

UK election sees Brexit delayed

Ireland has got a good break pre Christmas with a delay in Brexit. The outcome will be uncertain. The next Brexit deadline is now three months time. Even then it is likely that the transition period will be at least till the end of next year and could go on longer depending on how transition talks happen. A different Government where there is no Conservative majority, could see the Brexit long running saga continue.



In the meantime, Ireland's best option is to do its best diversify its trade away from the UK, particularly in the food sector and be more active promoting in Europe and selling in China. The UK delays gives Ireland more time to plan the next moves. As we have written before, building alternative shipping links to Europe has to become more a priority for Government. The EU if lobbied will support these moves and allow state aids as suggested by some of our MEPs. It might be a bit more expensive but it does create more security.

Working more with our close European neighbours in France, Belgium and Holland would be worthwhile, but getting the ports more ready to handle trade would be a strong step.

It will be interesting to see how the DUP vote plays out in the North and how the public there view their hard core Brexit strategy. It is probable that they could lose seats and find that their unique balance of power position be just a memory. Ulster people are usually pragmatic so let us see how this will work out.

They will want to avoid and damage to their farming sector. The debate could prove interesting, staying in the Customs Union would provide the best option for Northern Ireland and allow open borders in the event of any Brexit. If Labour manage to get a coalition together that might happen, but their manifesto is quite radical and poll numbers weak at present so there is a lot to play out. Interesting to come out on the side of his friend Nigel Farage in an interview on his radio show last week on LBC.

We have many Irish in Britain and they would like things to stay as they are. Some of the points in the UK debate are well worth considering. One retail lobby group has said with the growth of on line shopping that they would like to see a change in the business rates system for retailers. One proposal would be to add 2 per cent on VAT and eliminate business rates, this would make high street retailers compete more easily with on line selling operations. You can read elsewhere in this issue how in the UK they are promoting markets more in town centres to get people back shopping increasing in town centres again, another idea that we can learn from here in Ireland. All we can hope for in the new Government in the UK is that their policies will be more friendly to Ireland.