisations and beneficiaries, which are now becoming second nature to these organisations. More importantly, they have opened mind borders on a cross-community and cross-Border basis. Working together, neighbours have built trust and mutual respect and an understanding of finding joint innovative solutions to alleviate issues in their areas. They have made common decisions about funding and structures and these have made a significant impact on the region, much more than the value of the funding we have spoken about.

Recently, the EU Commission undertook a research project across all European borders to gather evidence on funding for cross-border programmes such as these. It identified 37

common obstacles which seem to hinder growth and development in border regions. The report summarised into four specific areas those obstacles relevant to EU cross-border funding programmes.

These include socioeconomic obstacles, physical obstacles and terrain. The obstacles highlighted as the most important to overcome, because they were seen as having the best potential to make a positive impact on economic, social and territorial cohesion, were institutional obstacles such as legal and administrative obstacles, including labour mobility, transport, social security, health care and cultural obstacles. Throughout Europe language is a cultural obstacle. On the island of Ireland, trust and culture were the specific areas identified.

The research also identified areas viewed as potential untapped resources, which would assist growth and development in border areas. These include human and social capital, building trust and education, market integration with employment and competitiveness potential, shared management of national resources and integrated services. The research also provided recommendations on the best way of overcoming these obstacles, which was through investment in competitiveness, product innovation, the development of cultural and industrial activities, and investment in social and human capital through education and training activities. Our programmes, which we will run with activities until 2022, focus on exactly these areas.

Border regions have difficulties and this is well known but those in the Border region here will be greatly exacerbated by any impact of Brexit. No one knows the terms of Brexit or how sectors will be affected, but what we do know is that existing programmes throughout Europe include non-EU countries and, therefore, an opportunity exists to have continued access to EU cross-border programmes. The Irish Government has clearly signalled its intent to engage in seeking these opportunities, and the British Prime Minister has also mentioned retaining access to certain EU funding programmes. The EU Commission knows our programmes very well and use them as examples of good practice.

We will embark on a series of evaluations in each theme as activity gets under way with our projects this year. Part of this work will be to seek early indications of any implications of Brexit on these sectors. These are likely to be significant in the areas about which everyone is concerned, including free movement, the Border, common travel areas, recognition of qualifications and employment rights. We believe we are in a unique position. We are enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement and we have significant experience of working at intergovernmental level with established networks in Government Departments in Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland and with the EU Commission. We work at a regional and sub-regional level with institutions, down to the local community organisations. We have a bird's eye view of the region and experience in encouraging cross-Border co-operation and in developing funding programmes in line with national priorities, regional and local needs.

We hope to continue that work.

We have experience of identifying obstacles and finding innovative solutions to those problems. We do not underestimate the impact of Brexit, but if we get an opportunity to implement future cross-Border programmes I believe those programmes could start building a Brexit bridge on this island by

finding ways to maintain the relationships that have already been established.

Chairman: Go raibh maith agat. I thank Ms McIntyre for her presentation. I will start with a few questions on it. The witness mentioned the potential for a funding stream to still come from the EU after 2022, but that question is still in the air. We do not really know exactly what the arrangement will be for that fund. The fund is a big one at €500 million over six years for 12 counties that would not typically see much funding. That arrangement has yet to be worked out. Who needs to focus on that arrangement?

Ms Gina McIntyre: Both Governments, obviously - the Irish and UK Governments. It will be part of the negotiations with the UK Government. I know that the Minister and the officials in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are all very well aware of this issue and are already focused on it.

Chairman: Okay, I have another question that I also asked the previous group. The national framework document is the spatial planning process. For me it is probably one of the most important actions this Government will be involved in. Has the Special EU Programmes Body been engaged with that?

Ms Gina McIntyre: We are aware of the consultation process and we attended the event in the north-west. Other than that we do not actually have much engagement with that planning framework.

Chairman: That is a pity. With such a big chunk of money and opportunity would it perhaps be a good idea if there was a stronger relationship there?

Ms Gina McIntyre: Yes, I think it is important going forward that we look at all of those national planning frameworks in Ireland and in Northern Ireland to align the strategic priorities for the region.

Chairman: Ms McIntyre mentioned that a good deal of the funding is for infrastructural or transport connectivity. Are projects such as the A5 too big for the Special EU Programmes Body specification?

Ms Gina McIntyre: Yes, and the EU no longer funds road projects.

Chairman: Okay.

Ms Gina McIntyre: That would not be on our radar at all. The programmes that we have currently, the INTERREG programme is almost fully allocated and there is only a small element left within that. The PEACE programme is under assessment. We have almost 40% or 45% of the programme allocated. The calls for the remainder have been open and closed and the projects are currently being assessed that will be awarded funding.

Chairman: Senator O'Donnell mentioned earlier to our previous witnesses that outside of the target areas there are probably very few citizens who would know exactly the amount of money involved or about the activities funded by the Special EU Programmes Body. Sometimes the knowledge about programmes among people is very important for the sustainability of projects ahead. Does Ms McIntyre have any objectives for the education of people about what is

happening, given that the future of the Special EU Programmes Body is not guaranteed after 2022?

Ms Gina McIntyre: Everybody in the Border regions knows about the PEACE and INTERREG funding because those are the people who are eligible to apply. We make sure that we publicly consult. We run many sessions where we bring in the public. We take statements and written submissions whenever we develop the programmes.

Three years now seems like a long time ago, but as we are now going into post-2020 funding we will begin that process to develop what those programmes could look like on the basis that there may be potential to get access to funding in the future.

Chairman: I had a great opportunity last year to write a report on the future of the all-island economy. It was the first time the Oireachtas had written such a report since the partition of the island, which is incredible. I spoke to 100 different groups from across the island of Ireland, from different backgrounds and with people who would not necessarily be focused on this issue. One thing that everyone agreed with was that if we plan, fund and deliver together the levels of economies of scale can be increased and the service delivery and consumption of service towards the end can be improved. This committee has learned, from the two council groups who came to the committee just in advance of the present witnesses, that there are great levels of engagement, interaction and co-operation. It appears, however, that this interaction is still ad hoc. It seems that some groups get it together to function very tightly to plan, fund and deliver together. In Ms McIntyre's experience is there now a necessity - for mitigation purposes regarding Brexit - for a statutory development that tells organisations that function on the island of Ireland and who deliver in the same space to have a statutory obligation plan and fund together in the delivery of service? If we speak to the whole gamut of organisations, for example, there could be some who work in the area of providing services in a particular area of health care and yet there is a helicopter operating out of Enniskillen that does not function in Sligo. Some other organisation will say it is focusing on developing cross-Border enterprise, yet Cavan County Enterprise Board and the training board in Northern Ireland may be delivering exactly the same courses to people in the same target markets but who are living ten miles from each other. What steps can we take, as an island, in the mitigation of this threat in order to make the co-operation more seamless?

Ms Gina McIntyre: That is a difficult question because without knowing the terms of Brexit, the negotiation and what is going to happen, it is difficult to plan for every potential scenario, be it a hard or soft Brexit. I absolutely take the Chairman's point that it should be done. In the context of our programmes that does happen. All the projects and the organisations of a similar activity within the sectors come together regularly and they apply for our funding. They see the opportunities for economies of scale and the efficiencies of services, especially in some of the health services. The universities involved in research and innovation see the benefits of working together. The institutions in the region see the benefits and all we can do is provide the funding. We take all of that on board in the consultation we do before the establishment of the programmes and for the content of the programmes, in line with the Commission's priorities.

The co-operation as proposed by the Chairman does occur currently.

I totally agree with this approach if we are to go forward. We will in any event be engaging in

evaluations in all the areas I mentioned and will be bringing together the type of people who would be involved in our projects, all the relevant institutions and those who have an interest, to look at what we can do in the future and to identify the problems. We will be undertaking that.

Chairman: It would seem logical for the two Administrations to do a systematic trawl through all the organisations that deliver services in similar areas and state that their future funding, etc., will be dependent upon them finding economies of scale or synergies between them. The delivery of those services to citizens, be they in Strabane or in Stranorlar, would probably be a lot better.

Ms Gina McIntyre: With all the sectors I have mentioned, we work very closely with each of the respective policy departments in Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland. They come together and they help to shape the content, objectives and outputs for that sector. They work together and they jointly make decisions on all the projects that are funded. For example, the two health departments or the two transport departments would come together to make those joint decisions at the same table in respect of our funding. I could not comment on the wider government position on that.

Chairman: This €500 million fund was set aside before the Brexit nightmare arose on the horizon. Given the work of the Special EU Programmes Body it is ideally placed in focusing investment in that space. I know there is not an organisation on the planet that does not want more money but would logic dictate that because of this threat we as a society should seek to accelerate and increase the investments we are making in this space to mitigate the downsides? If that were to happen would an organisation such as the Special EU Programmes Body be able to function on that basis?

Ms Gina McIntyre: That is exactly what an organisation like ours could do. Regarding the €500 million we currently have, we already have a much larger demand than €500 million can sustain, before Brexit.

Chairman: I appreciate that. I call Deputy Smyth first.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I would like to go first because I have a meeting to attend.

I thank Ms McIntyre for her presentation. I am very familiar with the Special EU Programmes Body's Castle Saunderson project and obviously the wonderful work the peace links are doing. That is a real tangible result of PEACE funding. She mentioned eight capital projects to come on stream relating to shared spaces and derelict areas. I ask her to expand on that.

Ms Gina McIntyre: We are in the process of assessing those projects. We have many more than eight. We are currently looking at 13 going forward to the next stage. It is a fantastic area as the Deputy said. The shared spaces such as Castle Saunderson and the Peace Bridge in Derry, Londonderry, were all funded. It is about bringing communities together, particularly in what would have been seen as areas of dereliction where young people might have been hanging about. They have been redeveloped, including the Portadown people's park. That was a very derelict area with young people hanging around and drug abuse. That has been developed for a cross-community purpose so that the two communities - indeed all the communities in the area - feel comfortable to

come into those civic spaces and can view them as their own. Mr. Greer might like to add something on the projects he is assessing.

Mr. John Greer: We can go into the detail of the projects. These projects are set aside to be iconic in nature and sited in contested spaces - whether that space is contested for historical reasons or became contested because of changes in demographics within those geographies. These iconic capital buildings are really just houses for the services that go on inside. This is very focused on peace and reconciliation activities. We look at where they are to be sited and the nature of the building. However, we look more robustly and intensely at what will happen in these buildings in the following five or six years. They really change people's attitudes within those buildings and what types of attitudes currently exist that we want to change. It is an exciting area. We expect the steering committee to make decisions by August.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I am thinking of spaces which may provide activity for young people. Monaghan County Council has big plans for a peace campus. Is Mr. Greer talking about such projects in that stream of funding?

Mr. John Greer: That is exactly it. I stress that we are looking at the detail of the activities that are going on in the buildings with regard to peace and reconciliation. Creating a building and having a bunch of kids coming in and having a new football pitch is great, but that is not what we are about. There has to be a clear link to what those children, older people, the Deputy or I are doing in that building that will change our mindset, will make us perceive the world differently and perceive those other communities when we leave that building.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: The two projects in which the Special EU Programmes Body has been involved with the peace links and the Castle Saunderson have been game-changers and are wonderful places for young people, in particular, to go. They may not carry the baggage that the older generations may have done in the past. They are making significant inroads on improved relationships across our communities in the Border region. That is to be welcomed. When did Mr. Greer say these flagship projects would be announced?

Mr. John Greer: We are aiming for August.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I look forward to that. I congratulate the witnesses.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: The witnesses do not need to answer my first question until we get to the end. Are they worried about Brexit? In what way are they worried about Brexit? How will it affect the Special EU Programmes Body's funding?

When is the next round? I know it is the PEACE and also INTERREG. The body got €1.6 billion and INTERREG was €1.13 billion. Is that over 15, 20 or 22 years? Is that likely to come again and what will the Special EU Programmes Body get again? I am somewhat confused. I know the body is assessing part of it. I know a lot of that money has been used brilliantly. What are the body's hopes for the future? What does the body hope to get? How might Brexit put a thorn in that?

When does PEACE end? We are 22 or 24 years into the peace process and have the Good Friday Agreement. I do not mean that in a bad way. Is it possible that that becomes something else or morphs into something else? How long will that continue? With the possibility of physical

borders again, there is a threat that a lot of things could be welling up.

From what I have read the Special EU Programmes Body's work - the science park, the scouts, the Peace Bridge, the Girdwood hub, the multi-use sports facility, the CREST, the social farming - is extraordinary. In the previous Seanad I had the privilege of going to Taiwan, which has done a brilliant job on the development of science parks. Their ideas about health and the environment are extraordinary. Taiwan is an island like Ireland with a relationship that has been fractured down through the years with a bigger country, China, to its west.

As someone who lives in Dublin and has a mother from Northern Ireland, I knew nothing about these. As I mentioned to the previous group that appeared before the committee, communication is very important. The Chairman took it up. It is not necessarily that the Special EU Programmes Body wants to become territorialised or get in on the territory. It was designed for the people living in the Border areas and who have suffered. However, the representatives of the Special EU Programmes Body need to communicate. There is so much that we could learn from them and we do not get that communication at all. I do not know how they do that they are doing it today, but in a very small way. I also said that to the groups from Derry and Louth that appeared before the committee. We do not even know about the Brexit problems here.

We are not seeing them, hearing about them or feeling them in the way that those in the Border counties are. They need us and we need them because we are interlinked in 1,000 different ways.

Ms Gina McIntyre: Of course, we are worried about Brexit. We do not take that lightly. The future of the programmes is as I mentioned earlier. There is an opportunity for cross-Border programmes to continue with a non-EU member, but that will come down to political and financial will on the parts of the UK Government, the Irish Government and the EU in discussions that will take place between the UK and the EU as to whether they want to be involved. However, they have alluded to the fact that they would like the opportunity to be involved in those programmes that they choose to get involved in.

That also speaks to the Senator's communications point. It is very important for us to continually communicate when and where we can. We probably speak a lot in Brussels about these programmes. Certainly Northern Ireland is very familiar with these programmes, as is the Irish Government. The Senator is right in saying that people in Dublin and further down in Ireland do not understand about these programmes because it does not impact on their daily lives.

The billions of euro the Senator mentioned have been granted over 18 years. The EU programmes work in cycles of seven years and this current round runs from 2014 to 2020, but activity runs on to the end of 2021 into 2022. We take another year to close things down after that. That is where the €500 million is between INTERREG and PEACE. It is being used now between 2014 and 2020, but we expect to have all of that €500 million committed by the end of this year. There is not an opportunity for people to get involved directly in some of the larger projects. We have some very significant projects, particularly in the area of research and innovation. There is an opportunity as the local action plans are rolled out in each council area over the next couple of months. That is where people will be able to access peace and reconciliation money directly for their areas.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: Will it be all over then?

Ms Gina McIntyre: That is just the funding announced. They then need to start the activity.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: No. I am asking whether it is all over after that €500 million allocation. This is what I am trying to find out. In 2020 or 2022, does the SEUPB expect the same amount of money? If not, does it expect the same gift, because of the success of many of the things the body has done in the areas of science, scouts and sports? What happens then?

Ms Gina McIntyre: We do not want it to be over. There is an opportunity for an EU funding programme involving Northern Ireland and Ireland if, politically and financially, it is sustainable. We are optimistic that there is such an opportunity and everyone seems to be in line that this is what they want. We will do everything we can in establishing the content of those programmes. We could not speak to the quantum because it is an EU budget decision.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: Is that not a major concern? I will leave it at this. Is it not a major concern in the sense that half of the participants will not be in the EU?

Ms Gina McIntyre: No, because, as I said, those people can get access to these programmes. They can continue to operate on a cross-border basis if, in effect, the UK gives us the share we currently get from the EU, which is the UK share. It is possible if that comes to Northern Ireland and it is matched with the Irish programme share from the EU and the Government.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: That is optimistic.

Ms Gina McIntyre: Yes, I am optimistic. There is an opportunity and therefore we have to go after that opportunity.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: Of course. I am simply trying to get it right in my head.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I thank the representatives from the Special EU Programmes Body for their contribution and for the valuable document.

Objective 2 concerns young people and children and the specific fund amounts to €54.7 million. I think Mr. Greer answered my question by saying that this money comes from current funding. The Senator will agree that we have had experience of arts and cultural centres being built but no activities to fill them.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: There is no money to keep them open either.

Senator Fintan Warfield: The detail and the positive outcomes that derive from these buildings being active are important. It is great to see the emphasis on it.

Phase one of the project will target 3,500 young people who are most marginalised and disadvantaged. Does the SEUPB entrust organisations with the process of identifying how those young people are identified? The SEUPB representatives have referred to sectarianism. Are racism, homophobia and other issues brought into the fray as well in this regard?

Ms Gina McIntyre: That objective is targeted at children who are most disadvantaged and most at risk of becoming involved in any kind of unhealthy activity.

We are most specific about the numbers that have to be trained by the agencies as well as the

children and young people who have to be identified. Mr. Henry may want to add something.

Mr. Shaun Henry: We are mindful that under the PEACE programme we are targeting the most marginalised young people. The call for applications is currently open and under assessment. We hope to make awards to relevant organisations in May or June this year.

One of the key criteria we assess relates to the capacity of those organisations to reach down or reach out to the most marginalised young people. Through an intensive programme of engagement we hope to try to change the opportunities for these young people. A critical factor involves building their capacity to respect difference and their understanding for respecting difference. This relates not only to the traditional divisions within Northern Ireland, but race and sexual orientation as well. We take a broad-based approach of building respect for difference and diversity.

Ms Gina McIntyre: Mr. Greer is assessing some of those applications currently. Perhaps he can speak to that activity.

Mr. John Greer: The committee should understand how far down the spectrum some of these young people are and how much of a challenge it is for the organisations applying for the funding to engage with them. We have rigorous modern evaluation criteria that assess the plans of applicants to reach out to these young people and to ensure their participation. Mr. Henry touched on the matter. The key is getting these children to make the first step in becoming good citizens, respecting difference and being culturally aware.

As part of the call we are appointing a co-ordination body. This body is important because this will be an eligible region-wide intervention. The co-ordination body is really about helping to monitor the activity under way to ensure best practice as well as to disseminate the associated learning between phase one and phase two.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I was on the board of a cultural body in South Dublin County Council. We had a full-time position to draw down European funding. Obviously, it is different in the case of the SEUPB. Does SEUPB take that into account? What process is faced by those organisations seeking to draw down money? Is it onerous? I imagine there has to be accountability. That is completely acceptable.

Ms Gina McIntyre: These are public funds.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Is it as onerous as it can be in drawing down European money?

Ms Gina McIntyre: I will ask Mr. Greer to outline our process, but we have tried to simplify it where we can and to make it less bureaucratic. Indeed, it would take away from it. That is why we have put much of the money through the local councils. The idea is that they take the administrative bureaucracy so that local groups do not have to. Mr. Greer will briefly outline our assessment process.

Mr. John Greer: Ms McIntyre has touched on this. I will outline the process of drawing down the money. When an organisation has been awarded the funding, we try to make it as lightweight as it can possibly be, while recognising the fact that this is, at its core, taxpayers' money. We have

used various strategies to do that. One relates to simplified costs. For example, in the case of children and young people, the staff portion is essentially 40%. In other words, that portion of the direct project activity automatically funds the staff. After that, as long as we can establish that the project activities are current, the 40% will flow. Again, that is because we want the money being directed to the project activities in children and young people rather than the administration of the grant. The simplified cost option is something that we are spreading across the programme wherever we possibly can to reduce the administrative burden. Unfortunately, as much as we want to make it lightweight, we must recognise the fact that this is public money.

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: The Senator across must have very wealthy friends in south County Dublin if the council there can give a job to someone to do the work of applying to Europe for the money. Those responsible should be in a backroom doing it themselves. Anyway, it is an interesting question. It happens all the time. It is like a minefield. Mr. Greer has raised a good question. There has to be the various checks and balances of accountability when such a large amount of money is at issue. I was simply being funny.

Chairman: There is a similar argument with Horizon 2020 and all the various funds. It is almost as if an industry has developed within society in an effort to draw down these funds.

I have some questions on the specifics of the process. One of the SEUPB areas of competence relates to renewable energy. There are two jurisdictions and, therefore, two distinct regulatory experiences. In the North, there is a feed-in tariff system for micro-generation of electricity. We do not have that in the South. Does the SEUPB ever get involved in working with administrations on how best they can equalise regulatory differences in any way to make it easier? Obviously, there is some level of hampering the delivery of these objectives because of the difference in regulation. Those differences in regulation are likely to become more apparent in future.

Mr. Shaun Henry: Currently, we do not have any direct engagement in trying to look at common regulatory environments. Our investment is more related to project level.

We invest heavily with the universities and the institutes of technology in the Border region where such bodies promote innovation within the renewable energy sector. In the past we invested in a major research project outside Larne, but in the past number of weeks it got a major investment from Europe of upwards of €70 million to develop a facility to store compressed air. Obviously in the context of the all-island electric grid that would be a storage capacity which would be of benefit to the entire island. Our key focus is in doing practical projects on the ground rather than engaging at the regulatory level.

Chairman: The earlier thrust of my questions was about the level of co-operation but is there any group in society tasked with the objective of the equalisation of regulation? That in itself is a real barrier to cross-Border trade, cross-Border enterprise and cross-Border development.

Mr. Shaun Henry: The North-South Ministerial Council in Armagh would be very actively engaged not only in supporting the work of the six cross-Border implementation bodies of which we are one. It is also actively engaged in a much broader policy role, which I understand would also include the all-island energy market.

Chairman: Is Mr. Henry saying that the secretariat would be involved in that work of the North-South Ministerial Council? From my knowledge it would not be an objective of each of the particular Ministers to equalise regulation on both sides of the Border.

Ms Gina McIntyre: No but they look at Border issues that affect the island. It would not be the secretariat that would carry out the work, but the Ministers would come together with the respective groups and the Departments responsible. What they are tasked with doing we are not sure, but I think they might be some of the issues that the Chairman raised as having the potential to be part of an innovative energy project. Part of that may be if they were involved in our programmes, looking at some of that equalisation of regulations or where they can share common ground. We would envisage that potentially these future programmes could be doing that.

Chairman: I was lucky enough to work as a management consultant for a company that was delivering one of the programmes in the Tyrone-Monaghan area. It brought me into the offices and sitting rooms of so many small businesses on both sides of the community. People from both sides of the community had suffered greatly and it opened my eyes to a lot of individual experiences of members from both sides of the community. I imagine that is one of the great benefits of the work of the Special EU Programmes Body.

With regard to the particular enterprise programme that the body is running, is there any specific Brexit mitigation enterprise programme that is being run?

Ms Gina McIntyre: Not currently but I know that InterTradeIreland is looking at that matter and has a fund to do something in this area at present.

Chairman: We had a representation from ISME. It was looking at the enterprise organisations in the State which actually only cover a minority of the enterprises. Obviously IDA, foreign direct investment and Enterprise Ireland would only take a small chunk of the 600,000 indigenous enterprises in the South and 250,000 of those may be covered by Enterprise Ireland while the rest are left to their own devices.

Ms Gina McIntyre: InterTradeIreland, which is one of the other cross-Border bodies and ourselves, the Special EU Programmes Body, have an all-island remit to look at business issues. I know they are looking at some of the business issues that will be affected by Brexit.

Chairman: Do members have any other questions?

