
LEO VARADKAR WARNS NORTHERN IRELAND OF BREXIT CONSEQUENCES

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Ireland's new prime minister has used his first visit to Northern Ireland since his election to make a strong plea for action to deal with the consequences of Brexit.

Calling for unique solutions to be found, Leo Varadkar warned against a new economic border between the North and the South, which will become the UK's only land frontier with the EU after it leaves the bloc.

Describing Brexit as the challenge of our generation in a speech at Queens University in Belfast, he said he was in favour of a bespoke customs union to solve the problem of a hard border.

The Republic of Ireland is seen as the EU country most exposed to the fallout from Britain's departure. But Varadkar's warning on Friday was addressed to people in the North.

Every single aspect of life in Northern Ireland could be affected by the outcome (of Brexit). Your jobs and your economy, the border, the rights of EU citizens, the rights of cross border workers, research funding as I mentioned earlier, trade, agriculture, energy, our fisheries, aviation, EU funding, tourism, public services, the list goes on, the Irish prime minister said.

The taoiseach is also meeting DUP leader Arlene Foster, days after they rowed over the UK-Irish border post-Brexit. Her party, which is propping up the UK government in Westminster, accused Varadkar of megaphone diplomacy.

Varadkar had said he would not design a border for Brexiteers, calling on London to come up with solutions – but insisted there was no proposal for the Irish Sea to become the new frontier.

The issue is a priority in Brexit negotiations amid fears that border controls and customs checks may revive historic tensions which have been much eased since the 1998 Good Friday peace agreement.

Referring to a key Brexit summit in October, the Irish PM said time is running out and no extra time will be allowed.