

Brexit

Former diplomat warns Ireland on 'wrong track' in negotiations

Former senior Irish diplomat Ray Bassett has warned that Ireland is on the "wrong track" in Brexit negotiations and says the European Union should stop insulting the UK, as humiliation is counterproductive.

Speaking on Saturday at a "Making Sense of Brexit" symposium in Belfast, organised by the Irish Association, Dr Bassett, who retired from the Department of Foreign Affairs last year after 39 years of service, said Ireland should have no interest in teaching the British a lesson; rather, it has an interest in making Brexit a success.

He said it is time for the EU to "stop the insults" and pointed to the good exchange of information between Britain and Ireland in the build-up to the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

"It is not in your interest to insult or defeat the other person and there is too much of that at the moment in the negotiations."

Dr Bassett said the Irish Government should demand no physical border in Ireland, and should also insist that the talks move on to trade and economic matters and that the UK's exit bill be sent for international arbitration.

AMANDA FERGUSON

Environment

'Smart farming' initiative cuts carbon emissions by 10%

An initiative to encourage "smart farming" cut CO₂ emissions by 10 per cent on participating farms, and improved financial returns for farmers, according to the first assessment of its effectiveness.

Publication of the first Smart Farming Progress Report "shows a significant overshoot of targets for improving farm returns and enhancing the environment", according to the Irish Farmers' Association, which runs the voluntary initiative with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

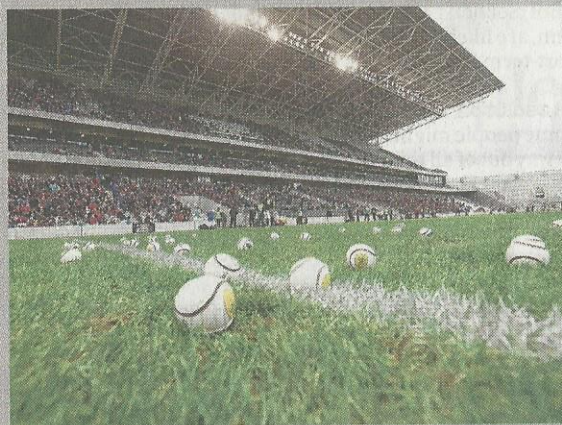
A total of 1,000 farmers will

have participated in the programme by the end of the year, with detailed resource efficiency assessments completed on 38 farms. The programme's target this year was to achieve an average cost saving of €5,000 and a reduction of 5 to 7 per cent in greenhouse gas emissions for each participating farm.

In addition to the 10 per cent average reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, average cost savings of €8,700 were achieved. Improving soil fertility accounted for 47 per cent of the savings.

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN

Sport



Páirc Uí Chaoimh reopens after €80m refurbishment

The €80 million newly refurbished Páirc Uí Chaoimh was praised by the Minister for Sport Shane Ross at its official opening yesterday.

Mr Ross described the stadium as a major addition to not just Cork but to Ireland, particularly when the country was bidding to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

"Ireland has put in a comprehensive, strong and competitive bid which as the full support of the Government and all other political parties. The entire population of the island of Ireland supports this bid and would make it a tournament like no other, full of Irish spirit," he said.

Noting the 45,000 capacity arena had been included in Ireland's long list of stadiums in the IRFU's bid, Mr Ross

congratulated the GAA and the Cork County Board on developing such a fine stadium.

GAA president Aogán Ó Fearghail unveiled a plaque after recalling that while the GAA was founded in Thurles in November 1884, the first actual working meeting of the new body took place on Leaside a month later.

Mr O Fearghail said hurling and football had been played on or near the Páirc Uí Chaoimh site in Ballintemple for more than 130 years.

"It is a world-class stadium and people deserve that - we are by far the most popular sport on the island of Ireland. We are pleased about that but we are not complacent and facilities play an important part in our success," he said.

BARRY ROCHE

Dublin

Work to begin on two hospital developments

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Minister for Health Simon Harris will today turn the sod on two new major hospital developments in Dublin.

The first ceremony will be at Connolly Hospital in west Dublin where a new paediatric outpatients and urgent care centre is to be developed.

Mr Varadkar and Mr Harris will later turn the sod on the first phase of a major redevelopment of the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dún Laoghaire.

The new paediatric out-patients and urgent care centre at Connolly along with a second such facility to be built at Tal-laght hospital and the new national children's hospital form part of an overall project to reshape hospital care for children.

The facility at Connolly Hospital will provide general community and paediatric clinics, including developmental paediatrics and multidisciplinary care for children with chronic stable conditions and other outpatient services.

The new development at the National Rehabilitation Hospital will see the existing ward accommodation replaced by a new block of 120 single en-suite rooms. It will include integrated therapy spaces, a new sports hall and a hydrotherapy unit.

MARTIN WALL