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell: No. I offer my congratulations and may the Special EU Programmes Body keep its great work going. Let me reiterate that we need to know more about it. It is so creative and enterprising from environmental science to young people. We have a lot to learn. It is very indicative that we in the South have not taken on board what is really happening with Brexit and what damage it could do to institutions and organisations and projects like what the Special EU Programmes Body does. I hope it will not, but it could affect the good work that this body is doing and is being done.

Chairman: Before we finish, does Deputy Michael Collins wish to comment?

Deputy Michael Collins: I was at a meeting.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses. If anything becomes apparent to the witnesses that would be useful to us in the coming weeks or months, we would be interested in hearing from them. If we can keep this communication line open, we would greatly appreciate it. I thank the Special EU Programmes Body for taking the time to come down to visit us.

The joint committee adjourned at 5.05 p.m. until 12 noon on Tuesday, 11 April 2017.

26. COMMITTEE DEBATE, 10 MAY 2017 - CO-OPERATION IRELAND, INTERTRADEIRELAND

AN COMHCHOISTE UM EALAÍONA, OIDHREACTH, GNÓTHAÍ RÉIGIÚNACHA, TUAITHE AGUS GAELTACHTA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS, HERITAGE, REGIONAL, RURAL AND GAELTACHT

Dé Céadaoin, 10 Bealtaine 2017

Wednesday, 10 May 2017

The Joint Committee met at 2.10 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Michael Collins,

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae,

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív,

Deputy Niamh Smyth.

Senator Paul Coghlan,

Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh,

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile.

In attendance: N/A

DEPUTY PEADAR TÓIBÍN IN THE CHAIR.

*The joint committee went into private session at 3.12 p.m.
and resumed in public session at 3.20 p.m.*

DEPUTY MICHAEL COLLINS TOOK THE CHAIR.

26.1. DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION IN BORDER COUNTIES: DISCUSSION (RESUMED)

Vice Chairman: We are discussing the future of community, social and economic development and co-operation in Border counties with representatives of Co-operation Ireland and the Centre for Cross Border Studies and, later, InterTradeIreland. From Co-operation Ireland I welcome Mr. Peter Sheridan, chief executive officer; Mr. Brian O’Caoindealbhain, research and evaluation officer; and Ms Susan McKay, director of the Glens Centre, Manorhamilton. From the Centre for Cross Border Studies I welcome Ms Ruth Taillon, director; Dr. Anthony Soares, deputy director; and Dr.

Katy Hayward, board member. I thank them for their attendance.

By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the joint committee. However, if they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or an entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I also advise them that the opening statement and any submission they have made to the committee may be published on its website after the meeting.

Members are reminded of the longstanding parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I call on Mr. Sheridan to address the committee.

Mr. Peter Sheridan: I thank the joint committee for its invitation to give evidence. I have submitted a paper on behalf of Co-operation Ireland and do not propose to go through it now, as members will have had an opportunity to read it.

It will come as no surprise to the committee that our interest in this matter concerns Brexit, in particular, and its impact on rural and local communities on the Border between Northern Ireland the Republic of Ireland. As an organisation, Co-operation Ireland took a neutral position on the referendum in Northern Ireland, not least because some board members were pro-Brexit, while some were pro-Remain. For example, the former First Minister Mr. Peter Robinson and the former chairman of the Ulster Unionist Party were pro-Brexit, while my vice chairman, Mr. John Bruton, and the chairman were pro-Remain.

That said, the board was able to agree on a number of matters, for example, the protection of the peace process, the common travel area, there being minimal impact on the Border and the importance of deepening and strengthening British-Irish relationships, given that tensions are more likely to arise during the negotiations.

I do not have to tell anyone in this room that the future of community, economic and social development is at risk as a result of Brexit. From communities and those with whom we work on the ground, I pick up concerns about the sustainability of local communities. Currency fluctuations are already impacting on some communities and businesses which worry about trade, tariffs and customs, the CAP budget and the integrated supply chains across the Border daily. Like everyone else, I cannot give guarantees on this issue. Since the Good Friday Agreement, there has largely been an invisible border. A farmer on the Border told me that people had not thought about it since the peace process and did not see it anymore. The Border re-emerging is a risk. If it does, will it become an issue of identity? The wider context of European integration took much of the heat out of the Border issue and made a region in which inhabitants could be British, Irish or both easier to imagine. The potential for that being undone in communities is now real.

The main apprehension I am picking up is local people's concerns that the global issues of trade and customs, the focus of governments, will dwarf the local issues faced by rural communities. These global issues will affect the communities in question, but the impacts will be specific to where they live if there is a return to a physical border.

Other issues include the loss of EU funding, the protection of human rights and agriculture. Some people see opportunities, but what they might be is not clear at this stage. There are concerns in the tourism and agrifood sectors about the impact of Brexit on working class rural communities.

That is all that I want to say. I will turn to my colleague from the Glens Centre in County Leitrim who I asked to join us because we work closely with the centre.

Vice Chairman: I thank Mr. Sheridan.

Ms Susan McKay: I am a former journalist and wrote extensively during the Troubles and the peace process about the Border region. It is a region that I know well in terms of the suffering it has experienced in every way during both during and since the conflict, including economically. When I recently wrote about Brexit for a British magazine, I discovered that, as Mr. Sheridan mentioned, there was a great deal of apprehension, with many saying they did not know what to expect but that they feared it would not be good. That fear appears to be well grounded.

I run the Glens Centre, a small community arts centre in Manorbhamilton, a small town with a large but underpopulated rural hinterland that extends into counties Donegal, Fermanagh and Cavan. Our belief in the Glens Centre, one that is shared by most arts and cultural organisations around the country, is that culture and the arts enable transformations and allow people to translate hard feelings into ones that are more fluid. They enable people to contemplate other ways of seeing things. I will give a simple example in the context of the peace process. Consider the role played by Professor Frank McGuinness' "Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme". It created all kinds of cross-Border relationships that were helpful to the peace process. The Glens Centre has just received a significant grant from the International Fund for Ireland to undertake a cross-community, cross-Border programme using the arts and culture to build relationships. We must count on being able to move back and forth across the Border to set up these relationships.

I wish to discuss the nature of the Border. Mr. Sheridan referred to the currency issue. In the journey I made this morning from the west of the Border region to the east to attend this hearing, I crossed the Border so many times that I ended up accidentally paying for my diesel in the Republic with sterling because I was not sure anymore of where I was. It is funny in a way now, but it will not be funny if each of these crossings becomes impossible because it is a non-approved road or difficult because of traffic jams at Border crossings. Whatever else happens, Brexit will make cross-Border relationships - day-to-day relationships, as well as those related to the bigger picture - more problematic.

Mr. Sheridan referred to farmers telling him that the Border was no longer thought about. The fear that used to prevail along the Border on all sides is largely gone, but old habits of wariness still remain in communities in the North and the Republic. Manorbhamilton, for example, is a town with a significant Protestant minority. We are facing a situation where there may be polarisation and a reversion to separatist outlooks, neither of which are helpful to the peace process. We may be

facing into a period which will lay waste carefully nurtured relationships as well as risking massive waste of the many EU, American, Irish and British funds that have gone into trying to nurture cross-Border relationships in a constructive way. We welcome, of course, the assurance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that it will step in if, as seems inevitable, peace funding is lost in the Border region, but I wonder how realistic that is in light of recent swingeing cuts to the community and voluntary sector and to arts organisations in the Republic as well as in the North. Manorhamilton is a very poor town. It is a very typical Border town and one only has to look at it to see the damage that has been done to the Border area. There are a lot of ruins, a lot of failed businesses, a lot of subsistence and a lot of emigration.

One sees schoolchildren in the town but one does not see young people in the 20 to 30 age group because they have simply gone and not come back. There is a lot of dependence on EU grants and a lot of neglect. The upside of that, however, is that artists have moved into the area because they can afford to do so, and there are little houses available for prices not seen in most other parts of the country. This is definitely a positive development, but it is important that is maintained and nurtured. Since moving into my present role I have been quite astonished by how little artists live on. We cannot charge high prices in The Glens Centre because people simply do not have the money to pay high ticket prices, and we are very typical of Border arts organisations in this respect. We get funding from the Arts Council and from Leitrim County Council and we recently got money from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, for which we were very grateful, to do some restoration work on our building. The fact remains, however, that we are giving subsistence levels of payment to some surprisingly well-known Irish artists. With talk of further cuts, and Brexit on top of that, we could be looking at quite a difficult situation for people. The Government needs to be very aware of this in the coming period.

Vice Chairman: I thank Ms McKay for her contribution. We will hear from the Centre for Cross Border Studies before moving on to questions.

Ms Ruth Taillon: I thank the committee for the invitation to come here today. We submitted a paper as well, but it was submitted in March and as the committee will be well aware, things have moved on quite a lot, certainly in terms of the Brexit debate. There have been some reassurances, but also possibly a change in tone in some of the discussion around Brexit which might undermine these reassurances. We have a number of concerns. The centre has worked on issues around the Border for many years now. We also have an all-island agenda, but certainly in terms of the Border region and Border counties, we have done quite a lot of work on the Border development quarter concept, for instance, and working with groups. Most of our work on cross-Border co-operation has for many years now been framed, both within the imperative for co-operation that is in the Good Friday Agreement, but also EU cohesion policy. One of our big concerns now with the UK withdrawal from the EU is that there is going to be a policy divergence. We are very concerned, for instance, that the cross-Border bodies working to a common regulatory remit, such as Waterways Ireland and Safefood, will be undermined by Brexit. We could, for instance, start losing some of these environmental protections or whatever, perhaps not immediately but certainly over a fairly short period of time. We also concur with the comments made by Co-operation Ireland about human rights. We have very much welcomed the civic dialogue.

Another concern I will flag before passing on to my colleagues is the importance of maintaining the kinds of relationships which were broken by the Troubles and the Border, but which programmes like PEACE I and PEACE II and the INTERREG programmes were very much geared at rebuilding. We need some kind of replacement for those programmes and priority to be given to that. There have been huge demographic changes on the island, North and South, since the common travel area was brought in, which only applies at present to UK and Irish citizens. The priority is not just on what the Border is going to look like, but on the rights of both UK and EU citizens already on the island. These really need to be preserved, because the social cohesion aspect of the peace process is something that should concern all of us on the island. The changes and the poverty issues discussed by Ms McKay are certainly the kind of things that could lead to a further breakdown of community relations on both sides of the Border region. Those things are very much tied into economic and social development as well, so they are concerns. I will pass on to my colleague, the deputy director of the Centre for Cross-Border Studies, Dr. Anthony Soares.

Dr. Anthony Soares: I thank the committee for this invitation. With regard to the Good Friday Agreement, we have been working on the Brexit issue for some considerable time and from the outset we said that Brexit does not necessarily represent an existential threat to the letter of the Good Friday Agreement, including strand two. It is the spirit of strand two, however, that is potentially at risk from the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This will then affect the ability of Northern Ireland to access EU funds that support co-operation. Post-Brexit, it is important that strand two of the Good Friday Agreement survives, not simply in terms of the institutions themselves. We said from the outset that the North-South Ministerial Council, for example, was not under threat from Brexit, because it can continue to operate, but that the spirit of strand two lives through communities and their ability to co-operate, especially in the Border counties themselves. The architecture of the Good Friday Agreement in strand two will become a fossil unless there is that ability to co-operate between communities. When I say communities I am talking, not just about community organisations, but also small businesses and their ability to trade across the Border.

As Ms Taillon said, our written statement was presented in March. Since then the European Council and the European Commission have issued a series of directives and guidelines on the upcoming negotiations, and we have to focus on some of the positive language there. I am not saying that the European Commission or any of the European institutions were necessarily taking directions from the Centre for Cross Border Studies, but I would like to point out that in the discussions around a special status for Northern Ireland, we were quite clear from the outset that the language used was perhaps not helpful, and we should be talking instead about creative, imaginative and flexible solutions. This is precisely the language now used about the negotiations in the European Parliament resolution of April. The Council guidelines also refer to creativity, imagination and flexibility for our particular Border, and the European Commission directors repeat this language. What we have to focus on, perhaps, are those creative, imaginative and flexible solutions that will enable communities along the Border to carry on co-operating and relating to communities on the other side of the Border and not to retrench and look inwards.

Dr. Katy Hayward: One point has been rather lost in the discussion about potential impact of Brexit

on the Border region, and that is the position of cross-Border workers, that is, people who live on one side of the Border and work on the other. The Centre for Cross Border Studies has conducted reports that estimate that 23,000 to 30,000 people are in this position. This includes not just British and Irish citizens, but other EU citizens and other workers. The logic of European integration has been to offer protections for them, which has been crucial for facilitating developments in the Border region. This includes such things as aggregation of social insurance payments and access to services which are not just for the workers themselves, but also their families. Once the UK leaves the EU, the protection offered to these workers will be gone, including the principle of non-discrimination, which will no longer apply. This is a direct concern not just for people who work directly in the Border region, but also other Irish citizens who cross the Border daily to work.

Vice Chairman: I thank the witnesses for enlightening us on the situation that people in the North face. We all face these issues, but in the weeks and months to come we might know further how things are going to work out.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I thank the witnesses for their presentations this afternoon. I come from a Border county myself, the constituency of Cavan-Monaghan. I have a background in arts, and I appreciate that artists always struggle in terms of employment and income. Artists living in the Border region they have depended quite a bit on funding. The Arts Council is the main source of that funding. It is a national funding stream. The cross-Border opportunities that we have had over the past 20 or 30 years have provided for artists, and of course Leitrim is well known for being an artist capital in the Border region, particularly the Glens Centre and the Leitrim Sculpture Centre, which I have visited on a number of occasions.

With regards the dependency that exists in the Border region, between peace funding and INTERREG funding and other funding streams, and the arts being one of the main vehicles for promoting social cohesion and bridge building and allowing people to be comfortable with their own identity - be it in the minority or majority - are there any possible solutions for artists in this? We need to see continued EU funding going into the North to allow the good work that has been done to continue. Contrary to what Ms Hayward said, the everyday crossing of the Border to get to work or visit family is one of the main discussion pieces that I have been party to in debates. To return to Ms McKay, are there any solutions that we could be working on in terms of the artistic community that is so dependent on cross-Border funding streams?

Ms Susan McKay: The Deputy has obviously travelled around the Border area and knows it well. It is noticeable that much of the money that has been spent in the area is EU money. There has been a centralisation in Belfast and Dublin in terms of other investment. There has been EU PEACE money and American money in particular invested in the Border area. In the absence of that on the Northern side of the Border, both Governments are going to have to be mindful of the vacuum that will be created.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: A special case is warranted for the artistic community. Many people are shouting for the agricultural communities and about infrastructure.

Ms Susan McKay: Yes. For example, as Deputy Smyth has mentioned, Manorhamilton has the

Glens Centre and the Leitrim Sculpture centre, and there are many individual artists living and working in the very beautiful region around there. One of the side effects of being an economic wilderness is that there is lots of unspoiled and beautiful countryside which artists have moved into. The marginalisation of the Border has been somewhat masked by the fact of all that international money going in there through the peace process. Once that is jeopardised by Brexit, governments on both sides of the Border, the Northern Irish Government, the British Government and the Irish Government are going to have to look at that and make up for it and recognise that it is an artistic area. The Tyrone Guthrie Centre is in that region. There are a range of arts centres along the Border which all co-operate with each other. Indeed, we are working on increasing that co-operation. It is a case that the governments are going to have to recognise that they will have to move in there and help. We are working on getting ideas on that. This weekend, Leitrim County Council and the Glens Centre are hosting an event in the Glens Centre for musicians and composers to talk about how to make a living out of one's work. Different musicians, including Lisa O'Neill from Deputy Smyth's county, Monaghan, will speak about how musicians can advance their careers in the very precarious world of being an artist.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Are the creative industries highly dependent now on European funding streams? If one is an artist in Dublin or working in the arts industry, the first port of call is the Arts Council.

We have been privy to other forms of funding that perhaps might not have been as accessible for artists living anywhere else in Ireland. Does the witness believe that because of that we have a high dependency on EU funding?

Ms Susan McKay: Artists rely upon audiences of one kind or another. If one is an artist in a city the opportunity exists to be taken into various different venues to do work and be paid for work. In somewhere like Manorhamilton an artist might get a gig in the Glens Centre once a year but will not get more than that. There are fewer opportunities to make money from performing or showing.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: The risk is that those creative industries on the Border might be lost.

Ms Susan McKay: They might be lost, or life might become incredibly difficult for the artists. Many artists live on very little, and their dedication to their art or their craft is such that they are willing to put up with that. There has to be some recognition of the need for sustainability for them. If people are looking with concern to what is happening to the Arts Council at the moment, with the threats to Aosdána, although most artists are not in a position to avail of that, it shows that the little support there is may be fading away. That said, we do get funding from the Arts Council and the local county council in Leitrim.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: To be fair and honest about it, I am sure that the cross-Border funds, along with the beautiful countryside, have been attractions to allow the creative industries to flourish along the Border area.

Ms Susan McKay: Yes, and it has been very helpful in terms of social cohesion on both sides of the Border.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: Were there to be a hard border, something very visible, we are running the

risk of a mass exodus of that particular industry from the Border region.

Ms Susan McKay: I doubt that we are talking about enough numbers to talk about a mass exodus, but certainly an exodus or an increase in pressure on people to leave because they simply cannot survive economically there. That would be a very bad thing for the country as a whole. It should be recognised as a cultural area. Manorhamilton alone deserves the designation of an arts and culture town, and something could be made of that. It is a very beautiful area. Tourists could be encouraged to come and visit. If we look at the success of the Wild Atlantic Way, for example, the Glens Centre is in the Glens which are very close to the Atlantic but there has not been any kind of incentive to bring tourists there. Mr. Sheridan invited me to represent where I work now, but also the wider issues. These kind of conditions prevail for people right along the Border area.

The absence of economic investment and the sense that the Border was a slightly dangerous area means that artists have been able to live there because it is not such a desirable area for others who have more choices. This would be true of other parts of the Border region as well, on both sides.

Ms Ruth Taillon: To move away from the arts, well before Brexit was even spoken about or thought about we were involved with elected representatives on both sides of the Border in the Border development corridor. The rationale for that was that counties in the Border region have more in common with other counties on both sides of the Border than with the rest of the island, the rest of the UK or the rest of Europe. That was why the idea of cohesion policy, which is to bring more deprived regions up to the average, has been so important in the framing of what we try to do. It takes it a bit out of the hardcore political area and talks about social and economic advances and what needs to be done. With the Border corridor idea, we were saying that both sides of the corridor needed to skew policies and funding to allow the Border region to catch up. Certainly, with Brexit, there is a huge danger from all the things that make the Border a barrier in the first place, and the problems that has created over time with regard to people turning away from the Border. Centralisation in Belfast and Dublin is going to be exacerbated. We need a massive injection of some sort of replacement funding and we have made a number of proposals not only for the Border region, but also for us to build relationships on the island.

Going back to what I was saying about demographic changes, one of the big threats to the peace process will be scapegoating of people who are a bit different. We have seen that in places like Dungannon, where there are different ethnic populations and a different societal composition. That needs to be addressed and there needs to be a new "peace vibe" or whatever else it is called. Whether it has EU money or not, it needs to be directed to those issues around the danger to community relations that will come out as a result of Brexit.

Mr. Peter Sheridan: I have a point to back up what Ms McKay and Ms Taillon said. It is unthinkable for inhabitants of Derry, Newry, Manorcunningham or Manorhamilton that they would be cut off again from their natural hinterland across the Border. I said it in my opening remarks, but the fear among local communities is that they will be lost in the negotiations and that those will be about the higher level. It is a plea to ensure that local communities are

welcomed during those negotiations and discussions. As both Ms McKay and Ms Taillon said, almost £1.5 billion worth of EU funding went into the Northern Ireland peace process. Most of that was along the Border areas. Post-Brexit, what will that impact mean? The British and Irish Governments will have to think carefully of what the impact is on that Border.

We certainly do not want to create a semi-detached status for people who see their allegiance being to the Republic of Ireland, nor do we want to create a semi-detached status for people who see their allegiance being to Westminster. Those are people's concerns and worries.

Dr. Katy Hayward: I will clarify my point about cross-Border workers. We welcome the interest and very active work being done by the Irish Government and Civil Service on the potential impact of Brexit. The concerns about cross-Border workers go beyond the issues of the common travel area and movement of people, and also beyond the question of protection for EU citizens. The EU has done much to specifically protect people, regardless of their citizenship status, who work on one side of the Border and live on the other. For example, it protects the provision or access to medical services for them and their family on either side of the Border. That is the point I am trying to make. It particularly affects people living in the Border region on both sides.

Vice Chairman: I have questions of my own. I am a farmer myself and would think that farmers in the North of Ireland would be extremely worried about what could be coming down the line. Has the UK Government given any assurances? Many farmers are reliant on European aid. What is going to compensate them going forward if we have a situation where Brexit goes through? Much trade moves across the Border. Could we see the reintroduction of smuggling such as happened before? Is that a worry that the witnesses envisage going forward? A majority of people in the North do not want to leave the European Union and they must be very frustrated and annoyed that this is happening. It is happening over their heads. How are they coping with this? Are they angered? Will it lead to the break-up of communities? What is the feeling there? I would appreciate if the witnesses could address those questions.

Mr. Peter Sheridan: Subject to correction, the British Government has said that it will continue to fund the farmers currently funded by the EU up to 2020. They will continue to do that for the farmers. There is no sense of what will happen after 2020. One could also make the argument that CAP funding was only up to 2020, and we do not know what would have happened after that, but as I understand it, the British Government has committed to continue it up to 2020. On the smuggling side, my background is as a police officer in Northern Ireland, and I had responsibility for the Border. I would be very surprised if there are not people thinking about how they can maximise the benefits if there are tariffs on one side of the Border or the other. The history of this place is that that is what happens, and it is inconceivable that people are not already thinking and planning for it.

On the Acting Chairman's question on how people are feeling, it is mixed. Some 56% of people voted to remain in the EU and clearly want to remain in, and see their allegiance as to this part of the island. There is frustration and anger. There is also a considerable section of the community who have seen no benefits from Europe and see that Britain can stand on its own two feet. It is a bit of a mixed bag. What surprises me is that if the referendum was run again, I am not sure

that the result would be very different despite what we all know now and some of the more dire predictions that have come out of it. That answers some of the Acting Chairman's questions.

Ms Ruth Taillon: On how people are feeling, one of the points that we really need to make here is how much we welcome the Taoiseach's initiative on civic dialogue and the fact that that was a North-South dialogue, and make the plea, which I think has already been made in a few different places, that some sort of structure like that can be allowed to continue. We are especially feeling it now where, with the whole Brexit debate moving on, there is no channel for people in the North on either side of the debate to make their voices heard. If that North-South dialogue can be maintained over the next few years, that would be very important and welcome.

Dr. Anthony Soares: On the question of agriculture and reassurances from the UK Government, Mr. Sheridan is correct that the UK Government has given those reassurances up to 2020, but I would like to point out that we did a report about the agrifood sector, looking at four counties along the Border specifically, prior to the EU referendum. Many of the producers referred to EU support during the research for that report. I spoke to some during the immediate run-up to the referendum, and some of those producers in Northern Ireland - from two counties in Northern Ireland on the Northern Ireland side of the Border - said that they intended to vote to leave, and having spoken to them and others after the referendum, they did indeed vote to leave. There are farmers in Northern Ireland who chose the option to leave the EU. On that reassurance up to 2020, one of the things that the agri-food sector in Northern Ireland will have to face post-2020 is that UK Government support, whatever it might be for farmers post-2020, will depend on annual budgets, so every year, farmers will have to lobby the Government to secure financial support on a yearly basis. Currently, under CAP, there is a seven-year budget, so farmers can plan what they are going to do on a medium-term basis since they are guaranteed those funds. That is going to be a major challenge going forward.

