

Simon Case and Brendan Threlfall Meeting

Migration

- We are keen to gain a fuller understanding on the impact of UKG's wider migration policy on the economy. The ability of Northern Ireland businesses to access a sufficient pool of skilled and unskilled labour to sustain the economy and compete on an all-island basis is a key concern for employers, both in the private and public sectors. As part of that understanding we are engaging with business on a number of fronts.
- Northern Ireland has a small labour market. The flexibility which migration provides in terms of accessing skills is of great benefit to the economy and one which we would wish to maintain.
- More people leave Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK than the converse. In the context of EU Exit, this picture could present a risk to the NI labour market should, for example, restrictions be placed on international migrants coming here and/or vacancies in GB attracting labour away from Northern Ireland.
- It is estimated that around 83,000 people with a nationality outside of the UK were in employment in Northern Ireland in 2016. This is approximately 10% of those in employment. The largest share of these have an EU nationality, which make up around 7% of those in employment in Northern Ireland.
- According to the Labour Force Survey, seventy per cent of EU nationals, excluding those from the RoI, work in the manufacturing and hotel and restaurant sectors. In addition EU nationals tend to work in lower skilled occupations with almost sixty percent in processing and elementary occupations. This could be particularly relevant to the agri-food sector where there is a heavy reliance on unskilled labour. The ability of NI businesses to compete with Irish counterparts, who will continue to have access to EU migrant labour, is also a salient issue.
- Businesses competing across the border could be at disadvantage if one side of the border has freer access to skills and labour than the other. Labour and skills is also a key aspect of what attracts inward investment to the Island of Ireland and we already compete in the context of a higher Corporation Tax rate here. If access

to labour is curtailed here that could further hamper our efforts to grow the economy and build a high value business base.

- The migration/access to skills and trade/market access strands are closely interlinked. Northern Ireland's long term competitiveness will rest not only on arrangements that are in place for cross border trade here but also on the nature of the workforce that delivers that trade.
- We will continue to engage with UKG on the development of policy options in the CTA space and more widely on the migration/ access to skills strands.
- We are also engaging with the Migration Advisory Committee on the recent commission from Home Secretary. Our aim is to ensure that the evidence base available to the MAC is as complete and up to date as possible and that this is reflected in their advice back to the Home Secretary.

Common Travel Area

- We are encouraged by the priority of the Common Travel Area and engagement on the evidence base, but are keen to unlock the CTA policy space to understand how our evidence is shaping options.
- We have provided substantive evidence to DExEU showing the fluid movement of people across the land border – this is reflected in the Annex on the Common Travel Area within the UK Government position paper on Northern Ireland and Ireland.
- That work shows that people make cross-border journeys for a wide variety of reasons including for work, education, shopping, or visiting friends and family. Modelled estimates suggest that the total number of person border crossings is around 110 million annually. Thus cross-border travel and movements between Northern Ireland and Ireland are very extensive and, for many people, a regular feature of everyday life.

- The Centre for Cross Border Studies estimates that between 23,000 and 30,000 people cross the border for work — living and working on different sides of the Irish land border. Some workers such as nurses can cross the border several times in a day in order to undertake their job.
- There are a number of public services that are provided on a cross-border basis between Northern Irish and Irish institutions. For example, in the area of health and social care services Cancer treatment in the Derry/Londonderry, which also provides radiology services for Irish patients, and children's cardiac care, which is provided on an all-Ireland basis in Dublin.
- The potential end of free movement across the border after Brexit may cause problems for businesses along the border area that rely on staff and customers who travel between the two jurisdictions. Any restriction in travel across the border, such as identity checks, would have negative consequences for the commuters as well as their employers.
- The common travel area has played an important role on how people, communities, district councils and others live and work together successfully in border areas of Northern Ireland and ROI. There is a long history of people on either side of the border living connected lives due to family ties and relationships.
- Key to maintaining all of this cross border freedom and movement will be the custom arrangements between North and South.
- It is vital that Stage 1 of the negotiations finds a resolution on North-South trade that avoids the re-introduction of customs facilities on either side. While technology can help, flexibility will be every bit as vital. In this sense it is probably an advantage that NI is small compared to the size of the EU and so there should be greater scope for such flexibility to be part of the solution for the border.