



CONTENTIOUS:
Traffic crosses the
border at Bridgend
between Donegal
and Derry.
PICTURE: Margaret
McLaughlin

Mutual enforcement could provide Brexit borders fix

THE EU has paused legal action against the UK for alleged breaches of the Brexit protocol, saying it wants to create the "necessary space" to consider new UK proposals.

Coming days after the UK rejected EU proposals for mitigation, this represents a significant unilateral de-escalation by Brussels – or a bit of a climbdown, if we must use confrontational terms. The EU seems to be accepting parts of the protocol are unworkable and cannot be fixed by just repeating that London agreed to them.

One idea to watch out for in the coming months is 'mutual enforcement', with the UK and EU making it an offence to move goods over the land border that have not been cleared to do so at the sea border.

For example, a supermarket could import containers freely from Britain but face fines or worse of any of its products later turned up in Dundalk. No enforcement would be required at the border itself.

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THERE has been widespread condemnation after east Belfast's first Irish-language pre-school, Naiscoil na Seolta, announced it will not be opening in September at a site at Braniel Primary, following what Braniel describes as "an ongoing social media hate campaign" by "people not connected to the school, nor parents of the school".

The main printable objection on social media is that there was no consultation with the local community. The Education Authority usually conducts a consultation exercise when a primary opens a nursery unit. Community support or opposition can be noted, as can petitions.

This was not necessary at Braniel because it was renting the nursery a temporary site, rather than adding a nursery unit – Braniel Primary already has its own nursery unit. Failure to explain this provided the excuse for complaints.

It also means the authorities have missed a chance to make it clear you cannot object to an Irish-language school just because you object to Irish.

■■■

ARLENE Foster has raised eyebrows by joining GB News as a contributor, although this is hardly as striking a

Newton
EMERSON



political-media crossover as when former UTV co-hosts Mike Nesbitt and Fearghal McKinney were UUP leader and SDLP deputy leader.

If anything looks off with Foster's new role it is the contrast with her other new role as chair of the Castlereagh Foundation, to which she was appointed this month by the secretary of state.

The foundation is a New Decade, New Approach body sought by the DUP to "support academic research through universities and other partners to explore identity and the shifting patterns of social identity in Northern Ireland".

The gravitas of this could be somewhat undermined by appearing as a talking head on a partisan culture-war media outlet. As an occasional contributor to *Talkback*, I offer this observation without judgement.

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SINN Féin and the SDLP are engaged in a desperate battle to take credit for Casement Park after SDLP infrastructure minister Nichola Mallon was able to announce planning approval for the stadium, as planning for major projects falls under her department.

Mallon then innocently told the BBC the executive should meet the \$30 million funding shortfall that has built up during the nine years it has taken to achieve approval, adding that sadly this falls to other departments.

Building Casement is a commitment in New Decade, New Approach, which will define the inevitable horse-trading with the DUP. "Sub-regional stadia" for football are the balancing item in the deal

That kicked the ball to Sinn Féin sports minister Deirdre Hargey, who must sign off a new business case, and Sinn Féin finance minister Conor Murphy, who must find the extra money.

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NICHOLA Mallon has launched a public consultation into Belfast's new north-south Glider line.

Documents reveal the route is not expected to be operational until September 2027 at the earliest – over six years away. This is for a project already years in the making, with funding agreed three years ago through the Belfast city deal.

Almost the entire length of the new route is already a high-quality bus lane as the consultation is essentially choosing two Metro bus routes, north and south, to link up through the city centre. Does this really have to take longer than World War II?

■■■

THE biggest development in touting since the Troubles is under way with plans by the departments of justice and infrastructure to introduce 'Operation Snap'.

This is an online system used by police forces in England and Wales that allows members of the public to submit dashcam or mobile phone footage of driving offences.

Technical and legal standardisation greatly speeds up the processing of submissions, with Welsh forces saying it has cut the time officers spend on each case from 15 hours to three.

The system cannot be used here because the law requires careless driving to be dealt with by the courts. However, if Stormont legislates to reduce it to a fixed-penalty offence, everyone can suddenly become a Traffic Branch reservist.

Downgrading a crime to tackle it might seem counter-intuitive but the sheer volume of enforcement Operation Snap makes possible could transform behaviour on our roads.

ON THIS DAY

JULY 31 1921

Virulent Intolerance

THE annual report of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress has been issued. The officers expressed the hope that the truce from actual warfare may develop into 'permanent peace and freedom'.

The industrial effects of the political-religious upheaval engineered by the Belfast Partitionists looms large in the report: 'We have endeavoured to assist in any way practicable to ensure the reinstatement of these expelled workers but regret that virulent intolerance still prevails and large numbers of men and women who were driven from their employment a year ago have been compelled to subsist upon the charity of the public for twelve long months. We confess to no sign of improvement.'

'A notable event in connection with Belfast was the action of the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners demanded that firms from whose employment men had been driven should allow the men to return and be given protection as had been done [in 1912]....'

Special Sent for Trial

MR JOHN Gray, RM, presiding in Belfast Custody Court, returned for trial a young man named Thomas Harkness, Zetland Street, a member of the Special Constabulary, on a charge of shooting at William Stitt, labourer on 14th inst.

William Stitt, answering District Inspector Speers, said that on the 14th inst at about 10.30 p.m. he was standing with a man named Magee at the corner of Sussex Place and Joy Street. He saw the prisoner coming from May Street. The Special Constable fired a shot towards Stitt. 'I felt it hitting me on the left shoulder and I fell.'

Another Child Riot Victim

ONE of the most distressing cases arising out of the disturbances in the city on Sunday, 10th July was the admission to the Mater Infirmorum Hospital of Mrs McGowan, Derby Street and her thirteen year old daughter, Mary, both suffering from bullet wounds to the legs. The little girl, who was the more seriously injured of the two, died in the hospital on Saturday morning following an operation for the amputation of the shattered limb. This brings the total death roll for that particular week up to 21.

The little victim bore her suffering uncomplainingly and with great courage. Constable Davy Magill had chivalrously offered a transfusion of his blood to assist her.

THE British government's failure to deal with sectarian expulsions while arming the sectarian USC reinforced nationalist hostility to the unionist state. Mary McGowan was a child victim of Belfast's 'Bloody Sunday'; Davy Magill from Cairncastle an RIC boxing champion.

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