

STRONG NORTH-SOUTH COLLABORATION NEEDED FOR BREXIT

Local authorities face a number of uncertainties due to Brexit but are focussed on building resilience in their areas to prepare for any eventuality, a recent conference in Dublin was told by the Chairperson of the County and City Management Association (CCMA).

Brexit has been to the forefront of local authority considerations since the UK vote to leave the EU, according to Jackie Maguire, Chairperson of the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and Chief Executive of Meath County Council.

Addressing a recent conference titled 'Local Authorities – Implications for Local Authorities and their Areas', organised by the Local Government Management Agency, she said that "preparing for the unknown" is a huge challenge.

"In the local authority sector, our approach has been to consider all our plans and actions through the lens of Brexit, while maintaining close contact with Government and relevant departments throughout the negotiation period," noted Maguire.

As well as the potential impact on local business and economic development, the CCMA chairperson cited a number of practical implications for local authorities, particularly in border regions.

These include the current arrangement where the Northern Irish Fire & Rescue Service provides first response to call-outs in parts of Donegal and the further example of an ongoing cross-border greenway project.

"While the Republic and Northern Ireland have been members of the EU, we have been able to work collaboratively on shared infrastructure development and shared service provision. We now face into an unknown situation as to whether that can continue."

ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

The CCMA Chair also highlighted the



Jackie Maguire, CCMA Chairperson and Chief Executive of Meath County Council, welcomed delegates to the conference on 4 December in Dublin's Ashling Hotel.



Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Donegal County Council; Jackie Maguire, CCMA Chairperson; Chief Executive of Meath County Council, and Prof Kiearn McQuinn. ESRI.



impact Brexit may have on environmental standards, “Currently we apply relatively consistent environmental policies north and south; this is the best way to achieve results. The Water Framework Directive, for example, is implemented in both jurisdictions to manage river basins and improve water quality but rivers don’t stop at borders.”

Discussing the role of local authorities in enterprise development and tourism, Jackie Maguire said: “Local authorities will do what we can to proactively mitigate against the worst impacts of Brexit and capitalise on any opportunities.

“This will involve not only our economic development and tourism teams but teams across our organisations – in planning, roads, housing, infrastructure and other areas. We will ensure efficient, responsive services and ambitious plans that will encourage enterprise, entice visitors and allow our areas to thrive.”

Jackie Maguire commended the work the Local Enterprise Offices have been doing to support business in their areas, “This is a very uncertain time for businesses. The full and free access we have enjoyed to our closest market in the UK has meant it is the first market to which many local businesses and SMEs expand.

“Many companies need to be brought up to speed on the issues that may be involved when the UK becomes a third country, and also need to be supported to help expand their markets. Local Enterprise Offices have been doing excellent work with businesses in their areas and will continue to help them to prepare.”



Pictured (l-r): Dan O’Brien, IIEA Chief Economist; Seamus Neely, Donegal County Council Chief Executive; Prof Kiearn McQuinn, ESRI; Martina Devlin, columnist and MC, and Jackie Maguire.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

The conference on the implications of Brexit from a political and economic perspective for local authorities and their areas was hosted on 4 December by the Local Government Management Agency.

The one-day event in Dublin examined how local authorities and their areas may be impacted by the exit of the UK from the EU, while businesses discussed their outlook on Brexit, and the preparations they’re putting in place. There was a focus on the supports available, through the Local Enterprise Offices and Enterprise Ireland and other agencies.

Speakers included:

- Simon Coveney TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Jackie Maguire, Chairperson, CCMA
- Dan O’Brien, Chief Economist, Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA)
- Jonathan McMillan, Brexit Unit Manager, Enterprise Ireland
- Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Donegal County Council
- Prof Kieran McQuinn, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)
- Michael Tunney, Head of Enterprise, Donegal County Council

The event included two panel discussions with representatives from business sectors:

- Gerry Carty, Managing Director, RPS Ireland
- Peter Legge, Partner, Grant Thornton
- Linda Stuart-Trainor, Director of Prepared Consumer Foods, Food Drink Ireland
- Liam Davis, WPD Freight Management
- Michael Lennon, Westport Woods Hotel and Irish Hotel Federation Chairman
- Ian Hunter, Centre Director, Pavilions Shopping Centre, Swords

