

Minister fears Brexit impact on tourism

FRESH fears that Brexit will seriously impact on the tourism and agri-food sector have been voiced by Agriculture Minister, Michael Creed, who said very few policy, business or financial decisions will be made over the coming months and years that will not be affected by the issue in some way, either directly or indirectly.

The tourism industry, the lifeblood of many counties, including Kerry, could be “seriously affected” and, already, the number of British visitors visiting Ireland is down about six per cent on 2016, he stressed.

The Government is conscious that the decline in British visitors is having a disproportionate impact in some areas, particularly in high tourist areas.

“In response to these challenges, Tourism Ireland is targeting the marketing effort in GB through a Brexit lens, whilst at the same time seeking to build on the successful strategy of market diversification implemented since 2014,” Minister Creed told the inaugural Killarney Economic Conference.

“In the medium term, other Brexit associated risks will threaten tourism and aviation related risks will reduce air access if they materialise,” he said.

The minister warned that there will be very significant impacts if a hard or “no deal” Brexit ensues and all walks of Irish life will be affected.

“Brexit is a British policy, not an EU policy or an Irish policy, and we believe it is bad for the UK, bad for Europe and bad for Ireland. It presents challenges to our peace, and challenges to our prosperity.

“However, we are where we are and we must now get on and deal with the matter in a way that causes the minimal possible disruption,” he told the attendance at the conference.

Minister Creed said most immediate impact of Brexit over the last 18 months has been caused by the drop in the value of Sterling, resulting in serious financial losses for many sectors, particularly horticulture and forest products.

To help mitigate this and to assist in reducing costs and improving competitiveness, he introduced a range of measures aimed at helping reduce farm gate and business costs.

Despite Brexit concerns, the Government has worked hard at maintaining close relationships with Britain and Northern Ireland to reflect the unique economic, political, cultural and people-to-people links that exist, he told the gathering in Killarney.