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Ireland to resist hard Border even if UK exit deal fails

Government wants to avoid the Border being used by UK to leverage concessions

Irish issues the main block in talks as agreement close on UK's EU divorce bill

FIACH KELLY
Political Correspondent

The Government wants a commitment from Britain that there will be no hard Border in Ireland even if the United Kingdom leaves the European Union without an exit deal.

Senior Government sources have said they do not want the Border being used as a "gun" by Britain to pressure the EU into other concessions. Such a commitment now would remove that threat, it is suggested, and would help the Brexit talks progress.

The disclosure comes ahead of a day of intense contact between the British and Irish governments, with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and British prime minister Theresa May holding a bilateral meeting on the margins of a summit in Gothenburg, Sweden.

The Government has re-

the second phase of the talks, according to sources.

Although the Government acknowledges that the exact detail of how the Border will operate cannot be finalised until the second phase, it wants proposals "in principle" from Britain.

This would include a commitment that there will not be a hard Border no matter what happens later in the Brexit talks, including a total breakdown.

No "regulatory divergence"
"We are not going to abandon Northern Ireland, no matter what the outcome," a senior Government source said. The Government has said there must be no "regulatory divergence" between North and South, post-Brexit, in order to allow for a "functioning all-island economy".

Writing in today's *Irish Times*, Mr Johnson says he understands "the importance of addressing the unique circumstances of Ireland, including the land border".

"I know the concerns about the possible impact on businesses and livelihoods. And I realise that for Irish people, the future of the Border is not simply a matter of economics. Above all, there is the need to preserve the ties that exist between communities across the island of Ireland."

Former taoiseach Bertie Ahern said yesterday that Irish influence will diminish once the talks progress to the second phase.

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UK will have 'no greater ally' in Brexit talks, says Coveney; **Business Today**

UK and Ireland can strengthen ties via Brexit; **Boris Johnson, page 18**



Stepping out Rare southern white rhinoceros calf born at Dublin Zoo



■ A 50kg male rhino calf, yet to be named, was born on Sunday at Dublin Zoo. The birth is a significant success for the zoo's efforts to assist the survival of the southern white rhinoceros. PHOTOGRAPH: PATRICK BOLGER

German party rejects plan for bailout payback

Outgoing German government party to vote against Ireland's early repayment plan

DEREK SCALLY
and JOE BRENNAN

After a starring role in the Paradise Papers, Ireland will next week face attempts in Berlin to extend its stay in financial purgatory.

Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) is pressing for the German parliament, the Bundestag, to block Ireland's plans for an early repayment of bailout loans totalling €5.5 billion.

"We won't go along with this free pass for Ireland because we don't want ongoing tax dumping in the EU," said Carsten Schneider, the SPD parliamentary party's general secretary. "We're not talking about Ireland's 12.5 per cent tax rate here, but secret deals that reduce that tax burden to near zero."

The Government estimates it can save €150 million in interest payments by refinancing the bailout loans in international debt markets.

Waiver right
The plan depends, however, on all European Union states agreeing to waive the right of two EU bailout facilities, which gave Ireland €40.2 billion during the crisis, to get early repayment at the same time. The loans in question comprise the remaining International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout as well as bilater-

al loans from Denmark and Sweden.

The centre-left SPD – junior partner in the outgoing German government – is urging other parties to join it in voting against Ireland's plan.

The SPD holds less than 22 per cent of the seats in the Bundestag and there are no signs yet it is receiving wider support in the German parlia-

“We don't want ongoing tax dumping in the EU

ment. Sources within chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, which together with its Christian Social Union in Bavaria account for almost 35 per cent of the Bundestag, have indicated that the party was likely to back Ireland's request.

German politicians have, however, taken note of Ireland's starring role in the Paradise Papers, in particular reports of Dublin simultaneously closing one tax loophole and opening another for US multinationals.

Minister for Finance Paschal Donohoe said last night that he had noted the SPD position, and found it "disappointing". He said he remained hopeful that the Bundestag would consent to the required waivers being granted.

More tree cover reduces rate of asthma attacks, study finds

JACK POWER

Living in a leafy suburb may do more than just boost property prices, as a study has found having more trees in urban areas can help reduce the rate of asthma attacks.

In areas with high air pollution, trees have a significant impact by helping to remove pollutants from the air, according to a study by the University of Exeter.

The research, published today in the *Environmental International Journal*, examined data from more than 650,000 serious asthma attacks in 26,455 urban neighbourhoods in England over a 15-year period.

The findings "suggest that tree planting could play a role in reducing the effects of air pollution from cars".

"Trees can effectively remove pollutants from the air, and this

may explain why they appear to be most beneficial where [air pollution] concentrations are high," said lead researcher Ian Alcock from University of Exeter's medical school.

It found in areas of lower air pollution, open green spaces

8:10

Residents per tree ratio in Dublin 4 – the ratio in Dublin 1 is 30:1

such as gardens and parks were more effective than increased tree cover at reducing the frequency of asthma attacks.

Dr Alcock said trees proved both a defence mechanism and an irritant for asthma sufferers. He explained that while trees can remove the air pollutants that trigger asthma attacks,

they can also spread allergenic pollen. Foliage can retain build-ups of the irritating pollutants that would otherwise have been dispersed by wind.

"We found that on balance, urban vegetation appears to do significantly more good than harm," he said.

Ireland has the fourth highest rate of asthma in the world.

A spokesman for the Asthma Society of Ireland said: "We have known for some time based on similar minor studies that the effect of having more green spaces can be quite helpful. From an urban-planning perspective the more green spaces and trees the better."

A study of tree coverage across Dublin published by UCD researchers last year found in the affluent area of Dublin 4 there was an 8:10 residents per tree ratio compared with a 30:1 ratio in Dublin 1.

Weather

Most places will be dry apart from scattered showers on western coasts in the afternoon. Highs of 7-11 degrees in light breezes.

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