

# Trump threatens 'severe' tariffs on the EU

US President Donald Trump has confirmed he will visit Ireland this year and also that he is considering appointing a new peace envoy for the North.

During the traditional St Patrick's Day celebration meeting with the Taoiseach in the White House, Mr Trump reflected on Brexit and trade policies.

He confirmed he would be "coming at some point" during the year to Ireland. He had "a warm spot for Doonbeg" in Co Clare, where his golf resort is based, and Ireland was a "special place".



Earlier, US vice president Mike Pence also confirmed he was making plans to visit Ireland. This is expected to include a visit to Sligo and Clare where his grandfather's family lived.

Mr Trump answered a number of questions around Brexit, trade, the next US presidential election, and his immigration policies.

He said he would consider appointing a new peace envoy to the North. When asked by the Irish Examiner about this, he responded: "We may very well be doing that."

The Taoiseach told the president the two differed on Brexit and that he wanted to speak to Mr Trump about the Good Friday Agreement among other issues.

Mr Varadkar also thanked the US president for intervening in protecting jobs in a factory in the west of Ireland and saving hundreds of positions when sanctions against Russia previously threatened the plant's closure. He also thanked Mr Trump for US support in trying to get visas for tens of thousands of Irish people.

However, the Oval Office meeting was dominated by discussion and questions around Brexit and trade.

Mr Trump threatened to slam new "severe" economic tariffs on the EU unless it

changes its trade policies with Washington.

He said he did not think the UK should have a second Brexit referendum as he criticized the handling of Britain's negotiations.

Mr Trump said Brexit was "tearing" Britain apart.

"It's a shame it has to be that way. I'm surprised how bad it has all gone from a standpoint of the negotiations."

Mr Trump said the US can do a "very big trade deal" with the UK, and was already involved in talks with individual European countries.

He said the EU was "unwilling to negotiate" with the previous Obama administration, and that his prediction around the Brexit vote had been right.

"They [the EU] are willing to talk to us and if they don't talk to us we are going to do something that is pretty severe economically, we are going to tariff a lot of their products coming in because the European Union treats us very very unfairly, I have to say that."

Disagreeing with Mr Trump on Brexit, Mr Varadkar suggested the US president should focus his attention on trade with the EU.

"The most important thing for Ireland is that their [Brexit] decision doesn't cause any problems for Northern Ireland, which actually voted to stay, and we shouldn't have a hard border or anything that disrupts the peace process.

"We want to make sure we still have friction-less trade between Ireland and England. I believe in free trade and think it will be a few years before the UK sorts itself out. But in the meantime, the EU is available to talk trade with the US."

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