The UK's Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Mr. David Davis, said in the House of Commons that the possibility of an increase in cross-Border smuggling is perhaps the price that the UK has to pay to maintain a frictionless Border. We think that is potentially a negative perspective.

Yes, the majority of people in Northern Ireland opted to remain, but we also have to realise that a significant minority actually voted to leave the EU.

We have to address the issue of maintaining cohesion within Northern Ireland between communities and between sections of the population who had different approaches to the referendum, and also to maintain those relationships on a cross-Border basis. One of the potential threats that we are facing is that communities on both sides of the Border will start to look away from each other once again, which is something that we thought we had overcome because there has been much more communication between communities. As Ms. Taillon pointed out earlier, we have considered on various occasions that if Northern Ireland cannot access EU funds, then this will be a litmus test for the Governments in Dublin, London and Belfast in terms of their commitment to strand two of the Good Friday Agreement. Will they come up with a programme to replace the EU-funded programmes that currently exist for cross-Border co-

operation?

Deputy Peadar Tóibín resumed the Chair.

Chairman: I am sorry I was obliged to leave but I had to speak in the Dáil. I have read through some of the notes that were sent in advance. I might have missed some of the questions or I might repeat some of them. One of the key issues is if Britain leaves the Single Market and the customs union, which is very likely, it is impossible to see a situation where there will not be some level of controls on the Border. The only way to fix that situation would be to push the Border into the sea, so that the island of Ireland at least would still function within the EU. Does the witnesses have specific views as to the attractiveness of that policy option and the likelihood of it being taken up?

Mr. Peter Sheridan: I briefly touched on that in a previous answer. There are two dangers that we foresee with it. If the Border is along the land frontier between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, with customs posts and so on, then that certainly runs a risk of semi-detached status for northern nationalists who are aligned more with this jurisdiction than London. Any obstacles or impediments on the Border would make people start to question their ability to be Irish. The Good Friday Agreement allowed people to be British, Irish or both. Likewise, if the Border is in the middle of the Irish Sea or on British ports then there is a risk of semi-detached status for those in the Protestant community who are aligned with London. They may find that in travelling from one part of the UK to another they will have to produce some identity documents. I do not know what the answer to this is. Both communities have very real fears.

Chairman: Does anyone else want to offer an opinion on that?

Dr. Katy Hayward: We could go round and round on this when we talk about it in majoritarian or ideological terms.

It is interesting to note the goodwill of the EU in looking out for flexible solutions. The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee recently published a report on electricity and energy and discussed special status on energy in Northern Ireland, which was a significant and notable step forward. This would be unusual in a European Union context, but it might be possible to start talking about sectoral or sub-sectoral interests with regards special arrangement for the Border region or for Northern Ireland with the rest of Ireland in areas like trade. If there are special arrangements for Northern Ireland, for example, if it stayed in the European Economic Area, that would solve many trade problems immediately. As Mr. Sheridan has already said, it would bring in new problems for east-west trade. It may be extremely complicated but it might be worth beginning to look into particular sectors that would be most damaged by a hardening North-South Border and investigate special arrangements at that level.

Chairman: It also creates the potential for a competitive advantage in an internal UK sense for the North of Ireland. If the North of Ireland remained ruled from London to a certain extent but within the EU, its access to the EU would obviously be enhanced *vis-à-vis* its competitor regions in the rest of Britain. Have the groups given any thought to the idea of sectoral customs unions? Turkey is within the customs union, and I understand Norway has a customs union in respect of certain products. Has the group considered whether Britain would stay inside the customs union in

certain sectors and how that could be beneficial on an all-Ireland basis?

Dr. Anthony Soares: Looking at the UK Government's approach prior to the triggering of Article 50, it is clear from the Prime Minister's speech at Lancaster House that it seems as if membership of the Single Market is totally out of the question. Membership of or any relationship with the customs union was left slightly open, but it seems that that door is closing somewhat.

We also have to look at the European Union's approach to it. We are seeing tensions within the EU's approach. They have been categorical in that they do not want sectoral deals or to offer sectoral membership of the Single Market to the UK as a whole. In terms of looking at sectoral deals, we should be more ambitious. Let us take those words - creativity, imagination, flexibility - and instead of looking at particular sectors, let us continue looking at how we resolve the situation for Northern Ireland in particular, for the UK as a whole but also for Ireland. We must remember that Ireland will continue to be an EU member state and will need to have its own specific circumstances accommodated by the other member states as we move forward through the Brexit negotiations. It would be prejudicial if we start minimising our approach by looking at sectors instead of being creative and ambitious and look at the whole situation rather than particular industries. If we take the agrifood sector versus manufacturing, membership of the customs union is absolutely essential for the agrifood sector, whereas for many industries within the manufacturing sector it is more about non-tariff barriers than about Single Market membership. There are different requirements for the economy North and South. We have to start with a more ambitious approach instead of looking at particular sectors. I am not saying that we do not move.

Chairman: The North has a population of 1.8 million people. If it leaves the EU, all of those people have the option to exercise a right to be Irish citizens and an option to therefore be EU citizens. A particular anomaly will exist were there will be a continuous citizenry outside of the boundaries of a political entity. I understand that there are threats to both communities from the location of the EU border, but at the very least that has to be added in to the understanding of where that EU border is.

Mr. Peter Sheridan: Where we have the potential for an economic union across the island of Ireland, that might resolve many of those issues. I take the point made here by colleagues that the EU has already indicated that the common travel area does not seem to be the issue we had thought it was going to be. We have not got anywhere near the end of discussions on that but it looks as though the common travel area will remain in place. I think the issues will become those of trade and customs and what impediments that puts on a border and how we minimise that to the maximum degree.

Chairman: Why does Mr. Sheridan think the EU has minimised the common travel area as an issue?

Mr. Peter Sheridan: Why have they not?

Chairman: Mr. Sheridan said they have said it was not potentially so big.

Mr. Peter Sheridan: There is some recognition that the common travel area was in place before the European Union was in place and as it worked then, why would it not continue to work now. I

have met some of the European leaders and I had not detected that it is going to be the major issue. The issue of trade and customs is where the focus seems to be at this time but we are at a very early stage in this regard and none of us know.

Chairman: We are in a world of conjecture.

Ms Ruth Taillon: I do not think we should be complacent about the citizenship issue because there are dangers with it being a two-tier citizenship, where some people who do not choose to take their Irish citizenship and therefore maintain EU citizenship will be living on this island with others who are EU citizens. Moreover, for those who do get their passports, these are limited rights in the sense that one can travel and go on one's holidays or take a job elsewhere in Europe but it does not necessarily guarantee health coverage or a student's right to study at a university in Europe on the same basis as a European citizen. We do not know exactly where those kinds of things will hit us in the face but there will be dangers down the line when some people in the North have some rights and others do not. It will be a messy situation and we do not know how it will play out in terms of where the issues will arise.

Dr. Katy Hayward: I was going to say the same thing but also that we should not confuse the issue of travel with citizenship rights. The Irish Government would first have to follow up in paying for that for Irish citizens in the North, as Ms Taillon was saying, who might have Irish citizenship and take EU citizenship and then access services abroad. The Irish Government would be responsible for paying for that. In addition, the common travel area is not an easy solution and does not relate to rights per se; it relates to not being subject to immigration controls when one enters. It needs to be much more formalised, which would be an incredibly complicated process, if it is to address matters such as access to services, rights of residency, access to social benefits and so on.

Dr. Anthony Soares: Dr. Hayward is right about the common travel area, and Mr. Sheridan referred to it earlier. I am trying to look for some positives. The European Council and the European Commission have referred to the common travel area and almost given a green light to it, including reciprocal arrangements between the UK and Ireland. It refers to that, although there is a little catch-all at the end of it to the effect that it will be within the EU legal framework. That is where we have to dig down and see whether this is now solid and it is being accepted that we can continue on post Brexit with those reciprocal arrangements that currently exist. As Dr. Hayward said, the common travel area and the arrangements around it need to be given more of a solid legal basis in both jurisdictions, that is, in Ireland and the UK, because at present, no single legislative item in Ireland states here is the common travel area Act and it is the same for the UK. There is no single item of legislation setting out exactly what is the common travel area and what are the arrangements around it. We really need to think about giving it more of a legislative basis than exists at present.

Chairman: Witnesses may or may not want to answer this but would they rather be Spain or Ireland going into negotiations at the moment, given that Spain has a veto and Ireland has positive things?

Mr. Peter Sheridan: I do not know enough about it.

Chairman: Last year, I had the opportunity to develop the first all-island economy document to be produced by the Oireachtas. I got to speak to some of the organisations present today on it from which I got great information for which I thank them.

I spoke to approximately 100 organisations, groups and individuals including trade unions, cross-Border studies groups, farmers, business people, the Confederation of British Industry and so on. All were of the view that if we plan, fund and deliver services together on the island of Ireland, typically they will be more efficient and will serve the citizens North and South better. First, is it not the case that we do not do that at present and there are major gaps and spaces available to us? While we have Altnagelvin, the cancer treatment centre, emergency helicopters in places and so on, really the approach to that kind of delivery, North and South, is haphazard at best. Second, is it not the case this space is under major threat at the end of this negotiation period?

Dr. Anthony Soares: Since its inception, the Centre for Cross Border Studies has promoted, advocated and supported cross-Border co-operation. One reason we have done that pertains to cases in which cross-Border co-operation, initiatives and interventions actually help us in terms of sharing resources. They therefore are of economic benefit through such sharing of resources, reduction of costs and becoming more efficient. However, in terms of a blanket agreement that it is always good, we need to be very careful. Earlier, Mr. Sheridan referred to citizens and a certain amount of disaffection among those in the UK as a whole and in Northern Ireland who did not see EU membership as having been of benefit to them. One reason that may have happened is because they have not given active agreement to certain initiatives. Giving a blanket agreement that this is always good or that cross-Border co-operation is always good and therefore somehow people must always agree to it, is potentially a negative approach. We need to have citizens' agreement and participation in those types of initiatives rather than something that is seen as being imposed on them. If they are not actively participating and are not actively involved in the design of programmes and projects, then they see themselves as being outsiders and being relegated and marginalised. I am wary of blanket agreements. I want to see citizens from both jurisdictions, particularly from Border counties, being involved right from the outset in any of those proposals or initiatives because that will buy them in and then they will not think they are being involved in something they have not bought into.

I have been working with community groups along the Border from both sides. Some community groups from some sections in society see economic cross-Border co-operation in generally positive terms but cross-Border co-operation generally is seen as part of a political project into which they are not buying and therefore they are reluctant to get involved in some cross-Border co-operation initiatives. We must involve citizens from the start.

Chairman: I agree that obviously, logically, cross-Border co-operation could be seen as a threat but the truth would be that it is far from the default.

Co-operation is probably the minority experience with regard to North and South. Would it not be logical at least to organise some level of systematic trawl through the services delivered on the island of Ireland, ascertain which are not contentious and then seek more co-operation in their delivery? At present, it seems haphazard and no one appears to be seeking to marry the two systems together

at least where there is agreement. There are excellent examples of where it does work but they are the exception rather than the rule.

Mr. Peter Sheridan: I will answer that and then perhaps I might be excused, along with my colleague, as we are on the train back to Belfast and if I miss it, I will miss the connection to Derry. That would leave me home at some stage in the middle of the night even if there was a train to get there.

The Chairman mentioned Altnagelvin Hospital, with which I am familiar. There is no doubt that access to INTERREG, which has allowed this co-operation and partnership to grow, has had a positive impact on rural isolated communities in counties like Donegal and Leitrim. It has enabled people in peripheral areas to access services. I agree that it is hard to see how the gaps that would exist in the absence of access to INTERREG would be filled. We are probably still at the beginning of the process of people having confidence in being able to share services between councils and so on. Now that Brexit has put the brakes on this process, people are more concerned about Brexit than they are about the areas of co-operation that were probably going to happen through good neighbourliness as the peace process continued to bed in.

Chairman: I thank Mr. Sheridan for his attendance at this meeting.

Mr. Peter Sheridan: I apologise for having to leave.

Chairman: That is no bother at all. I wish Mr. Sheridan a safe journey home.

Ms Ruth Taillon: I wish to mention something we have been trying to highlight for a while. It was decided in 2006 or 2008 under the St. Andrews Agreement that the areas of co-operation would be reviewed and further areas of co-operation would be sought. We have been putting a focus on the need for this to be reprioritised. We are concerned that the Good Friday Agreement seems to be getting reduced to strand one. We know there is a crisis with the institutions North of the Border. Progress with strands two and three has been pretty slow. Strand three is almost entirely outside public consciousness. The cross-Border bodies have just been ticking over without really being able to live up to their potential. This review needs to start by putting a focus on the strand two bodies and institutions. After progress has been made in that regard, civil society can weigh in on some of these issues. All this needs to be supported, resourced and institutionalised.

Dr. Katy Hayward: I would like to follow up on that. It is notable that the OECD report from 2013 said that trade flows and connections between the North and the South were falling significantly below their potential. That was in the post-Agreement context of a much more positive environment than the one we are facing now. When we talk about the cross-Border links that make sense as we face a post-Brexit context, I suggest we need to think about the British-Irish links in strand three as well as strand two.

Mr. Brian Ó Caoindealbháin: I would like to respond to the point that was made about co-operation. The extent to which North-South co-operation has become depoliticised since the Agreement has been one of the Agreement's quiet success stories. Perhaps the fact this has taken place within a wider European narrative about integration and cross-Border co-operation has taken some of the sting out of it for Northern unionists. I think we risk losing that through Brexit if there

is a return to bilateral relations. Brexit has led to some conversations about long-term reunification. Maybe co-operation will again be seen as a stalking horse for that. I suggest that Brexit will put at risk the kind of supportive narrative that was there around co-operation.

Chairman: I have a final question. The Border, to a certain extent, is a man-made periphery. Typically, peripheries do not do well. That periphery will deepen with a hard Border. Has anyone made any efforts to research or estimate how a hard Border will affect the socioeconomic experience of the people living in this space? I know they probably figure at the bottom of most socioeconomic indicators at present. Is it possible to estimate the exact impact? I assume it is not possible if we are still in the area of conjecture.

Dr. Anthony Soares: I think the Chairman has answered his own question. While there are some general things we can say about communities living along the Border, many of which applied prior to the prospect of Brexit, it is too early to make an estimate of the kind alluded to by the Chair. It must be borne in mind that there are three distinct areas within the Border region: the north west, which has its own particular characteristics; the Dublin to Belfast corridor, which also has its own characteristics; and the central Border area, which is the most rural of the three areas and is perhaps facing the most challenges. During economic booms, the counties adjoining both sides of the Border generally lag behind other regions on the island of Ireland. During economic crises, those counties are always those most deeply affected. They always take longer to benefit from an upturn and they are always the first to be affected by a downturn. We know from experience that if Brexit presents an economic challenge or leads to an economic downturn, communities in Border counties on both sides of the Border will suffer the most.

I would like to pitch something to the committee before we conclude. Members may have received an invitation to an information session being hosted by the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs next Tuesday, 16 May 2017, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. We are bringing over two teams from the Norway-Sweden border to address the seminar. The French ambassador in charge of trans-boundary co-operation will speak about the French experience of co-operation with Switzerland. This is an opportunity for Deputies and Senators to speak to those who are directly involved in administering and managing cross-border co-operation at the Norway-Sweden and France-Switzerland borders and who know the obstacles.

Chairman: We recently had a meeting with officials from the Norwegian embassy on this matter. We will definitely try to attend next Tuesday's event. I thank the witnesses for attending this afternoon's meeting. I apologise for being unable to attend the entire session. I was unexpectedly called to speak in the Dáil Chamber. I ask the witnesses to keep up the good work. We hope to be in contact with them soon.

The joint committee went into private session at 4.27 p.m. and resumed in public session at 4.34 p.m.

Chairman: We will now consider the topic of the future of community, social and economic development and co-operation in Border counties with representatives of InterTradeIreland. I welcome Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan and Mr. Aidan Gough and thank them very much for their attendance. Before starting, I draw their attention to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)

(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. If they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter but continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

I advise the witnesses that their opening statement and any other documents submitted to the committee may be published by the committee on its website after this meeting. Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: We welcome the opportunity to address the committee on this issue. InterTradeIreland helps business explore new cross-Border markets, develop new products, processes and services and become investor-ready. We engage particularly with small and medium-sized enterprises and, to date, we have helped over 32,000 small businesses on the island of Ireland. We work on a 32-county basis and we have activities in every county on the island of Ireland. Most of our supports are in three main strands, namely, cross-Border business funding, business intelligence and providing meaningful contacts.

Trade between the South and North is quite extensive and there is much traffic, and that has come into sharp focus recently as a result of the UK's decision to leave the European Union. Every month, there are over 177,000 lorry journeys, 205,000 van journeys and 1.85 million people crossings of the Border. It is active traffic and the relationship will be changed as a result of these new negotiations. We have been active in trying to assist companies in navigating their way through the coming changes. It is a particularly big challenge and our business monitor indicates 98% of businesses do not have a plan in place to deal with Brexit. On top of that, 80% of businesses rely on the news as their main source of information about Brexit.

In order to address those challenges, we set about a number of practical measures that people can follow in order to prepare. In particular, we are talking about planning for Brexit and we have set out a roadmap for people and steps they should take, even with the uncertainty. I will leave it there and if the committee wishes to ask some questions, I can elaborate on issues.

Chairman: Before beginning, I should say I worked on an InterTradeIreland programme when I was much younger. It was the Focus programme and we worked with a firm in Armagh, so I have good experience with regard to the delivery of services that involve InterTradeIreland. From my perspective, it is one of the most useful organisations. The all-island economy is not operating at the level it should and trade flows North and South are at lower levels than possible. If we harvested the all-Ireland economy to its full extent, we would be far better off economically North and South. Really good steps have been taken by the organisation in that regard. How many businesses would consume InterTradeIreland services on an annual basis?

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: On an annual basis we engage with approximately 3,000

companies. Of those, approximately 300 would be involved directly with programmes that we deliver.

Chairman: The others might attend conferences like the Go-2-Tender workshops, etc.

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: Yes. We have engagement with companies and there are approximately 400 or 500 on Go-2-Tender training. We have approximately 60 FUSION programmes, which are the knowledge transfer programmes, in order to develop innovation capability within companies. We have a further 60 or 70 companies on Acumen, which is a sales programme. We could have 90 companies on our Elevate programme. There is a range of other activities such as business angel networks and business planning, as well as the US-Ireland research and development partnership. There is a feast of other things that we do that are not as directly related to companies.

Chairman: Research is a big element of the work and many of the key data sets for trade on the island stem from the body's research. Is that right?

Mr. Aidan Gough: We have a substantial, cross-Border, all-island research agenda. We publish two or three research reports annually and monitor trade statistics. We have been actively trying to identify the impacts of various Brexit scenarios at a granular or product level because that is the level we must get to.

Chairman: Before we discuss the various Brexit scenarios, what are the benefits of an investment in InterTradeIreland's work? Does the organisation record key performance indicators, including the benefit of each €1 of investment.

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: We have key performance indicators on four different levels. The primary indicators are on first-time innovators to whom we give preference and first-time exporters. On an annual basis, we have at least 100 in each of these two categories. The second major area we measure is the business value generated. We set a target in our business plan of achieving a ratio of 9:1 for business value generated. By this I mean that for every £1 we spend on supports in a company, the company in question will generate a further £9 in additional sales, efficiencies, economies or investment. Our actual outputs are much higher than that. Last year, we had a ratio return of 16.6:1 on moneys invested. We had more than 150 in each of the categories of first-time exporters and first time innovators. All the key performance indicators have been exceeded. The inference is the number of jobs created in companies as a direct result of interventions by InterTradeIreland. Last year, the figure stood at approximately 2,300.

Chairman: Does the figure refer to jobs sustained or created?

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: It is a combination of both but it is attached to the intervention by InterTradeIreland.

Chairman: We are in the land of conjecture to some extent because as it is difficult for an organisation to scientifically measure the potential outputs associated with Brexit. How does InterTradeIreland address this difficulty in the research it is carrying out?

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: There are two aspects involved. I will speak about the planning

process, while Mr. Gough will discuss the research we are conducting in conjunction with the Economic and Social Research Institute and Central Statistics Office. On the planning element, we have prepared a Brexit fact sheet and produced a Brexit readiness voucher. We have asked companies to consider the impact on their business if one of the four freedoms were to be lost or affected in any way. I refer to the freedom of movement of people, goods and capital, respectively, and the right to establish a service in another jurisdiction. Companies need to consider first whether changes to or loss of any of the four freedoms would have an impact on their business. That sets the parameters for them and from there, we consider how we could deal with the issue. This can be done in a number of ways.

Mr. Gough will discuss the worst-case scenario in which World Trade Organization, WTO, tariffs would apply. In that context, we can also identify what the WTO tariff is for specific products. The principal point we are making to companies is that they should look at the product they are making as innovation is probably a factorial response of how they can deal with Brexit, simply because tariffs can be altered significantly through innovation. For example, by removing the salt, sugar or fat content of a product, a company could find that a much lower tariff level applies. Alternatively, a business may be able to use existing ingredients to make a different product that is not subject to tariffs. We are not saying tariffs will be imposed, we are presenting a worst-case scenario. That is what we are working towards.

Chairman: Did InterTradeIreland make any quantitative assessments of the potential imposition of tariffs or loss of each or all of the four freedoms? Do companies simply report that the loss of one or other freedom would have a negative effect on their development? Has an effort been made to quantify elements of the impact?

Mr. Aidan Gough: Our response to Brexit to date is based first and foremost on the information that came from our business monitor survey before Christmas. The survey, which I believe was carried out in November, showed that 98% of businesses were not making any plans for dealing with Brexit and found considerable uncertainty among businesses.

Chairman: Was the survey carried out north and south of the Border?

Mr. Aidan Gough: Yes, it was carried out across the whole island. In response to the survey, we went out on what was, to all intents and purposes, a roadshow. We spoke at probably 50 events in the past three or four months to try to get businesses to start planning, acting and engaging with the process. They have a window of opportunity to prepare in the period before a deal emerges. We discussed with business, first and foremost, the things they know.

Northern Ireland companies in particular avail of the four freedoms that make up the Single Market. A good starting point for all businesses is to ask what would be the effect if they could no longer avail of the four freedoms or if some of their customers or suppliers were not working to the same regulatory or customs union environment. That is the starting point.

Chairman: Can Mr. Gough provide feedback on the responses received?

Mr. Aidan Gough: That is the issue. Our latest survey indicates that 98% of businesses are still not planning, which means they are not responding to these questions at the moment. For this reason,

we are actively trying to encourage them to start asking questions of themselves. With Brexit, the impact gets very granular and depends very much on the type of business involved. Only the businesses can answer the questions and we are asking them to start the planning process. We also have services in place to help them while they ask these questions. If they start asking questions and find they do not have the answers they need in certain areas, we will supply a voucher up to a value of up to €1,000 to help them obtain the expert advice they need. This will enable them to start to prepare for whatever new relationship emerges. InterTradeIreland does not comment in any way on what that relationship may be because no one knows the answer.

