

## **Martin slates shabby and squalid campaign**

THERE are many lessons to be drawn from the Brexit negotiations to date and one of the most important is the need to replace negotiation through the media with close and substantive discussions, Fianna Fail leader, Micheál Martin, told the Killarney Economic Conference at the weekend.

He said the issues involved in the Brexit negotiations carry with them permanent consequences for the social, economic, cultural and political future for Ireland and Europe as a whole.

“Irrespective of where you stand, the increasingly undeniable reality is that Brexit is already causing damage.

“Equally there is still no proposal from the UK for a long-term arrangement which respects the right of EU members to maintain the core principles of their Union. There is no scenario available in which Brexit will not do further damage,” Mr Martin told the gathering in The Brehon Hotel, Killarney.

He stressed that exporters in Ireland are already suffering due to the fear of what will come after the transition period and the impact of a weakened Sterling.

“As for the UK, it is quite striking how the end of last year’s fiscal and economic data showed a picture of higher borrowing, higher inflation, lower disposable income and a loss to national income of £350 million a week,” the FF leader remarked.

Mr Martin said while he accepted the sincere personal beliefs of anti-EU advocates, he branded their campaign as “shabby and squalid”.

“It was largely based on fear-mongering and outright falsehoods. As the many insider accounts of the campaign have revealed in the last year, the overall ‘Leave’ strategy was to say or do whatever was necessary and to hell with the facts and the consequences. And quite frankly this gives everyone a right to argue over the shape and nature of what happens once the UK has left the EU,” the FF leader stated.

“For all parts of Ireland, there is no good Brexit. If what we end up with is a new customs border with light-touch technology administering it, it may not look like there is a border, but it will be there and it will be damaging businesses and communities on both sides,” Mr Martin maintained.

“Ireland has made its choice and we stand with the European ideal which has delivered so much for us and Europe,” he stressed.