



## Optimistic banker vents at 'Britain's folly'

It has been another busy week on the Brexit front, with the Bank of England governor, Mark Carney, announcing that he will remain in his post until after the UK's exit negotiations are completed in 2019. Meanwhile, the British high court ruled that parliament must vote on whether the UK can start the process of leaving the EU.

Closer to home, AIB's British chairman Richard Pym once again communicated his anger at the UK's decision in an address to an event in Kilkenny organised by the Association of European Journalists.

"The British government starts Brexit with its public finances in poor shape," he said. "A government spending deficit well outside euro zone norms, and the latest month's figures show a worrying shortfall in tax receipts. Accompanied by a massive trade deficit funded by external capital flows now under threat from Brexit.

"In the UK, business investment is falling, some sectors are already contracting, but consumer spending has continued growing which has sustained the growth figures. Once consumers find their wallets constricted then the UK economy will look

very different."

The AIB chairman revealed himself to be familiar with the Road Runner cartoon, invoking an analogy with the UK economy's continued growth post the referendum result.

"I think of it like one of those Road Runner cartoons, you know where Wile E Coyote is chasing Road Runner, and continues the chase over the edge of the cliff. Momentum carries the creature forward for a time before gravity has its inevitable victory."

Pym suggested that Ireland was now in a "unique position to benefit from Britain's folly".

"Ireland is open for business, anchored in the European Union, and a very attractive location for inward investment. Even after Brexit we forecast growth of over 3 per cent next year," he told delegates.

Pym is still hoping that Britain might have a change of heart on Brexit. "I still hope that once the severe economic threats become evident, and affect the wallets and purses of the nation, that someone will show leadership and that the British will change their mind."

That might be wishful thinking.