Again, we are not making a projection or prediction, but one of the scenarios for which the largest amount of information is available is if Britain and the European Union were to revert to a WTO type trading regime, which is sometimes known as the hard Brexit or cliff edge scenario. We know what the tariffs would be in this worst case scenario and we are completing some research, as yet unpublished, that examines the impact on cross-Border trade of a WTO tariff regime. It identifies the sectors that are most susceptible and at risk, right down to a granular product level. This is a useful starting point for a business because it can work with that.

Chairman: Can Mr. Gough provide a preview of the information?

Mr. Aidan Gough: No, it has not been published and we have to check it all before publication.

Chairman: When does Mr. Gough expect it will be published?

Mr. Aidan Gough: We are taking advice on how it is impacted because we report to the Northern side as well and there is an election in the North at the moment.

Chairman: Will the election delay publication?

Mr. Aidan Gough: We are not yet sure but we are taking advice on the matter. While I cannot give the Chairman an exact time for publication, it will be published sooner rather than later. We are still confirming the figures. It is very clear, as everyone is well aware, that products in the agrifood sector and agriculture as a whole are at greatest exposure. In the worst case scenario, the tariffs applied to roughly 85% of the approximately 2,200 products traded from North to South and 1,900 products traded South to North would be well below 10%. The biggest risk or exposure from cross-Border trade is that 50% of the trade in goods across the Border is in agrifood, the sector in which tariffs are highest. Again, we are not predicting an outcome but presenting a scenario to enable businesses to start planning on the basis of the information available.

Chairman: Has InterTradeIreland looked specifically at enterprises along the Border? There are two types of all-island focus. There is all-island aspect but there is also the periphery of the Border. Businesses operating within 30 miles of either side of the Border would have higher exposures. Has InterTradeIreland focused on that?

Mr. Aidan Gough: We have not. We have always taken the approach of being an all-island body and the first stage is to look at the impact on businesses across the whole island. That type of tariff regime applies across the island to businesses if they are exporting. We are looking at other case studies which may give us that more granular and anecdotal type of evidence also.

Chairman: Could the witnesses send us lists of mitigating policies and which businesses could be involved to resolve some of the challenges?

Mr. Aidan Gough: We have already identified those and we are going out to businesses. The first thing is the planning part. A good basis from which to start planning is the worst case scenario. There is a different scale of an issue in the agrifood sector but the vast majority of businesses we work with are primarily in the manufacturing sector. As I said, tariffs for 85% of them were below 10%. One could build value into one's production chain to mitigate a tariff, which will, in essence, be transferred into a price increase in one's goods, through programmes like our FUSION innovation programme. We see innovation as a key response for business, but it is really about focusing them on making adjustments to their business models now by looking at lean techniques and innovation to mitigate the worst impacts of Brexit.

Chairman: Being a healthier business is the ultimate tool.

Mr. Aidan Gough: It is a starting point.

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: We have been successful in a funding bid to INTERREG to launch a new programme which will happen towards the end of June.

It will be called Co-Innovate and is a partnership involving us, LEOs in the six Border counties, Enterprise Northern Ireland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise. Its key objective will be to develop innovation capacity in SMEs in the region. Even though it is not a response to Brexit and is quite separate, it will be very important to develop innovation in SMEs in the Border counties and the region.

Chairman: InterTradeIreland has been the anchor organisation for the likes of Horizon 2020 and different drawdown programmes for EU funding. Will that radically change now?

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: All of our funding bar the funding for the new Co-Innovate programme is from the two sponsoring Departments. We are not reliant on European funds.

Chairman: However, InterTradeIreland facilitates the funding.

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: We facilitate and Horizon 2020 has been something in which we have been involved actively from the start. We are a keen facilitator simply because we are in the position of having two partners in circumstances where three are necessary to get a Horizon 2020 project off the ground. We have been very successful over the years. The percentage of successful companies going through Horizon 2020 North-South is higher than the European average and has consistently been that way including during its predecessor, FP7. However, if the British exit means there is no further involvement in Horizon 2020, that may come to an end in 2020 or slightly beyond that. There is obviously also the option that it could continue. It is not necessarily the case that it will end at any particular time. Currently, it continues apace and has been a very important source of funding for research for many companies. We have an active portfolio of researchers across the island of Ireland and into Europe to get the right connections to get people to collaborate on Horizon 2020. The Co-Innovate fund is possibly the first and last we will be involved in where we get funding for a particular project. Details of that will be released later in June.

Chairman: Is there any way to quantify the types of money that will be involved in these spaces for people? What type of drawdowns will typically be involved in these programmes?

Mr. Aidan Gough: So far under Horizon 2020, the North-South partnerships have drawn down approximately €63 or €64 million, which is substantially up on the North-South drawdown in the same period under FP7. As such, there has been a significant increase. As Mr. Hunter McGowan was saying, we do not see any slowdown in the number of applications or in the willingness to develop North-South partnerships to participate in Horizon 2020.

Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh: I apologise for arriving late. My colleagues and I were caught with Seanad duties earlier on. This is a really interesting debate and the questions so far have sparked many thoughts and questions in my own head. One of the things that struck me initially was around the urban-rural companies. Even looking at the map the witnesses have provided, it seems that InterTradeIreland has a greater rural spread than the other agencies which support business. Given the implications of Brexit, is there any urban-rural divide such that rural companies appear to be less prepared or better prepared? Will it have a greater impact on them because they are based in rural areas of Mayo, Fermanagh or wherever else?

Another sector of which I have experience is the audio-visual sector. There has been a great deal of North-South co-operation, in particular with the work that has been done through TG4 and both film funds North and South and because we are almost branding ourselves as an audio-visual island where it is good to come to make feature films or TV series. Does InterTradeIreland support many small audio-visual companies or other companies in that sphere? If so, are there particular implications for them? Obviously, there are different regulations, rules and guidelines from a broadcasting perspective which can be complicated to navigate, especially with the platforms changing. It is not just terrestrial television anymore. People are on satellite platforms and everything is merging into new media, online and smart phones. Will it be much more complicated for companies to navigate all of that where one partner company is in the EU and one is outside?

It is shocking to see that 98% of companies almost appear to have their heads in the sand as regards Brexit even at this late stage. There is almost a sense that they are hoping it will not happen. It is stark when figures like that are mentioned.

Another sector that strikes me is fish food. I have certain connections with the fishing industry and an interest in the sector as I come from a coastal community. There is obviously huge potential in the area of processing and marketing our fish which can be done on an all-island basis. Are there implications in that regard? Fishermen are concerned about quota changes and access to the raw material before one even talks about the added value.

Is there any difference in the level of preparation among companies in the North as compared to the South? Are the companies in the Six Counties more aware of the implications of Brexit than those in the Twenty-six Counties or vice versa? I might come back with a few more questions afterwards.

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: I will speak first to the urban-rural divide. Many of the companies we deal with are in the manufacturing, engineering and services sectors. As Mr. Gough mentioned, 85% of them will have tariffs of 10% or less even in the worst-case scenario. That would encompass

nearly all of the companies we deal with and it could be quite low for many of these companies. In rural areas, there tend to be a lot of engineering type projects because they tend to be farm-based in the first instance. People tend to be more inventive when dealing with problems and coming up with solutions in that regard. We do not anticipate that the scenario would be worse for rural rather than urban companies. Much of the stuff in the urban setting tends to be more technology oriented. The split between them does not have any negative consequences, one versus the other.

We have not had many projects come across our path from the audio-visual sector with a North-South angle. A project has to have a real connection in that we are exporting a service, North or South. It is very important to get those relationships, which tend to be quite low in what has come across our book so far.

Senator Ó Clochartaigh also mentioned fish food. We deal with companies that process fish and have had some notable successes with companies in terms of packaging. Some of our FUSION graduates have developed fantastic solutions for fish processing companies. It is one area where, if tariffs were to be applied, the process itself effectively helps to reduce those quite considerably. A raw product versus one that has been developed with, say, someone in our FUSION programme will be quite considerably different and will have a much lower tariff. When we speak of tariffs, I should explain that there are thousands of tariffs. There are 375 different tariffs for fish alone. There is quite a comprehensive range of tariffs. That is why we are not definitive about any particular rates. There are many tariffs and it really is taken on a case-by-case basis.

There are great opportunities. We have dealt with companies dealing in both seaweed and fish. In particular, we have had fantastic successes in developing products. An example would be Oilean Glas Teo. in Donegal. Two people that were hand-harvesting seaweed made a product that makes grass very green. They could not get it into the Northern Ireland and UK markets. We got them a salesperson on the ground. To come to the end of the story, their clients now include all golf courses in Ireland, North and South, and most golf courses in the UK as well as Arsenal and Real Madrid and 12,000 golf courses in the United States. They have gone from employing two people to employing 23 people.

Those kinds of stories are important. They give people hope in that what might be small and humble beginnings can become quite significant in a local economy. There are a range of companies such as that one which have developed in Cork, Louth and Donegal, in particular companies dealing in fish products. Much of it is around the packaging and how it is done. There is a lot of technology involved in that. FUSION graduates can be helpful in that regard.

We encourage companies that are thinking of going along that road to contact us. We will see what we can do because it could be a very good response in dealing with any kind of adverse consequences that might come.

Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh: From what the witness is saying, it strikes me that these companies are not just competing against other companies on this island. They are also competing against competitors elsewhere in Europe. The manufacturing area is cutthroat as it is and margins are very low. To take a 10% tariff on certain companies, would adding that extra little bit make it much more difficult for the companies InterTradeIreland is dealing with when they are competing

with companies in France, Spain or Portugal?

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: We are encouraging companies to build relationships before anything happens and to develop a good relationship both with their customers and their suppliers. In some cases, there will be imports in the value chain that will be affected by Brexit in some way. We are telling companies to get familiar with their customers and to develop the relationship. Therefore, even if there are some adverse consequences, they may not lose the business simply because they have had to deal with a higher cost base. They will be known and trusted to give a good product or service. Now is a good time to build those relationships.

There are other programmes. Enterprise Ireland delivers Lean initiatives. They are very effective for slightly larger organisations. They can squeeze an awful lot of cost out of an organisation. These are the things we are telling people to consider and propel towards. We are not telling any company to give up and go away. If a company can diversify, that is well and good. However, often for SMEs the product or service that has been delivered is very much directed towards a reasonably local market. By local, I mean the UK or Ireland. It is not really transferable in a lot of cases to any other European country in a ready format. In that regard, we have to deal with what is in front of us and try to meet the challenge head on. That is why we put our Brexit advisory service in place. We will try to give a steady hand to anyone to guide them through it.

We are not alone. All State agencies have been active in this regard. Bord Bia is doing something for food companies and is helping people to navigate through that end of it. Enterprise Ireland is working with its particular clients. It deals with 3,500 companies. It is looking at companies that are exposed. Effectively, all the different State agencies work together and independently to try to help companies steer through this. We are confident that the concerns companies have can be addressed, by and large, and can be navigated fairly reasonably through all of this.

Mr. Aidan Gough: In terms of the question about a rural-urban differential impact and the lack of preparation among businesses, there is no rural-urban divide. However, our research and others have pointed out that the products which are most at risk are in the agrifood sector, which is the sector that is most at risk. Agrifood industry is predominantly found in rural areas and there is a much bigger proportion of the community in employment in it in those rural areas. There is a potential differential impact there in that regard.

Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh: That InterTradeIreland has a certain relationship with regard EU funding was touched on. Apart from that, how many of InterTradeIreland's client companies north of the Border would have a dependency on or some form of an income stream from EU funding of some sort? They may be primary producers that are availing of CAP moneys or whatever or other research funding, etc. How do the witnesses see that impacting on their businesses and their ability to produce at a reasonable cost base and to innovate given the funds they may have got to do research or product development of whatever from a European perspective? Even from an education point of view, people living in the North will not be able to avail of some of the Erasmus opportunities to study in other European countries where there may be expertise in a particular area or field. Do the witnesses see that having an impact on the resources, that is, the

people working in the companies that InterTradeIreland is working with?

Mr. Aidan Gough: We are very focused on businesses. Their greatest exposure is in terms of access to research and development funding from Europe. As I stated, at the minute we are still seeing businesses trying to access these funds. If those funds are not there, they will not be able to access them.

Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh: Is there a danger that some of them would move across the Border just so they could avail of that? Then InterTradeIreland would be left with fewer connections, North-South, that it can work with.

Mr. Aidan Gough: We are encouraging every business to start planning now and to take whatever action it requires to ensure that cross-Border trade continues to grow. It has been growing at more than 4% per annum for the past 20 years and bringing the benefits Mr. Hunter McGowan mentioned.

Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh: Another area that has been examined is all-island labelling. I know Michelle O'Neill was working on it with the Minister, Deputy Coveney, particularly around agricultural products, etc. Do the witnesses think Brexit will have an impact on the potential to do that? At the moment we are all subject to the same EU regulations as regards foodstuffs, the quality of food and what one can eat, etc. If, post-Brexit, Britain starts to change certain regulations around foodstuffs, does it make it much more difficult to have all-island labelling in any food area?

Therefore, do we lose the unique selling point that we might have with an all-island labelling potential?

Mr. Aidan Gough: In our research into the impact on business, we have been surprised at the potential impact of non-tariff barriers on top of tariff barriers. In fact, the initial results would suggest that they could more than double the impact. At the minute, we are beginning with a level playing field because all of the regulation is coming from the European Union and Britain is part of it. If Britain decides to diverge in any way from the EU standards, that will have cost implications for any business that wants to export into Britain and vice versa.

Chairman: I wish to ask a question. I do not want to misquote Mr. McGowan and Mr. Gough in the future. A total of 98% of the businesses on the island of Ireland that InterTrade Ireland has surveyed have not made plans for how to deal with Brexit. Is that a fair comment?

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: Yes.

Mr. Aidan Gough: Three quarterly surveys in a row came up with that figure.

Chairman: That is astounding. With regard to supply chains, much of the debate at this meeting has been symbolised by the fact that the likes of the milk industry has supply chains criss-crossing the Border. Has there been any study carried out to see how they break down on the basis of tariffs and non-tariff barriers?

Mr. Aidan Gough: Yes. We are looking at it as the next stage because supply chains are important. On paying cross-Border tariffs, it will all have to be subject to negotiations. However, a

company might be able to decide when to pay tariffs. It might not have to pay them every time product crosses the Border. They might be paid on the final product. It is an issue at which we are thinking of looking as the next stage of the research. It is about mapping supply chains across the Border.

Chairman: Even non-tariff barriers would be problematic. For example, if Britain was to allow more GM crops into the agricultural scene and producers in the South of Ireland wanted to export non-GM milk, surely that would pull the supply chain asunder?

Mr. Aidan Gough: Yes. As I said, non-tariff barriers could have a very significant impact. The North and the South are more or less on a level playing field in terms of regulations. However, if Britain leaves the European Union and decides to come up with its own regulations in certain sectors, that will have an impact.

Chairman: For sure. On export pathways into the European Union, there is a big chunk of exports that travel through Britain to elsewhere in the Union. That is potentially going to become more complex owing to customs and excise regulations. Has there been any work done or developments in that regard?

Mr. Aidan Gough: The haulage associations have been co-operating and looking at it as a factor. A figure they have been using is that for every minute's delay there is a cost of about £3 or €3. I will find out the exact figure.

Chairman: Were they able to estimate the typical delays they could expect to see?

Mr. Aidan Gough: No.

Mr. Thomas Hunter McGowan: In terms of non-tariff barriers, we have talked about labelling, supply chains and so on. It would involve things like certificates of origin, shipping documentation and the customs documentation required, which are quite substantial. Effectively, even if there were no or very low tariffs, if all of these requirements were to be met, there could still be an impact which could be very significant for SMEs, in particular.

Chairman: Most of the work done on the TTIP and the CETA was designed to focus on non-tariff rather than tariff barriers. We are told billions of euro of extra trade would result from these agreements.

Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh: I have a question, although it may be one for the unions more than for InterTradeIreland. It is about the impact on the cost of labour. Has any research been carried out in that regard? There is a thought that it will be a race to the bottom if Britain moves away from the European Union and that the liberalisation of the markets will lead to a pushing down of the wages paid to workers, etc. Some say it would have a positive impact for some companies because their production costs would be lower, but I wonder if any research has been carried out in that regard.

Mr. Aidan Gough: Ulster University has just completed a piece of research in looking at the potential impact of Brexit on Border counties and regions. On labour costs, one of the most significant issues is the availability of migrant labour. The Ulster University research shows that

50% of the migrant labourers who come to Northern Ireland live and work in Border communities. I think 20% of the migrant labourers who come to the Republic of Ireland live and work in Border counties. There could be a significant impact.

Chairman: I thank Mr. McGowan and Mr. Gough for coming. It was really appreciated. I wish them great success in their work in the future. They are in a greater position to provide support. I have made the argument a number of times in their presence, although they obviously cannot take a policy view on it, that InterTradeIreland should have far more investment and far more staff and should be allowed to do far more work. We want to see far more of the performance indicators described. We wish Mr. McGowan and Mr. Gough good luck in that regard.

The joint committee adjourned at 5.20 p.m. until 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday, 24 May 2017.

27. COMMITTEE DEBATE, 12 DECEMBER 2018 - CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES

AN COMHCHOISTE UM FHORBAIRT TUAITHE AGUS POBAIL

JOINT COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Dé Céadaoin, 12 Nollaig 2018

Wednesday, 12 December 2018

The Joint Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Michael Collins,

Deputy Martin Kenny,

Deputy Willie Penrose,

Deputy Niamh Smyth,

Senator Grace O'Sullivan.

In attendance: Deputies Declan Breathnach and Fergus O'Dowd.

DEPUTY JOE CAREY IN THE CHAIR.

27.1. EFFECTS OF BREXIT ON BORDER REGION: DISCUSSION

Chairman: I have received apologies from Deputy Fitzmaurice. At the outset I remind members, staff, witnesses and those in the Public Gallery to turn off their mobile phones. Mobile phones interfere with the sound system and make it difficult for the parliamentary reporters to report the meeting as well as affecting the television broadcast and web stream.

I draw the attention of witnesses to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to so do, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I advise that any submissions, opening statements or other documents supplied by the witnesses to the committee will be published on the committee website after the meeting. Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the House or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

The committee is meeting today to discuss the matter of supporting communities and sustaining small rural businesses within the Border region after Brexit. I welcome the following witnesses to the

committee: from the Centre for Cross Border Studies, Dr. Anthony Soares, deputy director; from the East Border Region, Ms Pamela Arthurs, chief executive; from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, NILGA, Councillor Seamus Doyle, a member of the NILGA executive, and Ms Lisa O’Kane, programme manager; from the Rural Community Network, Mr. Aidan Campbell, policy and public affairs; and from the Irish Central Border Area, Mr. Shane Campbell, chief executive. It is proposed that the opening statements and any other documents supplied by the witnesses to the committee be published on the committee website after the meeting. Is that agreed? Agreed.

This is an appropriate time to consider the risks to the Border region, particularly in terms of rural and community development. After the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union two and a half years ago, it is still not clear what Brexit actually means in practice. The withdrawal agreement and a political declaration may or may not be agreed by the United Kingdom Parliament.

There are basic scenarios in relation to Brexit. There will be a soft Brexit with a withdrawal agreement and a transition period, there will be a hard Brexit without a withdrawal agreement, meaning that the UK would basically crash out of the EU, or there will be no Brexit at all. There is no good Brexit so we are trying to get the best possible outcome for all of this island and for the EU as a whole. An added difficulty is that there is no functioning Executive in Northern Ireland.

We should always remember that policies on one side of the Border can have serious effects on the other side of the Border. There have been successes, such as the PEACE IV programme, which funds actions that promote social and economic stability in Northern Ireland and the Border region of Ireland and is co-funded by the EU and the Irish and UK Governments. Some €240 million will be invested by the EU, Ireland and the UK over the programme period. When there is co-operation between both sides, both sides can benefit. A good example was rural transport with the joint control of the Great Northern Railway in the 1950s by both Governments North and South. Later in the 1960s, the Northern Ireland Government closed all cross-Border railways except the Dublin-Belfast line. Consequently, there are no railway lines in counties Donegal, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Cavan and Monaghan and there is no railway line anywhere between Derry and Mullingar.

The committee looks forward to enhanced co-operation at local and regional level. We are interested in hearing the views of representatives here today on how we can mitigate the risks to the Border region and how we can enhance rural and community development. The joint committee looks forward to the witnesses’ contribution to policy formation in the area of rural and community development in the Border region. As the committee has agreed to publish the witnesses’ opening statements, perhaps they can focus on the main points and speak for three to five minutes. I also suggest that members limit their questions to between three and five minutes. I call Dr. Soares, deputy director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, to make his opening statement.

Dr. Anthony Soares: On behalf of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, I thank the Chairman and members of this committee for the invitation to meet on the subject of supporting communities and sustaining small rural business within the Border region after Brexit. As the Chairman referred to, even as we rapidly approach the date on which the United Kingdom will officially leave the European Union, it is still unclear as to what the scale and nature of the impact will be on Border communities

and businesses. What is at stake here is not only the economic future of communities and small rural businesses in the Border region but also, if not properly mitigated, is social cohesion within the Border region after Brexit.

Brexit will not alter the fact that the United Kingdom will remain a co-guarantor, along with Ireland, of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. That means that, in terms of maintaining the conditions for North-South co-operation that will assist in supporting communities and small rural businesses in the Border region post Brexit, the UK Government must not shirk that responsibility to a non-operational Northern Ireland Assembly or Executive.

To support communities and small rural businesses in the Border region fully post Brexit, it is essential that EU funding for North-South and cross-Border co-operation is secured for the next programming period. However, we, the Centre for Cross Border Studies, are concerned that although the European Commission's fact sheet on the protocol on Ireland-Northern Ireland in the withdrawal agreement refers to the "continuation of PEACE and INTERREG for Northern Ireland and the border regions of Ireland beyond 2020 under a single programme PEACE PLUS", the political declaration on future UK-EU relations refers simply to the UK and EU's "shared commitment to delivering a future PEACE PLUS programme to sustain work on reconciliation and a shared future in Northern Ireland". There is no reference here to the Border counties of Ireland. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that legal guarantees are given that any future PEACE PLUS programme will encompass the Border counties of Ireland and will be a significant contribution, of at least 15% of any total budget, to cross-Border co-operation.

Given the potential of the current LEADER programme to support cross-Border co-operation activities in relation to rural development, it is also important that a similar support is provided in the post-Brexit context, either as part of any proposed PEACE PLUS programme or as a discrete programme supportive of rural development as one of the areas of North-South co-operation identified as part of the North-South co-operation mapping exercise.

Those are some of the headline issues in supporting communities and small rural businesses in the Border region following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. Many imponderables still exist due to the unstable political landscape in Westminster, meaning that we cannot be sure of the kind of Brexit we will be left with, or whether we will have any Brexit at all. Whatever the case, I assure the committee that the Centre for Cross Border Studies will remain committed to supporting, promoting and advocating for cross-Border co-operation as part of the ongoing process of peace and reconciliation, and as a means of providing practical benefits to communities and businesses on both sides of the Border.

Chairman: I thank Dr. Soares. I now call on Ms Pamela Arthurs to make her presentation.

