

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC 2 (13) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

SEVENTEENTH PLENARY MEETING

ARMAGH

8 NOVEMBER 2013

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The Seventeenth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held in Armagh on 8 November 2013.
2. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MLA. The Irish Government was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD. The meeting was chaired by the First Minister and deputy First Minister. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. The Council welcomed the success of the Investment Conference held in Northern Ireland during October following the hosting of the G8 summit. The success of the Global Irish Economic Forum, which included participation from Business representatives from both jurisdictions, was also welcomed.
4. Following their attendance at a conference exploring the role of sport in reconciliation, Ministers endorsed the collaboration between sporting organisations across the Island to tackle racism, sectarianism and division.

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC MATTERS

5. The Council had a discussion on the position of the Economies in both jurisdictions and welcomed the fact that some signs of recovery had been apparent over the last number of months. The Council was advised that the Irish Government is on track to exit the EU/IMF bailout by the end of the year.

6. The various actions being undertaken by each Administration to help support the economic recovery were explored and the importance of attracting Foreign Direct Investment and ensuring adequate access to credit within the banking sector in each jurisdiction was recognised. Both Administrations have a series of Trade visits planned to attract additional investment. Ministers agreed that they should continue to prioritise directing their efforts to economic recovery, job creation, the best use of public funds and the most effective delivery of services for their citizens.
7. The role of NAMA in making lending available to develop assets across the Island was welcomed. The Council was advised that disposal of assets from NAMA would be handled sensitively with a view to supporting the economic recovery in both jurisdictions.
8. The contribution of the Tourism Industry to both economies was highlighted. Ministers looked forward to the hosting of the Giro d'Italia in Northern Ireland next year which has a cross border element as cyclists travel from Armagh to Dublin. Ministers also recognised the value of tourism and, in particular, the success of ongoing, initiatives including *The Gathering Ireland 2013* and the *Derry~Londonderry UK City of Culture* celebrations.
9. The progress made to date under the "Building a Prosperous and United Community" economic package was discussed. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the package.

EU MATTERS

10. The importance of European Funding to both jurisdictions was recognised and current collaboration to draw down this funding was welcomed. Further possibilities for collaboration to draw down funding, which are mutually beneficial, continue to be explored.
11. The future Peace IV and Interreg V funding Programmes were discussed. Proposals for the structure of the Programmes are currently being developed and both Administrations looked forward to reviewing these.
12. Ministers remain supportive of the concept of the Narrow Water Bridge and have asked for an urgent analysis of the issues involved. They remain conscious that the priority is not to lose the EU funding involved.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

13. The Council noted the levels of youth unemployment in both jurisdictions, discussed the European Union's Youth Guarantee and agreed that, where possible, both jurisdictions should collaborate to tackle this issue.
14. The Council welcomed the ongoing collaboration between the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department for Social Protection to tackle the issue of Youth Unemployment and the NSMC will receive a further update on Youth Unemployment at a future meeting.

JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT

15. Ministers welcomed the work taken forward by the North South Bodies and in the other Areas for Co-operation since the last NSMC Plenary meeting including the following key developments:
- The business planning process for the establishment of a new radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin is progressing on time with construction due to commence in the spring of 2014 and completion scheduled for the summer of 2016;
 - Progress continues to be made on the agreed work programme on child protection. The programme, which was agreed in July 2012, promotes shared learning and is contributing further to improving practice in specific areas of safeguarding and child protection and focuses on five work streams;
 - The continued progress on the Common Agriculture Policy following the political agreement reached between the European Council and the European Parliament on the Multiannual Financial Framework and between the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament on CAP reform;
 - The successful high-level engagement between officials in both Education Departments. Progress will be reported to a future NSMC meeting relating to the agreed cooperation in the areas of 'Educational Underperformance' and 'Good School Leadership' workstreams;
 - The Terms of Reference for an all-island research study into the issue of airborne pollution from residential smoky coal combustion has been approved;
 - Both jurisdictions continue to share knowledge and experience in the delivery of road safety strategies and measures to further reduce road casualties;
 - In December 2013, InterTradeIreland will launch a free, multi-platform app for Horizon 2020. The app provides a centralised online portal of key information and also allows users to communicate with each other instantly, as well as facilitating partner searching and promoting opportunities to get involved in existing project consortiums;
 - Development on post 2013 Territorial Cooperation EU Programmes is processing and it is intended that Operational Programmes for PEACE and INTERREG will be presented to the Executive, the Irish Government and the Scottish Government (INTERREG V only) during 2013, with formal submission to the European Commission taking place following agreement of the relevant Governments;
 - A major new campaign focusing on childhood obesity was launched by safefood in October 2013. The campaign focuses on helping parents tackle the everyday habits that are associated with excess weight in childhood and to maintain awareness of the health challenges posed by excess weight;

- The Loughs Agency partnered with Tate Britain to supply oysters harvested in Lough Foyle at the Turner Prize events in Derry~Londonderry including the event launch which over 1000 guests attended;
- Foras na Gaeilge is proceeding with implementation of the new Core Funding arrangements with effect from 1 July 2014, in line with the NSMC decision from 10 July, and the two Agencies of the Language Body continue to collaborate on governance and promotional issues and the delivery of a joint programme of activities to mark the 400th Anniversary of Plantation Charters;
- The new Chief Executive of Waterways Ireland, Ms Dawn Livingstone, took up the position on the 29th July 2013. Development work on the Ulster Canal is progressing incrementally. All planning approvals have now been obtained from Cavan County Council, Clones Town Council, Fermanagh District Council and the Department of the Environment Planning Service. The Inter-Agency Group is exploring funding options; and
- Progress on the improved tourist visitor numbers to date in 2013 and the launch of the £15.7million Tourism Ireland Autumn promotional campaign in September 2013. The period September to December traditionally yields as much as 30% of overseas tourism business.

16. Ministers also acknowledged the ongoing work in relation to reform of the North South Bodies Pension Scheme.

ST ANDREWS AGREEMENT REVIEW

17. Following discussion, the Council agreed that Ministers consider their priorities in their respective sectoral areas. The outcome of this exercise will be considered at a future NSMC Institutional meeting as part of the ongoing review.

NORTH WEST GATEWAY INITIATIVE

18. The North West Gateway Initiative was discussed and Ministers looked forward to receiving a report on the outcome of the ongoing stakeholder consultation exercise at a future NSMC Institutional meeting.

NORTH SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

19. Ministers noted the current position on a North South Consultative Forum and agreed to review the issue at a future NSMC Plenary.

FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

20. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat, including a NSMC Plenary meeting in June 2014.

ANNEX A

MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ARMAGH – 8 NOVEMBER 2013

Irish Government	Northern Ireland Executive
Enda Kenny TD Taoiseach	The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA First Minister
Eamon Gilmore TD Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	Martin McGuinness MLA deputy First Minister
Michael Noonan TD Minister for Finance	Mark Durkan MLA Minister of the Environment
Ruairí Quinn TD Minister for Education and Skills	Stephen Farry MLA Minister for Employment and Learning
Brendan Howlin TD Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform	Arlene Foster MLA Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Richard Bruton TD Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	Simon Hamilton MLA Minister for Finance and Personnel
Jimmy Deenihan TD Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Danny Kennedy MLA Minister for Regional Development
Pat Rabbitte TD Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources	Nelson McCausland Minister for Social Development
Simon Coveney TD Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Carál Ní Chuilín MLA Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Frances Fitzgerald TD Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	John O'Dowd MLA Minister for Education
Leo Varadkar TD Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport	Michelle O'Neill MLA Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Fergus O'Dowd TD Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government	Jennifer McCann MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister