

The Irish border

Attitudes to the Irish border sum up the differences between Leave and Remain.

To Leave there is no problem. The current Irish border is a complex international border, handled with the minimum of fuss. It is a Vat, Excise and currency border. These fiscal and financial requirements are handled away from the border, mostly electronically. If there are to be customs we could do the same with those.

It is a border requiring co-operation against smuggling, which already occurs. It is an anti terrorist border, without the need for border posts. There is action by police on both sides of the border to combat crime. We have a common travel area to ease the movement of people, which will continue after Brexit.

It will become a border for issues of quality and compliance for food and goods. As both sides currently meet the same standards and wish to do so after Brexit to sell to each other, we can continue with compliance checks away from the border with electronic manifests detailing what is on a truck and where it has been or will be tested.

To Remain it is a series of insoluble problems that require Northern Ireland to stay in the single market and customs union. To the Republic of Ireland and the EU it is an opportunity to advance the island of Ireland agenda for government of all matters commercial. They query a series of detailed and sensible proposals using existing technology and practices to avoid a more intrusive police and government presence at the border.

The UK government should repeat that after Brexit it will not impose watch towers and an army of inspectors on the border. It will use existing technology and practices to collect revenue and check goods, and will continue full co-operation with the Republic as now. The Republic can then work with the EU to decide how best to run their side of the border, knowing the UK will be helpful and positive about ensuring a smooth outcome.