Ms Pamela Arthurs: In the first instance, I again thank the Chairman and committee for inviting me here today to discuss the theme, supporting communities and sustaining small rural business within the Border region after Brexit. I am accompanied by the chairman of the East Border Region, EBR, Councillor Aidan Campbell, from Monaghan County Council, and the vice chairman, Alderman Arnold Hatch, from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

Let me first briefly explain the organisation. The EBR, is a local authority led cross-Border organisation. It is one of the few genuinely cross-Border organisations on the island of Ireland, comprising three local authorities in Ireland, Louth, Monaghan and Meath county councils, and three in Northern Ireland, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, and Ards and North Down Borough Council. The east coast area between Dublin and Belfast is covered by the cross-Border organisation. The mission statement is simple but comprehensive, namely, to promote cross-Border economic development which benefits the people of the region.

The EBR was formed in 1976. It is one of the oldest genuinely cross-Border organisations and it has always worked under the backdrop of the European Union. The initial impetus for co-operation came from locally elected politicians on both sides of the Border who realised that there would be mutual benefit to working together. That was the case in spite of the hostile political climate at the time. However, it was only since the introduction of the EU INTERREG programme in 1990 that the EBR made a difference in that it had money for cross-Border co-operation. With our colleague organisations, the EBR has drawn down millions of euro for a host of projects which have benefited communities and small rural businesses along the Border corridor. Let us be honest: the majority of the Border corridor is rural. I have a brochure which outlines the scope of the current work. The projects we are working on reach a total budget of €91 million. They are all genuine cross-Border projects funded through the INTERREG programme and working on both sides of the Border.

The Co-Innovate project is one example of a project funded by the INTERREG programme. InterTradeIreland leads the large strategic SME project which will complete in 2022. The aim of Co-Innovate is to assist 1,409 small businesses in the Border region and west coast of Scotland. We all know the Border region is dominated by small rural businesses, especially micro business, which have fewer than ten employees. They require assistance not only to create new jobs, which is important, but also to sustain existing jobs.

There is no doubt the myriad EU-funded projects which have been drawn down have significantly contributed to the growth of Border business over the past 25 years, but there is still work to be done.

Brexit will be a game changer. What Brexit has done is to highlight many needs which exist in the Border area as well as causing problems in the future. Small rural businesses have already been affected, especially in Ireland. The drastic fall in sterling after the referendum and the ongoing uncertainty around Brexit, which has dominated our landscape since the vote 12 in June 2016, is not good for business. Coupled with the lack of a Government in Northern Ireland, it is evident that Border businesses are suffering. While the Irish Government has put in place measures to support rural business, the same opportunities do not exist for businesses in Northern Ireland.

I will now focus on what has been the local authority response to Brexit. In particular, given the absence of a Government in Northern Ireland, local authorities along the Border felt it necessary to articulate and lobby for the needs of the 1 million constituents of the Border region. The report, Brexit and the Border Corridor on the island of Ireland: Risks, Opportunities and Issues to Consider, was commissioned by the 11 local authorities which make up the Border corridor. The East Border

Region facilitated the report. Copies of the report can be made available to members of the committee. The report clearly identified that the economy of the Border region currently lags behind the economies of both Ireland and Northern Ireland. It also outlines that the Border will be most detrimentally affected as a result of Brexit, that regional disparities exist along the Border and that areas most reliant on agriculture will suffer most. Also of note is that some farmers in Northern Ireland who receive 87% single farm payment are currently better off due to the decline in sterling because they receive their money in euro. The question is where this money will come from in the future. Some of the groups represented here today responded to a consultation by Westminster on a future UK prosperity fund to compensate for the lack of EU funding. Despite our efforts, the report hardly recognised the need to fund any cross-Border activity.

Mr. Dan O'Brien, chief economist in the Institute of International and European Affairs, IIEA, stated at a Brexit event in Dublin on 4 December 2018 that "whilst employment growth over all in Ireland is good, employment in the border region has faltered" since June 2016. That is a reflection of the damage Brexit has already done. Business in the region is less confident and more reluctant to expand as the future is so uncertain. Current developments at Westminster have compounded the problem. One can ask what local authorities can do. Local authorities on both sides of the Border have a duty of care to the citizens of the Border region.

Local elected members in Northern Ireland are the only political voice at present. Border local authorities want to work with both Governments to develop and propose creative solutions for Border management post Brexit. We want to be part of the solution, not the problem.

Local authorities have an excellent track record and have been working on a cross-Border basis for more than 40 years. It is a long time in one way but in another way it is not very long in terms of cross-Border co-operation. That is despite the political problems at a national level. To assist rural communities and business it is essential to address the structural weaknesses in the Border region. Intervention clearly is needed now. The report, *Brexit and the Border Corridor*, highlighted that. There is a requirement for upgrading infrastructure, both transport and broadband, as this would assist connectivity in the region. We also need ongoing business support measures to assist business prepare for and deal with the impact. Again, the Government is doing a great deal of work with businesses in the South, but in the North there is not so much. However, InterTradeIreland is in Northern Ireland. We need to focus on relevant skills levels in the region as well.

A Brexit transition programme along the lines of the EU Territorial Co-operation programme, INTERREG, would assist the Border region to start to adapt to the challenges of Brexit. This needs to be broad-based as Brexit will impact on every sector.

In respect of the continuation of EU funding programmes to assist the communities, Northern Ireland is not at a stage where it can do without the intervention. We have progressed by along way, but work still needs to be done.

Mitigating risks, taking opportunities, or both, will mean by necessity defending some of what is in place, for example, the funding streams, but it will also mean that some things will have to change. The Border corridor, with its peripheral position, already lags behind, and we need to break the past patterns. New policy, new thinking and new methods of co-operation and partnership between local

authorities and central government will be important as we cannot do it on our own, and this will be essential for Border management in the wake of Brexit.

The success of any future regime for the management of the Border will be judged not only on how well it answers the political and economic dilemmas caused to the region by Brexit, but also how far it allows the current level of co-dependence across Border areas to continue. Any solution must be bottom up, that is, coming from the people, needs-based, and driven and delivered locally. I thank the members and witnesses for listening.

Chairman: I thank Ms Arthurs. I call Councillor Seamus Doyle of the NILGA. As time is limited, I ask Mr. Doyle to make the key points.

Mr. Seamus Doyle: I am a member of NILGA and a member of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, and Banbridge Council before that.

The Northern Ireland Local Government Association, NILGA, is the only functioning cross-party political body in Northern Ireland at present. Throughout the hiatus in regional government at Stormont, NILGA has sought to build consensus and represent all of Northern Ireland's main political parties at local government level in Westminster, Dublin and Brussels.

Northern Ireland's councils have built a strong track record in delivering economic growth and fostering peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The Border corridor in particular will be the region most affected by Brexit and its outworkings, and we are working intently to prepare our councils and to attempt to minimise any negative effects for local areas.

Brexit is a major concern for our councils. We are all too familiar with the risks we are facing, namely, the unbinding of our close ties with our neighbours on an economic and social level which will widen the gap between our communities and impinge on our way of life. Different rules and regulations are creating havoc for business, the environment and ordinary people which will create difficult conditions for our small businesses and tourists, resulting in a downturn in our economies. There will be pressure on our agriculture, health, manufacturing and hospitality sectors. In this difficult situation we find ourselves in, our communities and councils, however, will find ways to continue our strong tradition of co-operation. We are feeling optimistic about the future of cross-Border co-operation following recent meetings with the regional assemblies in Brussels and follow-up meetings at home, and we are planning future collaborative work together. This will include sharing information and tools to ensure local authorities North and South are prepared for Brexit. We are embedding entrepreneurialism in our local authorities and investigating joint opportunities for training and development. We are building regional relationships to improve cross-Border development and regeneration.

In economic policy terms, the emergence of city and growth deals can be a real game changer for Northern Ireland. NILGA's paper of May 2018 highlights the interconnectedness of our economies, in particular the links with the national development plan and the cross-Border linkages with the Derry and Newry areas. Indeed in the hinterland of the Derry city region, 40% of the population lives in Donegal.

It goes without saying that investment in one jurisdiction will reap benefits for the entire region, whether that be investment in jobs, broadband, education or infrastructure. This is what we must focus on to ensure growth of the entire island.

I thank the committee for their attention, and my colleague, Ms Lisa O'Kane, will address any questions from the committee.

Chairman: I thank Councillor Doyle and I call Mr. Aidan Campbell, from the policy and public affairs office of the Rural Community Network.

Mr. Aidan Campbell: I thank the Chair and members for the invitation to meet them. The Rural Community Network is an NGO, a voluntary and community organisation with 250 member groups across Northern Ireland. Our main areas of interest are rural and community development.

In terms of the issues the committee is addressing today, many Border communities are on the periphery of both jurisdictions and citizens need to be better connected to opportunity, either locally or in major towns and cities. Many of these communities are still recovering from the legacy of the conflict. Broadband connectivity and a decent road network are a prerequisite to encourage young people to remain in, or return to, these rural communities. The closure of public services can lead to a vicious circle where young people and young families see no future in those communities, leading to further decline.

Government, North and South needs to put in place policies and programmes that sustain North-South networking and co-operation. Brexit and the absence of a functioning assembly and Executive risks regressing into back-to-back development, which will further marginalise Border communities.

The 2014-2020 Northern Ireland rural development programme is worth up to £623 million. Some £70 million in the current programme is allocated to the LEADER programme. The EU rural development programme has been a key policy driver as well as providing a ring-fenced funding pot that can only be spent on development of rural communities. As of now, it is unclear what replaces the rural development programme post Brexit.

The Good Friday Agreement identified the PEACE programme, INTERREG and LEADER II and their successor programmes as areas of potential North South co-operation. The UK-EU withdrawal agreement recognises the need to protect the 1998 agreement "in all its parts". It states that both Governments will honour their commitments to the PEACE and INTERREG funding programmes and that the possibilities for future support will be examined favourably.

It is of concern to Rural Community Network and other rural stakeholders that specific reference to the LEADER programme was omitted from the withdrawal agreement.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, DAERA, has established a Brexit rural society working group which has produced an issues paper. In the view of RCN, however, Northern Ireland has barely started discussing what a future policy or programme for rural development post Brexit will look like. Our concern is that rural development is very far down the agenda among the myriad other issues affected by Brexit, and none of this is helped the absence of a functioning assembly.

In spite of the problems, there are opportunities. Agriculture and rural development are devolved matters and a functioning assembly could shape any future rural development policy to rural communities and reduce bureaucracy. The Northern Ireland Executive has committed significant matching funding from the Northern Ireland block grant in previous programme periods. It will not be beginning from a standing start, therefore, in funding a successor rural development programme. Any new programmes must complement the LEADER programme in the Border counties, both North and South, to enable learning, sharing and important co-operation projects to continue.

Chairman: I thank Mr. Aidan Campbell and now call Mr. Shane Campbell, chief executive of the Irish Central Border Area Network.

Mr. Shane Campbell: I thank the committee for the opportunity to engage with it. I also thank Dr. Soares and the Centre for Cross Border Studies for facilitating the engagement.

The Irish Central Border Area Network, ICBAN, is another local authority led cross-Border partnership. We cover the area known as the central Border region and the eight council areas of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid-Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo. It is a predominantly rural area with few large settlements, and small businesses are the backbone of the economy. It is recognised that Brexit represents the greatest challenge to cross-Border co-operation since the Troubles. Joint studies between ICBAN and Queen's University have identified uncertainties already impacting on the lives of Border citizens and businesses and that the most important community consideration is protecting the hard-won peace.

No one knows what Brexit will bring, but on the understanding it will create change, I will make some comments on supporting and sustaining communities and small businesses in the area post Brexit.

There is a continuing need to ensure free movement of people, goods and services. In the rural community context this includes ensuring access to health and education services. Brexit has challenged communication in the area. Therefore, it is vitally important to prioritise North-South and cross-Border co-operation regardless of Brexit outcomes and, in so doing, to help work against any drift to back-to-back development again. For example, in reference to the national development plan and the planning framework and in the absence of a regional development strategy review in Northern Ireland, cognisance should be taken of the fact that, through local development plans, Northern Ireland councils are reaching out to their neighbours.

Connectivity infrastructure is critical to enabling access to services. This includes both digital communications and roads-based transportation. Delivering on the national broadband plan ambitions is critical for rural Border communities. As active commentators on the subject, we encourage an alternative solution to be found if the national broadband plan cannot be advanced further to delivery in its current format.

Strategic road corridors are vital for transportation access and movement. It is vital and would be helpful if both Governments formally recommitted to the long-planned N2-A5 Dublin to Derry dual carriageway project.

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

The importance of the A4-N16 Sligo to Ballygawley and Belfast route is important for east-west navigation and needs support from both Governments.

There are many successful examples where Government has helped to spur on a renewed regional economy. The central Border region would benefit from such bespoke intervention to complement local leadership and initiatives being taken there.

While national Government attention is focused on Brexit, the delivery of local services must continue to be a priority. Local authorities from both sides of the Border must be supported to engage through community planning with its focus on the economic and social elements of well-being. Continued direct interventions into promoting co-operation are needed, through the delivery of PEACE, INTERREG and LEADER funds in arrangements between the UK and EU or, in the absence of these, ensuring they are directly replaced. These supports have been vital for communities and businesses of the region. They should include provision for the softer people-to-people and community-based initiatives, to help maintain good relations, alongside infrastructure supports. There should also be support for the revitalisation of Border towns and villages which have been in persistent decline.

Government, telecoms providers and the regulator must ensure that inadvertent roaming charges are not reintroduced, which would disenfranchise Border region communities as a consequence of the UK planning to leave the digital Single Market.

Chairman: I mentioned earlier that the witnesses will give an information session in the audiovisual room at 11 o'clock, so it is our aim to get out of here before that point. I will call members in the order in which they indicated. I call Deputy Breathnach.

Deputy Declan Breathnach: I thank the Chairman and members for their indulgence. I am not a member of the committee. Normally members of the committee speak first, but I have another meeting to attend at 10.30 a.m. I hope to meet the witnesses in the audiovisual room later.

I welcome the delegation. I pay tribute to local councillors right across the Border region, the management of local authorities and the managers of the programmes on their efforts. I smiled when Ms Arthurs referred to the INTERREG programme starting in 1990. I remember an MEP talking about it in the Leinster region in a very strange accent and we thought he was talking about Easter eggs. That was in the late 1980s when the programme was being introduced and we were made aware of the great benefits it would bring to the Border region. There is no doubt that the impact of the INTERREG and PEACE programmes, in addition to what local authorities have been doing, has been enormous.

The Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement has been looking at having the witnesses appear at the committee again to discuss this issue.

It is clear everybody is making a concerted effort and has made sure the additional moneys available to the Border region are best spent. I am a former member of a Border region local authority and was a local public representative for 25 years. The additional funding in rural Border regions, particularly in my area of Louth, which I can speak for specifically - I am sure other members will speak for their own area - has been very beneficial to peace, prosperity and the sense

of co-operation. Despite the fact that management was always engaging throughout the Troubles, too many people, including councillors, had their backs to each other. It has changed dramatically in my lifetime as a result of EU intervention and the PEACE programme moneys. We are in a huge vacuum at present.

I am coming to my question. In the context of Brexit, what can be done collectively in terms of the duty of care, the bottom-up approach and new policies from Government to ensure that, in a more extreme situation than we have ever found ourselves in, there is a specific programme? Dr. Soares referred to 15%.

The reality is when one is in a vacuum, one cannot plan. We have been told some of the programmes will be available until 2020.

I will finish on this point. Ms Gina McIntyre attended a committee meeting and spoke about extraterritorial programmes and programmes available between non-EU and EU countries. There are examples of those across Europe. Is action needed to have somebody within the EU programmes address the issue? What was happening in each of these particular bodies was lauded down the years in Europe. This is the most important point I will make this morning. The European Commission, the Commissioner at the time, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, and Colin Wolfe stated what was happening in the Border region was unique in Europe. They talked about 130 cross-territorial regions where this type of co-operation was not happening but it was happening in our region. Our region has benefited hugely from it.

I will leave it there. I have another meeting to attend so I will meet the witnesses later. What can be done by politicians to ensure either a new or enhanced programme delivers from Carlingford Lough to the tip of Donegal to ensure the region continues to prosper, because it will take a backward step if Brexit happens? That is the key question. Money speaks languages but the communities have suffered badly and continue to suffer. Despite the money that came in through the INTERREG and PEACE programmes, it has still not filtered down into communities, not only in the Border region but also in the more deprived areas of Belfast or Derry. How can we ensure that happens?

Chairman: The Deputy made his point very well. I call Deputy Smyth now and we will come back to the witnesses when she concludes.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I thank the delegations and welcome them. I hope they will not mind if I mention Councillor Aidan Campbell, who is from the same constituency as me. I am delighted to have all the witnesses here this morning. It is a milestone day for us nationally as a European country. The witnesses could not be here on a more appropriate day to keep the Border region firmly on the agenda. As somebody who is from Cavan-Monaghan, every day I see the positive influence from PEACE and INTERREG funding, cross-Border co-operation, and the difference that has made to towns such as Castleblayney, Clones, Belturbet and Ballyconnell which were war-torn, everybody wanted to leave and where people were afraid to live. Thankfully, the next generation of young people will not remember that.

I am concerned following the witnesses' presentations that there is a risk of all that unravelling. They have all mentioned the non-functioning of the Assembly in Stormont. Brexit looms large. Our

Government is focused on Brexit, as it has to be. That leaves the Border region in a vacuum. Where does that leave the witnesses' organisations? Who is flying their flag?

They are right to be here to fly the flag for a focused, co-ordinated task force that encompasses everything they are doing, with a significant focus on the Border region, on both sides of the Border, in Cavan, Monaghan, Meath, Sligo, Tyrone, Armagh and Fermanagh. There needs to be fast action because there is a risk in what has been happening since 2016 of all that good work unravelling. We do not want to go back to times where towns and villages were almost ghost towns, which they were 20 years ago. I am glad to have the witnesses here this morning to make the case that there is a need for urgency from the Government. It has to come from here. The Government has a job to do in flying the flag for the country in Europe but there has to be a focus on this.

The A5 and M3 motorway currently stop at Meath. We need to look at such infrastructure. Witnesses from Iarnród Éireann attended a meeting of this committee where we talked about the fact that we have no rail line. There seems to be a focus on the Dublin-Galway line and south of that. We are the forgotten half of the country. We have to bring back the focus to that area and to the need for the infrastructure about which the witnesses have talked here this morning, including the roads, rail and broadband. As Ms Arthurs said, that will ensure the connectivity is present and that the relationship stays strong. Following on from what my colleague has suggested, while we have a lot of information from the witnesses' presentations, what tangible measures would the witnesses like to see us, as a committee, bring forward that will benefit all of what they are doing and make sure they are on top of the agenda nationally for the Border region?

Dr. Anthony Soares: I will address what can be done collectively to ensure there is a specific programme post Brexit that will address the needs of communities in the Border region, including by this committee, Government and Departments. Ms Arthurs and other witnesses have alluded to it. It entails listening to the people and communities of the Border region who live and work there. I will give a specific example, which I can use as an opportunity to plug a project which is not EU-funded. It has alternative funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Community Relations Council in Northern Ireland and most recently the reconciliation funds from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, for which we are very grateful. Those funds are for a new common chapter project which is working with community groups from both sides of the Border. They have come up with their vision of what they want for co-operation, how we go about co-operating and what kinds of issues with co-operation they would like to see addressed.

They are about to link up with community groups in Scotland, England and Wales because they are conscious not just of the North-South element but of the east-west one too. That would fit in with the Good Friday Agreement.

If we are to respect all parts of the Good Friday Agreement in Brexit, since both the EU and UK Government have said they will protect it, it is not just about the institutions in Northern Ireland but also the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and the island of Ireland as a whole and Great Britain. Perhaps the committee will invite members of those community groups to present their draft common chapter to this committee. That might help.

With regard to the 15% that I mentioned, the Centre for Cross Border Studies, in two consultation responses to the current PEACE and INTERREG programmes, with specific reference to PEACE, noted the need to ring-fence at least 15% of that fund for cross-Border co-operation. We were afraid that because that programme, although it is a European territorial co-operation programme, has a derogation allowing projects funded from that to be in just one jurisdiction that, for very good reasons, many of those funds would be then spent in one jurisdiction and not support cross-Border co-operation. We are very concerned that we have ring-fencing for the part of the future PEACE PLUS programme that is a continuation of the current PEACE programme. INTERREG is truly cross-Border and we are unfortunately talking about a future PEACE PLUS programme where the INTERREG element will have lost part of what it currently contains, which is a connection between Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Border counties of Ireland in one INTERREG programme, and a connection between Wales and Ireland. Mr. Campbell and others have referred to the lack of definition about where LEADER fits into the future of this. Committee members can promote the voices of people in the region, support them in what they are trying to do with their vision for co-operation, and help us to pay close attention to what is coming with the future PEACE PLUS programme. Ms Arthurs also alluded to paying close attention to the UK Government's proposed UK shared prosperity fund and the fact that it, as a replacement for EU structural funds, seems to ignore that structural funds fund cross-Border co-operation.

Ms Pamela Arthurs: If we are to be serious about assisting the Border, we have to do more. It has to be more strategic and has to involve the Irish Government, at the highest levels, working in conjunction with Northern Ireland. It could involve working with the Secretary of State to say that we need to be strategic and focus on the Border area. If one looks at the INTERREG programmes, PEACE PLUS proposes €250 million in total. It is nothing for the extant needs. There needs to be a strategic intervention. If EU funding is taken out of cross-Border activity, no one will fund it. There is a small amount of money from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and that is all. It has never been taken seriously. We have been always working against the tide with regard to cross-Border co-operation.

We have been lauded across Europe, as the Deputy said, but we have not been lauded at home and the Border corridor lags behind. Our young people have been leaving.

This is perhaps an opportunity to properly focus and take a strategic approach to address the needs. We did something similar in the past so this is not new. The first two INTERREG programmes were centralised. All the decisions were made in Dublin and Belfast. People here were deciding what our needs were. There should be a bottom-up approach to requirements. For the INTERREG III programme, all our members said they wanted to make decisions. We did that at local level. We set up an action team involving Dublin and Belfast. We had a government then. It was from our two finance Ministers in Belfast and Dublin and relevant people along the Border who could speak for the Border. The elected members there have a mandate and they have the only mandate in Northern Ireland at the moment. As such, it is not reinventing the wheel. It can be done but it needs the Governments to say at the highest levels that they recognise our worry that notwithstanding all the talk about the Border, we will be left to fend for ourselves after it is sorted in whatever way. There is something that can be done which is tangible and will make a difference but it needs to start now.

So many businesses have closed, in particular on this side of the Border. These are small and micro businesses including, for example, companies in the mushroom industry. They are going now. We need to look at this but there is no point if we do not do so on a cross-Border basis. Cross-Border is not easy but it makes sense.

Mr. Shane Campbell: The Border region will be probably the EU area most affected by Brexit, whatever may happen. We see change happening and we anticipate further challenges along the way. To that, we must add the fact that the Border region had pre-existing issues before Brexit which have yet to be addressed. Ms Arthurs is absolutely right as are Deputies Smyth and Breathnach. There is a need for a high-level intervention in the cross-Border region. INTERREG, PEACE and LEADER have all been very important and we do not want to see them end. However, they have been sticking-plaster solutions on an area and issue which is huge. It needs that sustainable prosperity plan for once and for all. We did not get that after the 1998 agreement and we did not see that direct delivery after peace. We have not built on that which is why the challenges remain. While there is a need for a task force, when we ask the Governments for it, we are told, "We need to see local leadership. It has to be self-help and bottom-up." We are evidence of the fact that is happening.

