



Department of the
Environment

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NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SECTORAL MEETING

A Statement by Alex Attwood MLA

Minister of the Environment

13 March 2012

1. With your permission Mr Speaker, in compliance with section 52 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, I wish to make the following statement on the fourteenth meeting of the North South Ministerial Council in Environment sectoral format, which was held in Joint Secretaries' Offices Armagh on Friday, 2 March 2012. The statement has been agreed with Minister Kennedy.
2. Danny Kennedy MLA, Minister for Regional Development and I represented the Northern Ireland Executive. The Irish Government was represented by Phil Hogan TD, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, who chaired the meeting.

Water Quality

3. The Council received a presentation by the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland and the Geological Survey of Ireland on the £4 million (approximately €4.4 million) TELLUS BORDER project. The project is being carried out under the EU INTERREG IVA Programme and will provide invaluable data to support sustainable environmental management in both jurisdictions.
4. Ministers noted that the North South Working Group on Water Quality had met in February 2012. The group will continue to drive and oversee coordinated implementation of the River Basin Management Plans under the EU Water Framework Directive and will report on progress at a future meeting.
5. The Council welcomed proposals for Ministers' involvement in the Blue Flag and Green Coast Schemes awards including the General Assembly of the Foundation for Environmental Education event in June 2012.

Waste Management

6. Ministers noted that ongoing cooperation between officials, including the sharing of lessons learnt and best practice in delivering and administering the plastic bag levy in Ireland, had greatly facilitated progress with policy and operations development of a carrier bag levy in Northern Ireland.
7. The all-island tyre survey led by the Department of the Environment was welcomed by Ministers. Officials continue to explore opportunities for greater engagement to maximize the environmental benefits and deter illegal operators.
8. The Council noted that the North South Market Development Steering Group had met and concluded that work on joint Quality Protocols should not proceed as this work has been overtaken by the development of end-of-waste criteria at EU level.
9. The commencement of the Bulky Waste Reuse Management Feasibility Study which aims to develop a common approach to bulky waste reuse management in both jurisdictions was welcomed by Ministers.

10. The Council welcomed measures being taken to add value to the Irish Recycled Plastic Waste Arisings Study such as the Plastics Recycling Business Forum held in Dublin in January 2012. The Forum provided an opportunity to promote the study and receive feedback from the industry.
11. Ministers noted that the Department of the Environment Community and Local Government has engaged with the Department of the Environment and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in relation to cross-border Transfrontier Shipments movements of mixed Municipal Solid Waste from Northern Ireland to Ireland.

Cross Border Movements of Waste

12. The Council noted that the removal of waste from a site at Ballymartin, Kilkeel, was successfully completed in October 2011 and that the total combined tonnage of waste removed from sites at Ballymartin, Slattinagh and Trillick was in the region of 49,000 tonnes. It was reported that it is planned to deal with two further sites in 2012 and a new procurement process is being developed to deal with the remaining sites from 2013 onwards.
13. The Council noted that the joint enforcement actions dealing with illegal operators are a priority for both Environment Ministers and that Departments continue to target resources on this.
14. The Council also discussed the problem of fuel laundering.

Environmental Reporting and Research

15. The Council welcomed the latest Northern Ireland Environment Statistics Report published on 26 January 2012, which included common environmental indicators, and the forthcoming publication of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) state of environment report "Ireland's Environment 2012: An Assessment" and Ministers looked forward to the publication of joint environmental indicators in "Ireland North and South: A Statistical Profile" in 2013.
16. Ministers welcomed continued co-operation between both agencies on identification of emerging research needs and strategic planning of research funding programmes. It was noted that discussions are taking place with Intertradelreland to organise a targeted FP7 environment workshop and that a more general information and guidance day on FP7 for the Environment will be hosted by the EPA in June 2012.

Next Meeting

17. The Council agreed to hold the next Environment meeting in Summer 2012.