

PAPER NSMC 1 (14) JC NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL EIGHTEENTH PLENARY MEETING DUBLIN CASTLE, DUBLIN 3 OCTOBER 2014 JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

- 1. The Eighteenth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held at Dublin Castle, Dublin on 3 October 2014.
- 2. The Irish Government was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, who chaired the meeting. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MLA. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC MATTERS

3. There was a discussion on the employment situation in both jurisdictions and measures to encourage job creation. These included discussions on actions to build trade links with developing markets, attraction of foreign direct investment and issues relating to banking, in particular lending to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. Progress on the disposal of NAMA's Northern Ireland portfolio was welcomed by Ministers. Ministers also discussed economic and budgetary challenges facing both administrations and measures aimed at rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy.

4. Ministers welcomed the success of the Giro d'Italia cycling event which secured widespread global media coverage. Ministers also noted the opportunities for tourism and trade through the hosting of all-island events and agreed to continue to cooperate on a joint bid for the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

EU MATTERS

- 5. Ministers were updated on the current situation with respect to the INTERREG IVA and PEACE III Programmes. Both Programmes are fully committed and the challenge will be to ensure full expenditure by the end of 2015.
- 6. Progress on the development of the new INTERREG V and PEACE IV Programmes for the period 2014 2020 was discussed. The Council noted that the draft Programmes had been submitted to the EU commission by the deadline of 22 September 2014.
- 7. Ministers noted several other new European programmes which may present opportunities for cooperation to maximize the drawdown of EU funding to the island and agreed that these should be further examined.
- 8. Ministers also reviewed other EU related developments.

SECTORAL PRIORITIES

- 9. The Council noted that discussions on Sectoral Priorities have now taken place, following the decisions taken at the last NSMC Plenary in November 2013 and NSMC Institutional in January 2014. These discussions focused on efforts to support the economic recovery, job creation, ensuring the best use of public funds and the most effective delivery of services for citizens.
- 10. Ministers agreed that it had been useful to review progress and identify opportunities within the existing agreed work programmes and noted that a report on other priorities identified during the Ministerial discussions will be brought to the next NSMC Institutional Meeting.

NORTH WEST GATEWAY INITIATIVE

- 11. Ministers noted the conclusion of the consultation process that had been carried out with regional stakeholders relevant to the North West Gateway Initiative.
- 12. The Council also noted the views of the North West Gateway Initiative regional stakeholders on the direction, and priorities for the North West region, including the desire for a renewed and strengthened strategic focus endorsed by both Governments.

- 13. Ministers agreed that further consultation with relevant Government Departments should be undertaken on the issues identified during the consultation process.
- 14. The Council also reaffirmed its commitment to a future meeting of Ministers and officials in the North West to consider strategic approaches to the development of the region.

JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT

- 15. The Council noted the Progress Report prepared by the NSMC Joint Secretaries on the work of the North South Bodies and in the other NSMC areas for co-operation and welcomed the following key developments:
 - Cooperation is continuing on Strategic Transport Planning throughout the island. Opportunities for further cooperation have been identified in the following areas:
 - o developing the strategic road network of the island;
 - o enhancing connections to the North West of the island;
 - the future enhancement of the Enterprise Service;
 - driving a shift to public and more sustainable modes of transport and the potential for shared cross border public transport services in border areas; and
 - o development of cross border Greenways.
 - At the NSMC Health meeting in April Ministers were informed that the business planning process for the Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin was progressing with work almost complete on finalising a Memorandum of Understanding and Service Level Agreement for the operation of the unit. Since that meeting contracts have been finalised and building work started on the site in July;
 - An 'App' to allow smart phone and tablet access to the North South Child Protection Hub was launched by Childlink in February 2014;
 - Both Agriculture Departments continue to work closely on the policy options arising from the reform of CAP;
 - A Joint Workshop on Educational Underachievement was held in Armagh on 25 March 2014 and proposals to scope a cross border pilot in support of Leadership Development involving existing groups of principals in both jurisdictions was agreed;

- The contract for the all-island research study into the issue of airborne pollution from residential solid fuels, in particular smoky coal, has been awarded;
- Both Enterprise Departments and InterTradeIreland are working to encourage support for Research and Innovation activities and recognise that there is potential for North South collaboration to increase drawdown of funding. At their meeting in January Ministers welcomed the establishment of the Horizon 2020 Steering Group and the appointment of the NI joint chair to the US Ireland R&D partnership, both of which are positive developments in this area;
- At the Special EU Programmes meeting on 30 May 2014 SEUPB reported that all available funding under Peace III and Interreg IV had now been committed.;
- The second phase of the multi-media consumer campaign targeting childhood obesity is focusing on the importance of exercise in tackling overweight and obesity in children;
- The Loughs Agency in partnership with Co-operation Ireland has developed the Foyle River Ambassadors Citizenship Scheme. This is a pilot youth leadership project which brings together young people from across the City in a personal development and citizenship programme, the theme of which is to promote the recreational and educational activities provided on the river;
- Foras na Gaeilge has selected the six new lead organisations, operating on an all-island basis, to take forward the new funding arrangements for delivery of its strategic priorities;
- The Ulster Scots Agency recently awarded over £300k to organisations to promote and deliver Ulster Scots music and dance;
- Plans to restore the Upper Lough Erne to Clones section of the Ulster Canal are being pursued by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; and
- Official figures and sentiment showed a positive year of tourism growth in 2013. The Gathering Ireland 2013 and Derry~Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013 were cited as successes by the vast majority of those in the industry. Trade and industry feedback in relation to 2014 prospects and sentiment are generally positive.
- 16. Ministers also acknowledged the ongoing work in relation to reform of the North South Bodies Pension Scheme, including recently approved amendments to ensure the Scheme complies with employment legislation and best practice in both jurisdictions and to increase employee contributions.

NORTH SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

17. Ministers noted the current position on a North South Consultative Forum.

FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

18. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat, including a NSMC Institutional meeting in Autumn 2014 and the next NSMC Plenary meeting in December 2014.

Joint Secretariat 3 October 2014

ANNEX A

MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL DUBLIN CASTLE – 3 OCTOBER 2014

Irish Government	Northern Ireland Executive
Enda Kenny TD	The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA
Taoiseach	First Minister
Joan Burton TD	Martin McGuinness MLA
Tánaiste & Minister for Social	deputy First Minister
Protection	
Michael Noonan TD	Stephen Farry MLA
Minister for Finance	Minister for Employment and
	Learning
James Reilly TD	Arlene Foster MLA
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	Minister of Enterprise, Trade and
	Investment
Charles Flanagan TD	Simon Hamilton MLA
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	Minister for Finance and Personnel
Paschal Donohoe TD	Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Minister for Transport, Tourism and	Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Sport	
Heather Humphreys TD	John O'Dowd MLA
Minister for Arts, Heritage and	Minister for Education
Gaeltacht	
Damien English TD	Michelle O'Neill MLA
Minister of State for Skills Research	Minister of Agriculture and Rural
and Innovation	Development
Gerald Nash TD	Jim Wells MLA
Minister of State for Small Business	Minister of Health, Social Services
and Collective Bargaining	and Public Safety
Ann Phelan TD	Jonathan Bell MLA
Minister of State for Rural Economic	Junior Minister, Office of the First
Development and Rural Transport	Minister and deputy First Minister
	Jennifer McCann MLA
	Junior Minister, Office of the First
	Minister and deputy First Minister