Our seminar later will detail the projects we are implementing. We are taking the local initiative and doing what we can. The national development plan prioritises support for the north-west and east Border areas. That is brilliant. It is good to see that happening in the Border region.

However, to make a personal pitch, those of us in the central Border region note that it does not feature to the same extent in national plans. There must be a resolution to that.

Deputy Martin Kenny: I thank the witnesses for their contributions this morning. I am very conscious in particular of the work of ICBAN in my region in Leitrim where cross-Border work has been taking place for many years. It has had a huge impact and been very positive for many communities and various sectors, including for local authorities, health services and all of those areas which have benefitted. I think of this from the perspective of the Border region which I know so well. In Pettigo half of premises are boarded up. I go right around from there to Kiltyclogher and Swanlinbar. If one drove through Swanlinbar this morning, one would see that there is not much in it. It is the same if one crosses the Border and goes to Kinawley. There is not much there either. The Border was drawn along county boundaries, which in a lot of cases meant simply a ditch or a drain somewhere. It is not a natural border such as one finds between two countries like the massive river between France and Germany or a mountain range somewhere else. It is a very unnatural border. The natural thing to happen is to have it all the one. For that reason, there has been a particular impact on the communities that live there.

The real problem is the sense of stagnation which Brexit has deepened. Stagnation has been present in many parts of rural Ireland on both sides of the Border for many years, but it has been particularly the case in the Border region. People who want to take risks and have an idea they want to bring forward face and have faced for the past number of years a lack of support from the traditional providers of finance like banks while the Government has, because of Brexit, backed away considerably. They come to people like the witnesses but whatever help they can provide has,

again, been smothered by Brexit. That is the reality. We have to overcome that sense of stagnation. How do we move that forward? How do we change that mindset? While the funding which has come through the years has been very welcome and made a huge difference, it has never been enough. I take Mr. Campbell's point about a sticking plaster. It has been always just enough to manage. Every couple of months some project was rolled out and the idea was that it looked good. To make a seismic shift and to change gear requires a major investment and major ideas and a total change as to where we are at.

Until Brexit is sorted out, we will not be in a position to resolve that. That is the reality. Let us be honest here. Brexit has totally destroyed the potential that was there. The fact that the assembly in the North is not operating is certainly a huge problem. There is no point denying or hiding from that. It has to be sorted out.

However, both Governments, which are guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement from which all of this flows, have a responsibility to do what it takes to make that seismic shift and to change gear. Brexit really sharpens the mind and focus as to where the problems are and what needs to be done. We need some plan with a budget to say what will happen over five years, not 40 years, for these communities. Four out of five young people in places like Swanlinbar and Kinawley on both sides of the Border have had to emigrate for the past 50 years. That has been the answer to their problems and it will continue to be unless we change things.

I welcome the witnesses again and I acknowledge the presentation they intend to make later. I do not have any questions for them really. It is important on the day that is in it, given what is happening internationally, that we are here to look at the part of the world and the communities which will be most impacted by Brexit. We must send a strong message from the committee that both Governments must step up to the mark with solutions. I am guilty of it myself, but we are all talking about the problem. Finding the solutions is difficult but we have to engage to make it happen.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I thank the witnesses for their presentations. I am sorry I am late but I was at another meeting. The uncertainty caused by Brexit allied to the non-operation of the executive in Northern Ireland are two significant issues which the witnesses have highlighted and crystallised for us this morning. They have given us a wake-up call on the real impact of Brexit. However, Deputy Martin Kenny is right that until that matter is finalised, everyone is in a bit of a vacuum. One is hazarding guesses. While the Governments are focused on the resolution associated with Brexit, everything else will stand still. We have a lost decade also on foot of the economic downturn that affected this island and countries across the world. It was especially severe within this island.

I was aware of the INTERREG funding in the region. I come from the midlands but a lot of the towns referred to this morning are only up the road and I could reach them within an hour. I was struck by the point a witness made that LEADER funding may well be falling between the cracks, which is an issue that must be highlighted and grasped. At minimum, there is a necessity to ring-fence funding for cross-Border projects. As an agriculture spokesman, I saw the immediate impact of the Brexit vote two years ago on the mushroom industry and other parts of the sector.

It was significant and some of the farmers involved were almost wiped out. Deputy Kenny and I were involved with a number of them and we saw the impact it had.

We have a huge export base in the mushroom industry and if one looks further afield, one of the areas about which we are worried involves cheddar cheese. We have a huge volume of that moving across the Border.

I come from a rural area and what has resonated most with me this morning is what has been said about the impact of rural depopulation and decline. There is an epidemic in that regard across the island. Do the witnesses know of any specific measures that are required to deal with the rampant decline of small towns, villages and communities across the Border region? The situation is symptomatic of what is occurring across the island. There is a challenge with outward migration. People are gravitating to towns. The situation becomes self-fulfilling because big industry, such as those in the pharmaceutical or healthcare areas, gravitate towards colleges. That is great for the towns concerned. Dundalk has done well in that regard, which is a tremendous achievement. That is wonderful, but given the challenge of dealing with the threats posed by Brexit, can the witnesses outline any specific policy measures or resources that are required to stem the tide? That is important because areas are nothing without people and people will not be there unless we provide gainful employment for them as close as possible to those areas. One cannot have an industry in every town. It is like people arguing the case for having a small hospital in every town. That is a nonsensical approach. The point was made about connectivity and broadband which allow people to operate small businesses from their homes. Such infrastructure could allow people to create two or three jobs per business and although they are small in number they are critical to the survival and sustainability of rural communities.

Chairman: I thank Deputy Penrose. He asked a specific question about the measures that are required to halt the decline in small rural towns and villages. Ms O’Kane has indicated that she would like to speak. All the witnesses will have an opportunity to contribute and to summarise as we are approaching the end of the meeting. I invite Ms O’Kane to speak first.

Ms Lisa O’Kane: I am conscious of the time. We heard today and we hear everywhere we go about the real desire to maintain cross-Border collaboration. We now need the full commitment from the Governments and the EU. There is a history, tradition and spirit of co-operation but a sticking plaster approach has been taken. In the main, the co-operation has been driven by funding. With the emergence of city deals in most of the councils in the North of Ireland and the very clear cross-Border links with the regional, spatial and economic strategies the regional assemblies are driving, somebody needs to take a step back and to say that if we work together at this level and put in funding from the Governments on both sides of the Border there could be better complementarity that would address many of the infrastructural issues that have been raised by Mr. Aidan Campbell and some members this morning. The economic hinterlands of all of the councils in Northern Ireland extend across the Border and we all have shared objectives on economic growth. There needs to be something at that level and the co-operation needs to be mainstreamed. It cannot just be piecemeal.

Mr. Aidan Campbell: I will make a couple of quick points as I know we are running out of time. I agree with many of the points made by members this morning. We were asked what needs to be done to address rural depopulation. As Deputy Penrose indicated, connectivity is crucial to halt rural depopulation. Investment is required in road infrastructure, broadband and the type of connectivity that allows businesses to develop and thrive. The M1, which is close to me previously stopped in Dungannon and was extended as a dual carriageway to the Ballygawley roundabout, which is about 20 miles of roadway. The villages and businesses within a 15 mile radius of the road have increased in the past 15 to 20 years because they are more attractive as commuter towns for people working in Portadown, Craigavon and in the city. Opening up rural communities to an opportunity to connect is crucial. The businesses in those areas have grown. The promotion of and investment in connectivity is most important.

One specific thing the committee could do in the context of the LEADER programme is to write to officials in the Department, or even to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, DEFRA, in Westminster to ask about their future plans for a rural development programme. We do not have an equivalent committee currently in the North. As a neighbouring jurisdiction, Ireland has an interest in terms of development co-operation. The rural development programme in the Republic will go through change as the Common Agricultural Policy changes. It would be a practical step to ask what the plans are for rural development post Brexit.

Ms Pamela Arthurs: We need to take a cross-sectoral approach. Brexit is affecting every sector. If we are serious about the Border, the Government must look at the 11 local authorities along the Border as they have the political mandate to take a strategic approach and come up with their priorities in terms of what interventions are required.

A major company that is based in Newry is First Derivatives. It has 1,000 employees. It was set up by a local indigenous business man who had faith in the Border area. He could have taken that business anywhere. It has offices across the world. Local people are prepared to invest in their local communities. The Government could recognise their work along the Border. First Derivatives has not received any funding.

Perhaps it did not need it, but there might be other entrepreneurial individuals along the Border who would stay in the region if there was some incentive to do so. We must be serious about the issue.

Looking at one sector or taking a piecemeal approach has not worked. The local authorities are there and they are ready to step up to the mark to say what they require. There will be competing interests, but that is the same everywhere and we are big enough to work out where the priorities are. Mr. Shane Campbell identified the Irish Central Border area as having problems with connectivity and the situation is better in the East Border Region in that regard. The requirements are different and we will compete with each other but at the end of the day the common view is the same in terms of promoting cross-Border economic development, as that benefits the people of the Border region and will hopefully keep our young people there. We will not succeed if we continue to take a sticking plaster approach.

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I value what Councillor Doyle said, which is reflective of what all the witnesses said, namely, that pre-existing issues have not been addressed so Brexit or no Brexit we

have not been addressing them in a strategic way. Regardless of what happens, there is a pre-existing problem that we must recognise and deal with.

Chairman: I now call on Mr. Shane Campbell and Dr. Soares to conclude.

Mr. Shane Campbell: In brief, the question is how do we give someone in Swanlinbar the same opportunity as someone in Dublin. It is about giving them the tools and the opportunities. Broadband is critical in terms of how it can open up rural life. The delivery of the national broadband plan has to be key. We cannot afford to sit on it for another six years. Otherwise, Ireland will lose its place. It is the same North of the Border and the opportunities there for the delivery of those schemes. It is not too late to look at something between Northern Ireland and the Republic. If the national broadband plan cannot be delivered or advanced, a new solution must be found to give people opportunities because that is where the future is going. The 21st century has taken us into new areas of technology and creativity. There are things people can do on a small device and they need the means and opportunity to be able to deliver on that.

I advocate for a strategic support for the Border region but that must come from the Government. The committee could use its influence to help promote that agenda. We are providing the local leadership that has to be a key part of the delivery, as Ms Arthurs has detailed. Organisations like NILGA and those represented by Mr. Aidan Campbell, Dr. Soares and myself constitute a consortium of cross-Border interests, local authorities and communities. We are all passionate about our areas. We want to do something for those areas. We are not asking the Government to do everything. We are asking the Government to help us by giving us a leg-up. We will certainly do our bit.

Dr. Anthony Soares: I referred in my written submission to some of the work that has been done by various organisations, including those represented at today's meeting and InterTradeIreland. In 2014, we published a draft solidarity charter for the economic revitalisation of the Irish Border development corridor. Much of the work that is needed has been already done. The Border region needs to be examined strategically. It is not just about the negatives - it is also about the potential that exists, which cannot be grasped unless people are given the tools they need. I refer to tools like transport and infrastructure connectivity and links between policy makers on either side of the Border. As Deputy Martin Kenny has said, the UK Government needs to step up to the plate as the co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement. We do not have an Assembly or an Executive. The cross-Border networks, which are led by local authorities, are evidence of the willingness in Northern Ireland to engage with the opportunities presented by policies being developed on the other side of the Border. Those networks have to be given the tools and the freedom they need. In the absence of an Executive or an Assembly, the UK Government has to step up to the mark as co-guarantor of strand 2 of the Good Friday Agreement, as well as strands 1 and 3.

Deputy Martin Kenny: We need to come at this issue at the right scale. The problem in the past is that it has been bitty. I often think it is almost like research and development is the buzzword nowadays. We have an awful lot of research. Many organisations, including those represented at today's meeting, have come up with methods to resolve issues and sort stuff out. I suggest that such efforts almost need to be commercialised. There is a need for deep pockets and access to resources if someone is to take on this and drive it forward. We have the ideas to solve much of this

stuff, but the problem arises in bringing those solutions to a level where they will have an impact. Brexit has sharpened the focus on the piece that is missing in this regard. Perhaps it has created an opportunity for us to see this for what it is. Rather than continuing to muddle along as we were doing, we now know what the problem is. We need to work with the witnesses to come up with a plan. Those of us who have met people on the ground in the Border region can tell the two Governments that we understand what the problems are and that we know there are solutions. Resources are needed to solve the problems in question. Both Governments have an opportunity to move this to a different place. The leadership that is provided by the local authorities, particularly through the organisations represented at today's meeting, will be vital as we seek to make all of these things happen.

Chairman: On behalf of the joint committee, I thank all the witnesses for their contributions. The engagement we have had has been worthwhile.

We will engage further with the witnesses in the future. Some very good questions have been asked and some very good requests have been made. We will take up those issues.

The joint committee adjourned at 10.55 a.m. sine die.

28. COMMITTEE DEBATE, 12 JUNE 2019 - CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES, LONGFORD WOMEN'S LINK, RURAL COMMUNITY NETWORK

AN COMHCHOISTE UM FHORBAIRT POBAIL AGUS TUAITHE

JOINT COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Dé Céadaoin, 12 Meitheamh 2019

Wednesday, 12 June 2019

The Joint Committee met at 10:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Michael Collins,

Deputy Martin Kenny,

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív.

Senator Paudie Coffey.

In attendance: Senator Gerard P. Craughwell.

DEPUTY JOE CAREY IN THE CHAIR.

28.1. TOWARDS A NEW COMMON CHAPTER PROJECT: DISCUSSION

Chairman: Apologies have been received from Deputy Burke and Senators Hopkins and Grace O'Sullivan. I congratulate Senator Grace O'Sullivan on her election to the European Parliament. I understand she will cease to be a Member of the Seanad and a member of the joint committee when she takes her seat at the first sitting of the European Parliament which is likely to be on 2 July. I wish her the very best in her endeavours.

I remind members, staff, delegates and those in the Visitors Gallery to turn off their mobile phones as they interfere with the sound and broadcasting systems.

By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the Chairman to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Brexit and the Border: The Impact on Rural Communities

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome Dr Anthony Soares, acting director, Centre for Cross Border Studies; Ms Tara Farrell, deputy CEO, Longford Women's Link; and Mr. Aidan Campbell, policy and public affairs officer, Rural Community Network. It is proposed that any opening statement, submission or other document supplied by delegates or other bodies to the committee on the topic of this meeting be published on its website. Is that agreed? Agreed.

In a referendum held on Thursday 23 June 2016 the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. While the withdrawal agreement and political declaration on future relations were agreed to between the United Kingdom and the European Union, the House of Commons seems to be unable to approve the agreement or any other way forward. The United Kingdom's departure date of 29 March 2019 was extended to 12 April and then 31 October. As a result of Theresa May's resignation as leader of the Conservative Party on 7 June, there will probably be a new UK Prime Minister towards the end of July. We are also facing the prospect of a hard Brexit, that is, a Brexit without a withdrawal agreement. Numerous experts agree on the impact of a hard Brexit on the Border region, the North and North-South trade, but politics is the art of the possible. The committee is preparing a report on Brexit and the Border and the impact on rural communities. We have heard from many people on both sides of the Border. We are delighted to hear from the delegates who are outlining a way forward. I welcome them and call Dr. Soares to make his presentation.

Dr. Anthony Soares: I thank the Chairman and members of the joint committee for the invitation to discuss the Towards a New Common Chapter project and the resulting New Common Charter for Co-operation Within and Between these Islands. With the Chairman's agreement, I will begin by offering a brief overview of the Centre for Cross Border Studies and the project before handing over to Ms Farrell from Longford Women's Link and then Mr. Campbell from the Rural Community Network who will tell the committee a little bit about their organisations and their involvement in the project. Before I do so, I draw the committee's attention to the New Common Charter for Co-operation Within and Between these Islands which will ultimately be the focus of our conversation today and future conversations and in which rural concerns are particularly evident.

Since its creation in 1999, shortly after the signing of the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement, the Centre for Cross Border Studies has sought to contribute to increased social, economic and territorial cohesion of the island of Ireland by promoting and improving the quality of cross-Border co-operation. The centre's pursuit of its mission has been framed by two primary public policy imperatives: the European Union's cohesion policy and strand 2 of the Good Friday Agreement. Throughout its existence, therefore, the centre has been deeply concerned with community, social and economic development and co-operation, particularly on the island of Ireland but also between the island of Ireland, Great Britain and beyond. From the beginning this concern informed the desire to initiate the Towards a New Common Chapter project which began in late 2014 and has been made possible by the generous support of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's reconciliation fund. The project has looked to support and inspire grassroots community

commitment to cross-Border co-operation in all of its dimensions, including co-operation at the Border, where rurality is a predominant characteristic; wider North-South co-operation on the island of Ireland; and east-west co-operation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain. It has worked towards having a bottom-up vision of the importance and role of cross-Border co-operation within and between these islands, while also noting the need for community groups to possess the necessary skills and capacity not only to engage in their own cross-Border initiatives but also to enter into more productive dialogue with relevant local, regional and central Government policies and strategies that may affect them.

The New Common Charter for Co-operation Within and Between these Islands which members should have before them is the result of a series of intensive conversations between a range of community groups from Northern Ireland and Ireland and, more recently, with groups from England, Scotland and Wales. The new common charter represents a shared desire to maintain and strengthen relations between communities across these islands, to work together on issues of common concern and to advocate for the provision of the requisite structures and means to co-operate within and between these islands in whatever circumstances may arise. The Chairman has alluded to the circumstances that may potentially arise in the political dimension.

In light of this committee's specific interests, and given that the sets of relations envisioned within the New Common Charter for Co-operation Within and Between these Islands are both the product of and supportive of rural communities, we ask members to support it. We ask them to work with us in ensuring all administrations across these islands put in place policies and funding structures to encourage cross-Border and cross-jurisdictional co-operation at grassroots community level. We hope that today's meeting will offer an opportunity to discuss in greater detail the work undertaken as part of the project, and how members of this committee and political representatives more generally can champion the objectives of the new common charter for co-operation.

These are outlined in more detail in the series of recommendations within the supporting information provided to the committee. Those objectives include how capacity-building measures should be introduced to improve how all levels of government and public bodies across these islands engage with community organisations in the development of policies and strategies with a cross-Border or cross-jurisdictional dimension and that such policies and strategies should be rural-proofed. The charter also calls for a comprehensive assessment of the current funding landscape for cross-Border and cross-jurisdictional co-operation initiatives aimed at community organisations and what that landscape should look like in future. Crucially, we would also like to see concrete support in advancing the work undertaken in the Towards a New Common Chapter project, bringing it to a wider audience. It might also, perhaps, look towards a platform for cross-Border, cross-jurisdictional dialogue for community organisations that recalls the structure provided for governments and administrations across these islands through bodies such as the North-South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council. These are issues that we may explore further during today's meeting, but I will hand over now to Tara Farrell of Longford Women's Link.

Ms. Tara Farrell: I thank the committee for giving us the opportunity to present today. I will start with just a few words about Longford's Women's Link. We are a social enterprise founded in 1995. We provide services to about 900 women and 130 children in Longford annually. Those services

include education, childcare, entrepreneurship, community employment and domestic violence support. We do this via our unique model of integrated service delivery. We engage in widespread regional and national advocacy. Our chief executive officer is on the board of the National Women's Council of Ireland, NWCI, while I sit on the board of Irish Rural Link. I am also the current chair of AONTAS, the national adult learning organisation, and I sit on the steering group of The Next Chapter project, an initiative of Irish Rural Link and Politics Plus based in Stormont.

One of our flagship programmes at Longford Women's Link, the Women's Manifesto Programme, is a unique model of local democratic engagement which aims to support women in Longford and other counties to play an active and meaningful role in their local decision-making structures. Just last month we launched the See Her Elected, SHE, project with 50:50 North West, supported by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. The project aims to change the face of local government in rural Ireland and support women to play an active role in public life. The Women's Manifesto Programme was supported by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust from 2012 until the cessation of the trust's operations in the Republic of Ireland in 2016.

Longford Women's Link and the Women's Manifesto Programme have been active members of the Towards a New Common Charter initiative since 2015 and see it as a key all-island programme of sustained engagement as we move beyond the Brexit referendum outcome. We believe that working at the grassroots level, as this programme most definitely does, is critical if we are to see meaningful co-operation and community development alongside an empowered civic society across these islands. We are already involved in a cross-Border project with WOMEN'STEC in Belfast, and our first cross-Border conference takes place in Monaghan later this month.

We have seen with Brexit what happens when civil society is largely excluded from central discussions. Whatever happens with Brexit, we believe that the voices of grassroots women, especially in rural areas, not only need to be heard but are essential in building inclusive and resilient communities. There is significant potential within the new common charter to do this. If we want an effective democratic society that embodies the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement with active and engaged citizens and communities, then we need, first, support for the new common charter and, second, support for civil society organisations. That means financial support from all the administrations. We believe, however, that that is an investment in our communities and in the future of these islands.

Mr. Aidan Campbell: I thank the Chair and members very much for inviting us here today. I will say a little about Rural Community Network, RCN, and what we do, and then I will move on to give some information about the new common charter. RCN is a regional voluntary organisation established by community groups from rural areas in 1991 to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty, disadvantage and equality. RCN is a membership organisation with 250 member groups across Northern Ireland, and we adopt a community development approach to our work. We employ a team of staff with a broad spectrum of skills.

Our vision is of vibrant, articulate, inclusive and sustainable rural communities across Northern Ireland which contribute to a prosperous, equitable, peaceful and stable society. Our mission is to provide an effective voice for and support to rural communities, particularly those who are most

disadvantaged. RCN's work is focused on three broad areas. These are supporting and developing good practice among rural community groups, articulating the voice of rural communities and promoting reconciliation. More detail on our work and some of our projects can be found in our written submission. RCN supports the new common charter and we have been involved over the past year in trying to promote it. The charter provides a framework to encourage co-operation among civic society groups on the island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain.

Many of the challenges rural communities face are similar. RCN has a long tradition of partnering with like-minded NGOs in Britain, Ireland and further afield. We delivered the Rural Enabler project in partnership with Irish Rural Link, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the North and the then Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the Republic of Ireland. This was a PEACE III funded project based in Northern Ireland and the six Border counties of the Republic of Ireland. We are completing a project with partner networks in the UK and Ireland to develop key asks for future rural development policy post Brexit. We know and value the importance of engaging with partner organisations across the UK and Ireland and further afield. We hope to continue to develop and deepen these links in the future, post Brexit, and we believe that the new common charter will support us in doing so.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses. I ask the members for any questions, observations or comments they may have. I call Deputy Martin Kenny.

Deputy Martin Kenny: I thank the witnesses for their presentations. This is one of the big issues facing us where I live in rural County Leitrim. We are next to the Border with Fermanagh and we are very conscious of the potential of Brexit to heighten the difficulties that already exist for many people living in rural communities. It can be seen from travelling around the Border region that much of it is rural. There are some middling-sized towns such as Enniskillen or Monaghan town, but mostly we are talking about vast rural areas. I take issue sometimes with statements being made that suggest that people in rural areas are disadvantaged. I would rather call them under-resourced. This is really an issue of resources and about having people living in a part of the world where they have a tremendous quality of life compared with what we call the really developed parts of the country. The major concern is about being able to ensure that the people who live in those areas have access to the required employment and services. That issue centres on resources and how to get those resources in place. The work that the witnesses have spoken of today is about drawing attention to that and seeing where and how we can put the required resources in place that will produce the maximum impact.

Nobody knows what the outcome of Brexit is going to be. We are, however, just measuring how negative that impact will be. There is nothing to talk about on the positive side at all. Everything focuses on the degrees of negativity that may be reached. One of the key things we need to be considering, and this committee may have a role to play in this, is to explore mechanisms of working with community organisations across the region to leverage funding to get those resources in place where they are most needed. While Brexit is about Britain, the North, which voted to remain, is being forced to leave as well, and I think the European Union has a responsibility in that regard. We need to work with every agency we possibly can to put as much pressure as possible on the European Union to meet its responsibility to put the resources in place to assist with what is going to

be a transitional period. That support will be necessary until we get to a stage where some common sense comes back into play.

We all know that whether Britain leaves with a deal now or in six months, there will have to be an arrangement at some stage. It is ridiculous for anyone to imagine that a country the size of Britain would leave the EU and then never have a trade deal with its neighbours.

That arrangement is going to happen. If it does not happen in the next six months or a year, it will happen in the next few years. Between now and then, we need to have the funding mechanisms in place to protect communities in the Border region in particular.

There are also the issues in regard to rural Ireland more widely and how we can assist in making rural Ireland a place where more people want to live or are able to live. One of the projects we have been looking at seeks to enable people to work remotely for big companies while living in rural areas. We want to enable the infrastructure that is required for that, in particular the infrastructure around communications, but also to ensure adequate health services, education systems and so on are in place so people can access them wherever they live, in any part of the country and regardless of what jurisdiction they are in.

I very much welcome the work that has been done. I have read through the new common charter for co-operation. We are talking about putting in place a structure that will be fit for purpose. One of the problems we have had is that there have been a lot of itty-bitty structures, as it were, all over the place and they have not been co-ordinated properly. If we can try to do that, and this committee will be up for that challenge and will assist in any way we can to make it happen, we can go with a number of clear asks in regard to what will make a difference and move the position forward. I again welcome the witnesses and thank them for their contributions.

Senator Paudie Coffey: I apologise for being late as I was attending the Commencement debate in the Seanad. I welcome the witnesses and thank them for their presentations. I recognise the work they have done, which is very important. It is more important now than ever, given the challenges we have heard about in regard to the onset of Brexit. I have no doubt that existing relationships and partnerships will be tested. There is a concern that Brexit will bring a great deal of uncertainty as to where all this will end up and how it will impact on our communities. Even when talking about the Border, it brings uncertainty all round.

We need fundamental flagship projects like the common charter that we can latch onto and build on to build collaboration into the future. We need to be careful that a lot of the good work that has been done in building partnership and collaboration over the years is not undone, and there is certainly a threat to that with the onset of Brexit. It behoves all of us, whether policymakers or those working in the field, to try to find new ways to strengthen these partnerships, which is what the groups represented today are trying to do.

As policymakers, we have an obligation to identify what supports these groups need in their work. Like Deputy Kenny, I believe this committee can be of some help. If new areas of partnership or collaboration can be identified that need resources, support or recognition, we need to understand where they are and how we can support them. Basic community work and starting from the grassroots is preferable, and the best way to work is from the ground up because that is where

people are committed. We have had various voluntary groups before the committee that work with rural communities, and we find the biggest problem nowadays is with volunteerism and people having the time to commit to projects. I am sure the witnesses have experience of that in their fieldwork. It is often left to the few. They are very committed but they are left to paddle the canoes on their own, essentially. We need to find new ways to involve younger people, to support people who are already involved in projects, to excite them about this, and to show them the benefits of joint partnerships with other communities.

I come from County Waterford and my wife comes from County Down, so I am very aware of a lot of the social integrations that happen. I am a member of the GAA, for example, and I know a lot of clubs from both communities travel up and down, North and South. That can happen in other communities as well, and whether it is a hockey club or a GAA club, it does not matter to me. I would like to see more involvement.

Deputy Kenny is from a more northerly county and many of the partnerships I see happening are in the Border regions, which is understandable. However, there are people in the southern counties who would also be interested. For example, I come from a place called Portlaw, an old cotton mill, Quaker town, built by the Malcomsons, which was a planned social village. I am aware there are such places in Northern Ireland, such as Bessbrook. There might be social histories there that we can connect, finding new ways of identifying each other's history and culture, and building relationships and partnerships. There is a lot that can be done in those areas and I would be interested to see how we can help.

Ms. Farrell mentioned support and resources, which we always hear. Is there a targeted programme of work outlining where there are resources that match? If there are deficits of resources and supports, we would like to hear where they might be so we might be able to assist into the future.

Chairman: I, too, recognise the work of all the organisations represented. What is the long-term vision for the new common charter, if there is one, and what are the next steps in its development? I agree with my colleagues that it is very important the grassroots would be involved. This is particularly the case in regard to the impact on rural communities, whether in the Border region or elsewhere. We can foresee the impact Brexit will have there. We do not want to go back to that vision of the past, which is what Brexit represents to me. Any policies or collaboration of community groups and grassroots organisations must be listened to. State organisations, whether north or south of the Border, should be working in collaboration with groups such as those represented here today, and listened to and engaged with. That is why we, as a committee, are delighted to host these groups today. The witnesses might take the opportunity to outline what the charter means in practice.

Dr. Anthony Soares: I will try to address the points made and then try to link them. I will start with the question on the long-term vision for the charter and the next steps. This relates back to some of the comments made by Deputy Kenny at the outset, where he noted there has to be some sort of arrangement in terms of where we are going with Brexit. I agree with that. However, it is vital that, whatever the arrangement is, that arrangement listens to and is shaped by communities on the ground, North and South, east and west, and that we are all involved in coming to whatever

the arrangement is. Otherwise, we will end up with a structure that is not fit for purpose and end up with remedies that are short-term and do not address the needs of communities.

It is vital that, as we move forward, we listen to communities, North and South, close to the Border and away from the Border.

In all sorts of sectors, community organisations are already involved in conversations. The Rural Community Network is involved in conversations in co-operation with similar organisations in England, Wales, Scotland and here in the Republic of Ireland. It is supporting them and allowing those conversations and that co-operation to continue. It would be tragic if we were to lose that connectivity and that dialogue.

Deputy Kenny also mentioned that the European Union has a responsibility in terms of what happens here. The EU has already made a commitment that it wants to support the Republic of Ireland, in particular, but the island of Ireland as a whole in how it deals with Brexit and how it moves forward. The Irish Government has also made a similar commitment but we are waiting for one important partner, which is the UK Government, to show its commitment. It is a commitment that needs to be made because the UK is a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, which represents the totality of relations within and between these islands. The UK Government must live up to that commitment.

That returns us to the question of what are the next steps for the common charter. We want to scale this up, involve more organisations and involve more administrations. We are in conversations with political representatives from Scotland, Wales and England, and, obviously, although it is a bit more difficult at the moment as there is no Executive or Assembly, with political representatives in Northern Ireland.

I hope that will resolve itself.

We also want to highlight the fact this is not just about the Good Friday Agreement. Relations are not just about those between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland or between Ireland and the UK as a whole or the UK Government. Scotland and Wales are part of the Good Friday Agreement and strand three binds us all together. The administrations there also have a responsibility to ensure their communities in Scotland and Wales are given the opportunities, structures and funding to continue these vital relationships in and between these islands. The next step in the terms of the charter is to ensure those conversations lead to a point whereby a proper structure is in place that is fit for purpose and encourages relations between community groups throughout these islands so they continue their dialogue and co-operate and exploit opportunities. A potential tragedy is that we will miss out on existing connections to exploit opportunities just because of administrative obstacles or the structures not being there to enable us to exploit those opportunities. That is where we are going with a common charter. We want to ensure administrations throughout the islands put in place the structures community groups need to continue the work many of us already do in terms of co-operation at the Border, wider co-operation on an all-island basis, North and South, and co-operation east and west.

Ms. Tara Farrell: To follow Dr. Soares's point, from our perspective as a grassroots organisation there has not been any other space of this nature. When we speak about structures that are fit for

purpose, bearing in mind the project started in 2014 and we have been involved since 2015, our concern is if we do not continue to facilitate this grassroots dialogue and all-island co-operation and co-operation between these islands, we will not have an understanding of the issues we all face on these islands. There is a huge opportunity and we are working at various levels. We took part in a Northern Ireland European Women's Platform, NIEWP, discussion with the five nations on the economic impact of Brexit for women. It covered a wide range of issues that perhaps do not always make headlines every day, for example, the issue of domestic violence and barring orders in jurisdictions for women living in Border areas. This is very important. We became involved in this because we could see the necessity for it. At the time, we felt the idea of grassroots co-operation was not necessarily a priority for many of the administrations. Our participation was driven by these concerns. To echo Dr. Soares's point on the Good Friday Agreement, the Irish Government is a co-guarantor of it. While the economic dialogue is absolutely critical, we also have to focus on grassroots communities and the issues they will face whatever happens as a result of Brexit.

Mr. Aidan Campbell: To add what Ms Farrell and Dr. Soares have already said, and to pick up on a couple of points made by Deputy Martin Kenny and Senator Coffey, much of the networking and work we have done with rural partner organisations in the South and in Britain has come from personal contact. We know individuals in rural networks in England to whom we can lift the phone and speak to about certain issues. We are a networking organisation. We employ six staff, which is not a big team. A total of 90% of our 250 member groups are volunteer-based and do not necessarily have these networks. If they are working on issues, whether local economic development, women's issues, youth issues or environmental issues, they are not necessarily as networked as organisations that can employ staff. It is very important that we start to think about how we could be more systematic in ensuring groups have these networks and know who to contact. The common charter is a way to facilitate this. If we can get administrations throughout these islands to start promoting it more, and to think about how we promote it more and embed it more, there would be huge power in it to deal with some of the issues Deputy Martin Kenny spoke about with regard to remote working, and how we build sustainable economic development in rural communities. Looking at what is coming down the line with regard to climate crisis, how do we reduce the number of people in rural areas having to jump in their cars to do a two-hour commute into urban centres to get work? These are huge issues and there is huge potential. Our board members were at the Grow Remote conference held in Tubbercurry in Sligo last month. They see huge potential in trying to extend that model into rural communities in the North. These are the types of issues that we deal with in rural Northern Ireland. They are very similar to what is being dealt with here. That is how the common charter can help.

Deputy Martin Kenny: Education and tourism are highlighted in the charter. It has always struck me that in the past 20 years, the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process did something on this island that has not happened in many countries throughout the world. Some of the peace process was a high-wire act between political parties but an awful lot of it was done on the ground between communities involving people who had not spoken to one another about difficult issues. They may have met at the mart and spoken about the price of cattle or they may have met somewhere and shared scones but they never spoke about the issues that were affecting their lives.

They began to talk about those issues and this had an impact on the peace process. This is something we missed. Throughout the world we have conflict. We speak about climate change. If we could end all the wars in the world the problem of climate change would be pretty quickly resolved because an awful lot of it flows from conflict and the inability of governments or structures to be able to work together properly.

In Ireland, we have an example of how divided communities and societies found a way of working with one another on a way forward. There is an opportunity in this, from a educational tourism point of view, to bring people to meet these communities, speak to them, share experiences and build a knowledge base among people in the community sector throughout all of the island.

Senator Coffey mentioned a Quaker village. Many of the towns and villages in the country go back 400 or 500 years. They were the consequence and outflow of plantations and other events that happened. We are all both victims and products of our histories. Anywhere in the world the history of people is similar. It is all about power imbalances and economic imbalances. We have the history of these imbalances and their impact on the future. The potential of what we have in Ireland has never been properly realised, in respect of bringing people from all over the world to learn, understand and build on the huge effort made. The consequence of that effort has never been fully examined. Some universities have done work and people have come to do studies but that is also a high-wire act. Getting into communities where the real action happens has the potential to bring different types of tourism and education. This could be part of it.

When I read through the charter, I was interested that two of the issues mentioned were tourism and education. The idea other countries could learn from Ireland is a no-brainer. Everyone can see it. Throughout the world we see political conflict and ideas coming to the fore that are about resentment and one-upmanship rather than the type of co-operation we have managed to develop here. Not only would it be good for people to come here, it would also be good to sustain and bed down the process we have had for the past 20 years. Some people speak about the peace process as if it were something that is finished. It is far from it. It is a work in progress and it requires continued evaluation, work and resources. Particularly, it requires continued effort from all of the parties involved to ensure that we bring it to its conclusion.

One way of doing it might be to invite others from outside and develop tourism and education projects around it.

Senator Paudie Coffey: Following on from Deputy Martin Kenny's observations, we should recognise the achievements in North-South and east-west collaborations. The Good Friday Agreement was a significant achievement for this island. It must be continuously protected and worked on to support it. As Dr. Soares noted, strand 3 and the commitments contained therein were voted on by the people living on the island. We must recognise that achievement. However, there is a fear that some of that work could be unwound.

Other things we have achieved include accessing funding through the EU Cohesion Funds under the INTERREG programme. In the south-east region there was collaboration with Wales to access INTERREG funding in education and other areas. My concern which I have raised here previously relates to what the future holds and might replace these supports which have been hugely valuable

to rural communities. Education and renewable energy projects, as well as other initiatives, have benefited, both in Wales and the region from which I come. I am sure the position is the same in the North of Ireland and elsewhere in the South. As Dr. Soares rightly pointed out, the European Union has a responsibility to continue to provide support for the regions, including rural communities on the island of Ireland, as well as in Wales and Scotland and similar places mentioned by him. Looking at the successes of funding programmes such as the INTERREG programme, what can we access or where can we go to access similar programmes? The European Commission and other organisations have a role to play in that regard.

Mr. Campbell made a good point about networking. Strong and successful networking was down to strong individuals who knew where to go. Mr. Campbell is correct in saying we need to be more systematic in that regard. We cannot just depend on individuals. In time we could lose some of these good individuals and then what would happen? Would the network be lost or break down? We need to tap into new ways to systematically build networks in order that no matter who comes into an organisation, the network will be in place or there will be an axis with which they can identify. It is already working. As Mr. Campbell spoke, I recalled how two or three years ago individuals from rural development groups across Northern Ireland visited the LEADER group in Waterford to discuss rural development programmes. I was invited to meet them. They shared information, for instance, from a small start-up business in rural Ireland which was making yogurts and cheese. It struck me that there were more links than we recognised. That is one example I came across and I hope it will continue. There are also women's groups North and South, east and west, and opportunities to tap into them. Farm organisations such as Macra na Féirme could share their experiences with similar organisations in other regions. There are structures in place. We just need to identify them and connect with them systematically. Energy will come from them in building new partnerships. Therefore, I am hopeful for the future, although there are great challenges.

What level of commitment have the delegates experienced in terms of political engagement? I know that they must be careful, as they will not want to chastise anyone in public, but among the local authorities, North and South, for instance, what level of commitment have they experienced? The regional assemblies are very important organisations from which they need a commitment. Is there commitment or a stand-off approach taken by parliamentarians, North and South and in the United Kingdom, as well as by the UK and Irish Governments? I hope the Northern Ireland Assembly will soon be back up and running again as there is a vacuum. We need political leadership to engage with and advocate for communities. I wish the parties in the North well in order that the Assembly can be re-established.

What is the level of commitment among EU institutions, including the Commission and MEPs? Is there something on which we can improve?

Chairman: A lot of questions have been asked. I invite Dr. Soares to respond to them. He might pass some of them to Mr. Campbell and Ms Farrell.

Dr. Anthony Soares: On political engagement, we recently addressed the 58th plenary of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly and presented on the new common charter. The reception was extremely good. There were many comments supportive of the new common chapter and questions

about how members could take it forward. The challenge for us is how to plug in to that goodwill to ensure those parliamentarians will put the good words into action. We will continue to address that issue.

On local authority engagement, we are planning to address the all-Ireland Local Authority Forum which brings together the chief executives of local authorities, North and South, to try to bring them on board. The Centre for Cross-Border Studies has good relations with the three local authority cross-Border networks, the East Border Region, the Irish Central Border Area Network and the North West Regional Strategic Partnership, which are very important in terms of what the common charter represents.

Up to now, political engagement has been positive, although we have only started in the last month or so. Turning the positive reception into something more concrete is key. The common charter talks about all relationships - relationships at the Border, all-island relationships and relationships between the islands; we do not focus on one to the detriment of others. It allows political representatives to engage in a more positive manner.

I refer to engagement with Brussels and the European Commission, in particular. I should emphasise that the common charter is not my product but that of the organisation and the community groups that have been involved in the project. It is their work, not mine, and they might hold a different view. However, before we go to the Commission to seek its engagement, we must have something solid between these islands.

Senator Coffey referred to the Structural Fund and the connections with Wales. It has been a topic of conversation with the groups in Wales and the Welsh Assembly. A recent report discussed how Wales wished to have external engagement post Brexit. They want the relationships which have been facilitated by the EU Structural Fund until now to continue. On the island of Ireland Northern Ireland is involved in one INTERREG programme which also involves Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. There is also an INTERREG programme between Wales and the Republic of Ireland. The EU commitment applies to the island of Ireland and North-South co-operation. It does not really address the connections we have through the INTERREG programme with Scotland, on the one hand, and Wales, on the other. It is really important that something be done to ensure there will be structures in place and funds available to enable these relationships to progress after Brexit. With others, we are involved in following the progress which is somewhat slow of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, its proposal for what will replace the EU Structural Fund. Up to now, we have seen no evidence that that programme will enable cross-Border co-operation. It is to deal with regional disparities in the four nations which make up the United Kingdom.

It does not recognise the fact that Structural Funds are absolutely crucial to cross-Border co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, co-operation with Scotland and between Wales and the Republic of Ireland. That is something we are attempting to address.

Deputy Martin Kenny made the important comment that we are all victims and products of our histories. That can be seen in the context of the Good Friday Agreement, what it has achieved, all the connections it has created and the ability for us to talk to each other and identify common issues. We sometimes miss those types of granular things in the entire Brexit debate, which is more

concentrated on the big ticket issues of high politics, business and trade. The small but vital connections that have been enabled and facilitated by the Good Friday Agreement are sometimes missing from the Brexit debate.

The groups involved in the common charter insisted on introducing a section that I had never thought of: a preface within which the community groups wanted to highlight the fact that this charter is not just being dropped from outer space but is building on things that exist. They made the precise comment about shared histories and languages, cultural and sporting connections that exist within these islands. They wanted to ensure those things are recognised.

The common charter represents an attempt to ensure we capture the lifeblood of relations within and across these islands. I do not think that, with Brexit, we will necessarily see the end of the institutions that were created by the Good Friday Agreement. We should not, and cannot, see the end of those institutions, including the North-South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council which are not, and cannot be, at risk. However, for those structures to operate properly and to give them added value, that lifeblood must exist underneath them. There must be community groups working together because there would be no point in having a North-South Ministerial Council or British-Irish Council that brings Ministers or political representatives together for a dialogue if there is little or nothing happening on the ground. The common charter is an attempt to ensure that, whatever happens with Brexit, those connections and relations will happen post Brexit.

Ms. Tara Farrell: I will pick up on a couple of points because I am furiously writing notes. The first is in response to the reaction we have had. Within our own networks, the reaction has been very positive and we are referring to that and including it in any submissions we are making, for example, to the Department at this meeting and to the third national action plan on peace and security, because of the role of women in peace building and conflict resolution.

I will pick up on the point that Dr. Soares raised about networking and Senator Coffey's query about the impact on volunteering. The volunteer strategy consultation is starting. There was local government reform in 2013 and we have done considerable work on the impact of that. We are losing institutional memory and we are losing volunteers across communities because the new, changed structures are impacting on their time. It is important to try the new structure of the common charter. We must bring in new blood, new volunteers, while also holding onto that institutional memory and knowledge because it is important.

Going back to the comments made by Deputy Kenny about the product of history is important, as is that idea of learning from the approach we have taken for the new common charter. We have been involved since 2015 and I do not say that the conversations were always easy. There were some interesting conversations particularly at a cross-community level. We brought the first draft of the new common charter - or chapter as it was then - to Scotland first and there were a considerable number of questions about the language in it which we had not anticipated because it was a product of our history. For example, they were asking why we had so many references to culture and language. It meant a very different thing to us, from an all-Ireland version of the charter, than it did from a Scottish perspective. That was interesting and important. We have a platform and structure in place now after five or six years of work and that is very important.

Mr. Aidan Campbell: Senator Coffey mentioned the LEADER programme and networking. That is built into LEADER and the rural development programme across Europe and that is an important lesson that the UK Government needs to take on but it may need prompting from the Irish Government. Once we get past high politics and whenever a deal emerges, whatever the UK replaces rural development funding with, there must be an external element. We cannot just do it within our own jurisdiction. We need to look outwards. There are many lessons we can learn from each other across the Border and from what countries across Europe are doing in terms of rural development.

LEADER invested in the importance of networking and placed it as being very important. Our organisation is trying to do that when it talks to the UK Government about the UK shared prosperity fund. There needs to be an external element, it needs to look outwards and that costs money, is valuable and worth investing in. That is one of the key lessons and learnings from that European rural development programme.

The only other point I wanted to pick up on was the idea of peace building and reconciliation. I agree with Deputy Martin Kenny that much work has been done in local areas and communities. That is the day job of a colleague of mine, Ms Charmain Jones, who concentrates on local reconciliation and communities and having those difficult conversations. Significant progress has been made at community level in Northern Ireland. Our concern, as an organisation, is that Brexit has become an issue that divides people along community lines in Northern Ireland despite the vote in the most recent European election. Our concern is that Brexit has the potential to be divisive again, especially in rural communities, depending on one's view of the constitutional issue. We are grappling with that as an organisation. The Rural Community Network has a diverse membership, some of whom are leavers and some remainers. We are finding it challenging to plot our way through this stuff.

My view is that rural development and these challenges will be there regardless of what deal the UK comes to with the EU. The issues will remain and we will continue to work on them.

Chairman: Are there any other final comments?

Senator Paudie Coffey: I wish our guests well in their work. It is vital now more than ever.

Chairman: We all agree with that comment and I thank our guests for their presentations and engagement with the committee. I am sure we will be in further contact in due course.

Senator Paudie Coffey: Perhaps it is something we can revisit in six months. There will be a good bit of water under the bridge at that stage and we can see how our guests are doing and get an update. A written submission to that effect would be helpful so we can continue engagement.

Chairman: Absolutely. We are currently drafting a report about this so we will be in contact with our guests. We need to work together. That has been showcased in this hearing.

The joint committee went into private session at 11.39 a.m. and adjourned at 11.47 a.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 26 June 2019.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE

29. ORDERS OF REFERENCE OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

29.1. FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENTAL SELECT COMMITTEE [DSO¹²³ 84A; SSO¹²⁴ 71]

- 1) The Dáil may appoint a Select Committee to consider and report to the Dáil on—
 - a) such aspects of the expenditure, administration and policy of a Government Department or Departments and associated public bodies as the Committee may select, and
 - b) European Union matters within the remit of the relevant Department or Departments.
- 2) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann for the purposes of the functions set out in this Standing Order, other than at paragraph (3), and to report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.
- 3) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), a Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments, such—
 - a) Bills,
 - b) proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 187,
 - c) Estimates for Public Services, and
 - d) other mattersas shall be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil, and
 - e) Annual Output Statements including performance, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public moneys, and
 - f) such Value for Money and Policy Reviews as the Select Committee may select.

¹²³ Dáil Standing Orders 2017

¹²⁴ Seanad Standing Orders 2017

- 4) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), a Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may consider the following matters in respect of the relevant Department or Departments and associated public bodies:
- a) matters of policy and governance for which the Minister is officially responsible,
 - b) public affairs administered by the Department,
 - c) policy issues arising from Value for Money and Policy Reviews conducted or commissioned by the Department,
 - d) Government policy and governance in respect of bodies under the aegis of the Department,
 - e) policy and governance issues concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by a member of the Government or the Oireachtas,
 - f) the general scheme or draft heads of any Bill,
 - g) any post-enactment report laid before either House or both Houses by a member of the Government or Minister of State on any Bill enacted by the Houses of the Oireachtas,
 - h) statutory instruments, including those laid or laid in draft before either House or both Houses and those made under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009,
 - i) strategy statements laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas pursuant to the Public Service Management Act 1997,
 - j) annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law, and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of the Department or bodies referred to in subparagraphs (d) and (e) and the overall performance and operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of such bodies, and
 - k) such other matters as may be referred to it by the Dáil from time to time.

- 5) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), a Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments—
 - a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 114, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,
 - b) other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,
 - c) non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, and
 - d) matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant EU Council of Ministers and the outcome of such meetings.
- 6) Where a Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order has been joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann, the Chairman of the Dáil Select Committee shall also be the Chairman of the Joint Committee.
- 7) The following may attend meetings of a Select or Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order, for the purposes of the functions set out in paragraph (5) and may take part in proceedings without having a right to vote or to move motions and amendments:
 - a) members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland, including Northern Ireland,
 - b) members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
 - c) at the invitation of the Committee, other members of the European Parliament.
- 8) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department or Departments, consider—
 - a) such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and
 - b) such Ombudsman reports laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select: Provided that the provisions of Standing Order 111F apply where the Select Committee has not considered the Ombudsman report, or a portion or portions thereof, within two months (excluding Christmas, Easter or summer recess periods) of the report being laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas.

29.2. SCOPE AND CONTEXT OF ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES [DSO 84; SSO 70]

- 1) The Joint Committee may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders.
- 2) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil and/or Seanad.
- 3) The Joint Committee shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to Standing Order 186 and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993.
- 4) The Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by—
 - a) a member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
 - b) the principal office-holder of a body under the aegis of a Department or which is partly or wholly funded by the State or established or appointed by a member of the Government or by the Oireachtas:

Provided that the Chairman may appeal any such request made to the Ceann Comhairle / Cathaoirleach whose decision shall be final.

- 5) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil, after due notice given by the Chairman of the Select Committee, waives this instruction on motion made by the Taoiseach pursuant to Dáil Standing Order 28. The Chairmen of Select Committees shall have responsibility for compliance with this instruction.

29.3. ORDERS OF THE DÁIL AND SEANAD

29.3.1. ORDER OF THE DÁIL 16 JUNE 2016¹²⁵ (ESTABLISHMENT OF SELECT COMMITTEES)

- 1) That Select Committees as set out in column (1) of the Schedule¹²⁶ hereto are hereby appointed pursuant to Standing Order 84A.
- 2) Each Select Committee shall perform the functions set out in Standing Order 84A in respect of the Government Department or Departments listed in column (2) opposite each Committee (in anticipation of the coming into effect of the necessary Government Orders in relation to names of Departments and titles of Ministers and transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions).
- 3) The number of members appointed to each Select Committee shall be seven.
- 4) Each Select Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 85 (1), (2) and (3).
- 5) Each Select Committee shall be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann to form a Joint Committee to carry out the functions set out in Standing Order 84A, other than at paragraph (3) thereof.
- 6) Each Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Orders 85 (other than paragraph (2A) thereof), 114 and 116.
- 7) The Select Committee on Justice and Equality shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 115(1)(b).
- 8) The Order of the Dáil of 10th March, 2016 in relation to the Standing Order 112 Select Committee is hereby rescinded and the Committee is accordingly dissolved.

29.3.2. ORDER OF THE DÁIL 26 SEPTEMBER 2017 (ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE)

That:

- a) the Select Committee on Rural and Community Development is hereby appointed–
 - i. pursuant to, and to perform the functions set out in, Standing Order 84A, in respect of the Department of Rural and Community Development, and
 - ii. with the Orders of Reference of Select Committees contained in the Order of the Dáil of 16 June 2016;

¹²⁵ Dáil Éireann Debate, Vol. 913 No. 3

¹²⁶ Schedule – see Order of the Dáil 26 September 2017.

29.3.3. ORDER OF THE DÁIL 7 NOVEMBER 2017 (NUMBER OF MEMBERS)

That, notwithstanding anything in the Orders of the Dáil of 26th September 2017 or 16th June 2016, the number of members appointed to the Select Committee on Rural and Community Development shall be nine, and that Dáil Éireann:

- a) approves the Fourteenth Report of the Standing Committee of Selection in accordance with Standing Order 27F, copies of which were laid before Dáil Éireann on 26th October 2017, and discharges and appoints members to Committees accordingly; ...

29.3.4. ORDER OF THE SEANAD 21 JULY 2016 (ESTABLISHMENT OF SELECT COMMITTEES)

Seanad Éireann Debate, Vol. 247 No. 5 (Order of the Seanad 21 July 2016)

- 1) That Select Committees as set out in column (1) of the Schedule hereto are hereby appointed pursuant to Standing Order 70A.
- 2) Each Select Committee shall perform the functions set out in Standing Order 70A in respect of the Government Departments listed in column (2) opposite each Committee (in anticipation of the coming into effect of the necessary Government Orders in relation to names of Departments and titles of Ministers and transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions).
- 3) The number of members appointed to each Select Committee shall be four.
- 4) Each Select Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 71 (1), (2) and (3).
- 5) Each Select Committee shall be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Dáil Éireann to form a Joint Committee to carry out the functions set out in Standing Order 70A.
- 6) Each Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Orders 71 (other than paragraph (2A) thereof), 107 and 109.
- 7) The Select Committee on Justice and Equality shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 108(1)(b).

29.3.5. ORDER OF THE SEANAD 16 NOVEMBER 2017 SCHEDULE (EXTRACT)

- Committee: Select Committee on Rural and Community Development
- Department: Rural and Community Development.

29.4. POWERS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

29.4.1. POWERS OF COMMITTEES (DSO 85 (EXTRACT))

85. Without prejudice to the generality of Standing Order 84, the Dáil may confer any or all of the following powers on a Select Committee:

- 1) power to take oral and written evidence and to print and publish from time to time minutes of such evidence taken in public before the Select Committee together with such related documents as the Select Committee thinks fit;
- 2) power to invite and accept oral presentations and written submissions from interested persons or bodies;
- (2A) power to send for persons, papers and records^{127 128}
- 3) power to appoint sub-Committees and to refer to such sub-Committees any matter comprehended by its orders of reference and to delegate any of its powers to such sub-Committees, including power to report directly to the Dáil;

¹²⁷ See also S.O. 88

¹²⁸ This power is not included in the Committee's orders of reference

29.5. POWERS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

29.5.1. POWERS OF COMMITTEES (DSO 85)

85. Without prejudice to the generality of Standing Order 84, the Dáil may confer any or all of the following powers on a Select Committee:

- 1) power to take oral and written evidence and to print and publish from time to time minutes of such evidence taken in public before the Select Committee together with such related documents as the Select Committee thinks fit;
- 2) power to invite and accept oral presentations and written submissions from interested persons or bodies;
- (2A) power to send for persons, papers and records^{129 130}
- 3) power to appoint sub-Committees and to refer to such sub-Committees any matter comprehended by its orders of reference and to delegate any of its powers to such sub-Committees, including power to report directly to the Dáil;
- 4) power to draft recommendations for legislative change and for new legislation;
- (4A) power to examine any statutory instrument, including those laid or laid in draft before either House or both Houses and those made under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009, and to recommend, where it considers that such action is warranted, whether the instrument should be annulled or amended;
- (4B) for the purposes of paragraph (4A), power to require any Government Department or instrument-making authority concerned to submit a Memorandum to the Select Committee explaining any statutory instrument under consideration or to attend a meeting of the Select Committee for the purpose of explaining any such statutory instrument: Provided that such Department or authority may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil;
- 5) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee to discuss policy for which he or she is officially responsible: Provided that a member of the Government or Minister of State may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil: and provided further that a member of the Government or Minister of State may request to attend a meeting of the Select Committee to enable him or her to discuss such policy;
- 6) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee to discuss proposed primary or secondary legislation (prior to such legislation being published) for which he or she is officially responsible: Provided that a member of the Government or Minister of State may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil: and provided further that a member of the Government or Minister of State may request to

¹²⁹ See also S.O. 88

¹³⁰ This power is not included in the Committee's orders of reference

- attend a meeting of the Select Committee to enable him or her to discuss such proposed legislation;
- (6A) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee and provide, in private session if so requested by the member of the Government or Minister of State, oral briefings in advance of meetings of the relevant EU Council of Ministers to enable the Select Committee to make known its views: Provided that the Committee may also require such attendance following such meetings;
- (6B) power to require that the Chairperson designate of a body or agency under the aegis of a Department shall, prior to his or her appointment, attend before the Select Committee to discuss his or her strategic priorities for the role;
- (6C) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State who is officially responsible for the implementation of an Act shall attend before a Select Committee in relation to the consideration of a report under Standing Order 164A;
- 7) subject to any constraints otherwise prescribed by law, power to require that principal office-holders in bodies in the State which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by members of the Government or by the Oireachtas shall attend meetings of the Select Committee, as appropriate, to discuss issues for which they are officially responsible: Provided that such an office-holder may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil;
- 8) power to engage, subject to the consent of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and
- 9) power to undertake travel, subject to—
- i. such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under Standing Order 108(4)(a); and
 - ii. the consent of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, and normal accounting procedures.

29.5.2. DRAFT LEGISLATIVE ACTS: EIGHT WEEK LIMIT TO EXPRESS OPINION ON INFRINGEMENT OF SUBSIDIARITY (“YELLOW AND ORANGE CARD”) (DSO 114)

- 1) In accordance with Article 6 of Protocol No. 2 to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Protocol on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality) as applied by section 7(3) of the European Union Act 2009, the Dáil may empower a Select Committee to form a reasoned opinion that a draft legislative act (within the meaning of Article 3 of the said Protocol) does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity.
- 2) All draft legislative acts forwarded to the Dáil under Article 4 of the said Protocol shall stand referred to a Select Committee empowered under this Standing Order.
- 3) It shall be an instruction to a Select Committee empowered under this Standing Order that—
 - a) in forming a reasoned opinion on whether a draft legislative act complies with the principle of subsidiarity, the Committee shall consult with such other Committees and such stakeholders as it considers appropriate;
 - b) where the Committee is of the opinion that a draft legislative act does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity, it shall submit a reasoned opinion to this effect by way of a report which shall be laid before the Dáil; and
 - c) where a report has been laid by the Committee under paragraph (3)(b) of this Standing Order, the Chairman shall forthwith table a motion thereon under section 7(3) of the European Union Act 2009, and such motion shall be given priority on the Order Paper in accordance with Standing Order 30;

Provided that the Dáil may substitute, add to or otherwise vary, the reasoned opinion set out in the Committee’s report by way of amendment to the motion tabled by the Chairman under this paragraph.
- 4) Where the Dáil agrees a motion tabled pursuant to paragraph (3)(c) of this Standing Order, either with or without amendment, the Ceann Comhairle shall cause a copy of—
 - a) the Resolution agreed by the Dáil,
 - b) the reasoned opinion agreed by the Dáil, and
 - c) the report of the Committee referred to in paragraph (3)(c),to be sent to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

29.5.3. LEGISLATIVE ACTS: INFRINGEMENT OF SUBSIDIARITY: REQUEST FOR REVIEW BY EU COURT OF JUSTICE (DSO 116)

- 1) In accordance with Article 8 of Protocol No. 2 to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Protocol on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality) as applied by section 7(4) of the European Union Act 2009, the Dáil may empower a Select Committee to consider whether any act of an institution of the European Union infringes the principle of subsidiarity.
- 2) It shall be an instruction to a Select Committee empowered under this Standing Order that—
 - a) in considering whether an act of an institution of the European Union infringes the principle of subsidiarity, the Committee shall consult with such other Committees and such stakeholders as it considers appropriate;
 - b) where the Committee is—
 - i. of the opinion that an act of an institution of the European Union infringes the principle of subsidiarity; and
 - ii. wishes that proceedings seeking a review of the act concerned be brought to the Court of Justice of the European Union,it shall lay a report to this effect before the Dáil; and
 - c) where a report has been laid by the Committee under paragraph (2)(b) of this Standing Order, the Chairman shall forthwith table a motion thereon under section 7(4) of the European Union Act 2009, which shall be given priority on the Order Paper in accordance with Standing Order 30.
- 3) The Ceann Comhairle shall cause a copy of all Resolutions made by the Dáil in accordance with paragraph (2)(c) of this Standing Order to be sent to the relevant Minister.

29.5.4. POST-ENACTMENT REPORT (DSO 164A)

Twelve months following the enactment of a Bill, save in the case of the Finance Bill and the Appropriation Bill, the member of the Government or Minister of State who is officially responsible for implementation of the Act shall provide a report which shall review the functioning of the Act and which shall be laid in the Parliamentary Library.

29.6. FUNCTIONS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

29.6.1. OVERSIGHT OF THE DEPARTMENT

The joint committee shadows the [Department of Rural and Community Development](#), bodies under its aegis, and associated bodies.

The joint committee will also carry out ex ante, current year, and ex post scrutiny of the performance of the department, including output measures and financial indicators.

29.6.2. POLICY

The committee may also on its own initiative, initiate a review of policy of any area within its remit, or may also carry out a policy review combined with one or more other joint committees.

29.6.3. PRE LEGISLATIVE SCRUTINY

The committee may carry out prelegislative scrutiny of any legislative proposals from the Minister, including a public consultation exercise.

29.6.4. EU SCRUTINY

The Committee also plays a role in the consideration of legislative proposals from the European Union. When the Committee is unsatisfied with a legislative proposal, it can make its observations known to the European Commission through either a reasoned opinion or a political contribution.

Further information on European Union legislative proposals can be found on the following Web sites:

- [European Commission](#)
- [IPEX](#) (EU Interparliamentary Exchange).

Proposals under consideration by the Committee will be published on the committee's Web site.

29.6.5. ROLE OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Dáil Select Committee mainly deals with bills and estimates referred by the Dáil.

29.6.6. PUBLIC SERVICE MANAGEMENT ACT, 1997

Appearance before committees of Houses of Oireachtas.

10.—The Secretary General of a Department or Head of a Scheduled Office or any other officer of the Department or Scheduled Office who is designated for the purposes of this section by the aforesaid Secretary General or Head and to whom the relevant responsibility for the performance of functions has been assigned, shall, when requested to do so in writing by a committee of either or both of the Houses of the Oireachtas authorised in that behalf to make the request in connection with the subject-matter before the committee, appear before the committee in relation to any strategy statement that has been laid before each House of the Oireachtas under section 5 (2) in respect of the Department or Scheduled Office.

29.6.7. ENGAGEMENT WITH CHAIRMEN DESIGNATE OF STATE BODIES

Engagement with Chairmen Designate of State Bodies under the aegis of the Department

The Government decision of May 2011 put new arrangements in place for the appointment of persons to State Boards and bodies.

Reference to this arrangement is also made in the [Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards](#) of November 2014.

The 2016 Programme for Government suggests that nominees for Chairs of State Boards will be required to have their nominations ratified by the relevant Oireachtas Committee prior to their appointment.

This is also covered by Dáil Standing orders:

Powers of Select Committees.

85. Without prejudice to the generality of Standing Order 84, the Dáil may confer any or all of the following powers on a Select Committee: ...

(6B) power to require that the Chairperson designate of a body or agency under the aegis of a Department shall, prior to his or her appointment, attend before the Select Committee to discuss his or her strategic priorities for the role; ...

29.6.8. OVERSIGHT OF BODIES UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE DEPARTMENT

Charities Regulator

"The Charities Regulator is Ireland's national statutory regulator for charitable organisations. The Charities Regulator is an independent authority and was established in October 2014 under the Charities Act 2009.

The key functions of the Regulator are to establish and maintain a public register of charitable organisations operating in Ireland and ensure their compliance with the Charities Acts.

The Regulator also engages in the provision of services to charities including the authorising of appointments of new charitable trustees, the framing of schemes of incorporation, authorisation of Cy-près schemes and disposition of lands held upon charitable trusts." www.charitiesregulator.ie/en

Irish Water Safety

The "The statutory, voluntary body and registered charity established to promote water safety and reduce drownings in Ireland.

Our focus is on Public Awareness and Education. Tragically, an average of 133 people drown in Ireland each year, eleven every month. We strive to reduce these fatalities by increasing water safety awareness and by changing attitudes and behaviours so that our aquatic environments can be enjoyed with confidence and safety." www.iws.ie

POBAL

Pobal is a not-for-profit company that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the EU.

We are an intermediary that works on behalf of Government to support communities and local agencies toward achieving social inclusion, reconciliation and equality. We do this by managing funding and providing resources for suitable programmes. In 2016, we provided management and support services to circa 24 programmes for four different Government departments and EU bodies. www.pobal.ie/

Western Development Commission

The Western Development Commission is a state body set up to develop the Western Region by:

Ensuring that government policy is directed at improving the social and economic situation in the Western Region from Donegal to Clare. Developing projects on a regional basis in sectors such as tourism, industry, marine, renewable energy, technology and organic agri-food.

Operating a €32 million Western Investment Fund that provides loans and equity to business and local communities in the Western Region. This Fund operates on a commercial basis and aims to become revolving, re-investing monies back into the Region. www.wdc.ie/

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEES

30. FORMER JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS, HERITAGE, REGIONAL, RURAL AND GAELTACHT AFFAIRS (FROM OCTOBER 2016 – OCTOBER 2017)

30.1. FORMER DÁIL SELECT COMMITTEE

Seán Canney TD, Independent

Michael Collins TD, Rural Independent Group

Danny Healy-Rae TD, Independent

Martin Heydon TD, Fine Gael

Éamon Ó Cuív TD, Fianna Fáil

Niamh Smyth TD, Fianna Fáil

Peadar Tóibín TD, (Chairman), Sinn Féin

30.2. FORMER SEANAD SELECT COMMITTEE

Senator Maura Hopkins, Fine Gael

Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell, Independent

Senator Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, Labour

Senator Fintan Warfield, Sinn Féin

30.3. FORMER DÁIL COMMITTEE ON ARTS, HERITAGE, REGIONAL, RURAL AND
GAELTACHT AFFAIRS (FROM OCTOBER 2016 – OCTOBER 2017)



[Seán Canney TD](#)
Independent



[Michael Collins TD](#)
Rural Independent Group



[Danny Healy-Rae TD](#)
Independent



[Martin Heydon TD](#)
Fine Gael



[Éamon Ó Cuív TD](#)
Fianna Fáil



[Niamh Smyth TD](#)
Fianna Fáil



[Peadar Tóibín
TD\(Chairman\)](#)
Sinn Féin

30.4. FORMER SEANAD COMMITTEE ON ARTS, HERITAGE, REGIONAL, RURAL AND
GAELTACHT AFFAIRS (FROM OCTOBER 2016 – OCTOBER 2017)



[Senator Maura Hopkins](#)

Fine Gael



[Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell](#)

Independent



[Senator Aodhán Ó Ríordáin](#)

Labour



[Senator Fintan Warfield](#)

Sinn Féin

31. JOINT COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (OCTOBER 2017 —)

31.1. Dáil Select Committee (Deputies / Teachtaí Dála)

Joe Carey (Chairman) (Fine Gael) / Seosamh Ó Ciardha

Peter Burke (Fine Gael) / Peadar de Búrca

Seán Canney (Independent¹³¹) / Seán Ó Ceannaigh

Michael Collins (Rural Independent Group) / Micheál Ó Coileáin

Martin Kenny (Sinn Féin)

Michael Fitzmaurice (Independent¹³²) / Micheál Mac Muiris

Éamon Ó Cuív (Fianna Fáil) / Éamon Ó Cuív

Willie Penrose (The Labour Party) / Liam Peanróis

Niamh Smyth (Fianna Fáil) / Niamh Nic Gabhann

31.2. SEANAD SELECT COMMITTEE (SENATORS / SEANADÓIRÍ)

Paudie Coffey (Fine Gael)

Maura Hopkins (Fine Gael)










Grace O'Sullivan (Civil Engagement Group / Green Party)

Vacancy (The Labour Party)

¹³¹ Not aligned with any party or group.

¹³² Not aligned with any party or group.

31.3. Dáil Select Committee on Rural and Community Development

 <p><u>Peter Burke TD</u> Fine Gael</p>	 <p><u>Seán Canney TD</u> Independent</p>	 <p><u>Joe Carey TD (Chairman)</u> Fine Gael</p>
 <p><u>Michael Collins TD</u> Rural Independent Group</p>	 <p><u>Michael Fitzmaurice TD</u> Independent</p>	 <p><u>Martin Kenny TD</u> Sinn Féin</p>
 <p><u>Éamon Ó Cuív TD</u> Fianna Fáil</p>	 <p><u>Willie Penrose TD</u> The Labour Party</p>	 <p><u>Niamh Smyth TD</u> Fianna Fáil</p>

31.4. SEANAD SELECT COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



[Senator Paudie Coffey](#)

Fine Gael



[Senator Maura Hopkins](#)

Fine Gael



[Senator Grace O'Sullivan](#)

Civil Engagement Group
(The Green Party)

Vacancy
(The Labour Party)

32.5. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

1. The Dáil appointed the following members to the select committee (nominated by the Committee of Selection) on 3 October 2017: Deputies Seán Canney, Joe Carey, Michael Fitzmaurice, Carol Nolan, Éamon Ó Cuív, Willie Penrose and Niamh Smyth Na Teachtaí Seán Ó Ceannaigh, Seosamh Ó Ciardha, Micheál Mac Muiris, Caral Uí Nualláin, Éamon Ó Cuív, Liam Peanrós agus Niamh Nic Gabhann
2. The Dáil Committee of Selection nominated Deputies Peter Burke and Michael Collins on 26 October 2017.
3. The Seanad Committee of Selection nominated Senators Martin Conway, Maura Hopkins, Denis Landy and Grace O'Sullivan on 16 November 2017.
4. Senator Denis Landy resigned from the Seanad with effect from 28 November 2017.
5. Senator Martin Conway was discharged from the Committee at his own request and Senator Paudie Coffey was appointed with effect from 13 February 2018.
6. Deputy Carol Nolan was discharged from the Committee and the Dáil appointed Deputy Martin Kenny with effect from 17 April 2018.
7. Senator Grace O'Sullivan ceased being a member of the Committee following her election to the European Parliament with effect from 01 July 2019

32.6. COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

Leo Bollins Clerk to the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development Houses of the Oireachtas, Leinster House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 XR20 Ireland	Leo Bollins Cléireach an Chomhchoiste um Fhorbairt Tuaithe agus Pobail Tithe an Oireachtais, Teach Laighean, Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 XR20 Éire
Fón <i>Phone</i> + 353 1 618 3054 + 353 1 618 3000 Fón póca <i>Mob</i> + 353 86 045 4204 rphost e jcrd@oireachtas.ie Leo.Bollins@oireachtas.ie Suíomh Gréasáin an Choiste Committee's Web site ¹³³	

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk.

¹³³ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees/32/rural-and-community-development/>

