

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC 2 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

NINETEENTH PLENARY MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

5 DECEMBER 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The Nineteenth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held in Armagh on 5 December 2014.
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 First Minister and deputy First Minister chaired the meeting. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. The Council noted that, following Ministerial consideration of a report on the feasibility of submitting a joint bid to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023, it had been agreed to support the IRFU's bid. The Council discussed the potential benefits hosting such an event would bring to both jurisdictions and agreed that the relevant Ministers should work closely together to ensure the strongest possible bid is submitted.
4. The Council also noted the position on Sectoral Priorities and the North West Gateway Initiative and agreed to keep these matters on its agenda.

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FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC MATTERS

5. Economic and budgetary issues in both jurisdictions were discussed. The Council welcomed that in general signs are positive while recognising that challenges remain. The recent announcement by the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer on Corporation Tax was also discussed.
6. Both Governments reflected on their respective successes in attracting external investment while recognising that there is a key role to be played by indigenous companies in economic development. The opportunities to work together on Joint Trade Missions and on developing new markets were recognised.

EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

7. Ministers noted that the new draft PEACE and INTERREG Programmes are currently with the European Commission for consideration and it is hoped that the final Programmes will be launched in Spring 2015.
8. The Council welcomed the ongoing discussions between Ministers at NSMC meetings on the potential for collaboration to draw down EU funds and noted that there is active engagement between both jurisdictions on the opportunities available. The Council looked forward to a further progress report at its next meeting.

CHILD PROTECTION AND E-SAFETY

9. The Council had an in-depth discussion on Child Protection issues with a particular focus on e-Safety and noted that good collaborative work is already taking place on Child Protection, both within the NSMC structures and elsewhere.
10. Ministers recognised that issues such as these are cross-cutting and cross-jurisdictional and will require collaborative working to address.
11. The Council agreed that Ministers who have a remit in Child Protection and E-Safety related activities should engage with their counterparts in the opposite jurisdiction to explore whether there is potential for further collaboration. It was also agreed that this topic should be revisited at a future meeting.

JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT

12. 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 of co-operation and welcomed the following key developments:
 - co-operation is continuing on identifying Strategic Transport Priorities including developing the strategic road and sustainable transport networks. Opportunities are being explored to pursue EU funding in a mutually

beneficial manner to include support for the development of cross border Greenways;

- progress continues in relation to developing the two new suicide prevention strategies to follow on from the *Reach Out* and *Protect Life* strategies. Both jurisdictions have committed to share knowledge arising from media and public information campaigns on mental health;
- the All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care has launched its Children and Young People website and the first ever All-Island Palliative Care Week took place from 6-11 October and aimed to encourage a deeper public understanding of palliative care;
- both administrations are in the process of seeking approval from the European Commission for their respective Rural Development Programmes 2014 – 2020;
- at their meeting on 22 October 2014, Ministers received a joint presentation on cross-border co-operation between the Departments on educational underachievement. The focus of the presentation was the Joint Workshop that had taken place in Dublin on 8 October 2014. Work will now be taken forward to establish a means of sharing the experience of schools to address the issue of educational disadvantage;
- the contract for the All-Island Air Quality Research Study into the issue of airborne pollution from the combustion of residential solid fuels, in particular smoky coal was awarded in February 2014 and an interim report is being considered by officials and will be presented to Ministers in the near future. The second and final phase of the study is due to commence before the end of the year;
- both Enterprise Departments and InterTradeIreland continue to encourage North South collaboration in Research and Innovation to increase drawdown of funding. Significant actions have included the publication of InterTradeIreland's Horizon 2020 Guide, the recently held *Collaborate to Innovate* Conference in Dublin Castle, and the launch of the jointly agreed Strategic Action Plan prepared by the Horizon 2020 All-Island Steering Group;
- the draft PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programmes (2014-2020) were submitted to the European Commission on 22 September 2014, in line with the regulatory deadline. The Programmes are now in the negotiation phase with the Commission and it is hoped that the final Programmes will be launched in Spring 2015;
- safefood continues to develop Community Food Initiatives and the evaluation of the first year of the current 10 projects has concluded that all are progressing very well. A range of research reports and surveys have also been completed by safefood in recent months;

- the Loughs Agency continues to work on the marketing and promotion of the Foyle and Carlingford Areas through the development of marine tourism, angling and education and outreach programmes;
- Foras na Gaeilge continues to assist with the implementation of the new funding arrangements including the agreement of an overall high-level strategic plan in addition to three year plans for each of the six strategic areas;
- a new Discover Ulster-Scots Centre was opened on 27 November, at the Corn Exchange Ulster-Scots Hub in Belfast. This centre works with a number of partners to maximise the opportunity for collaboration within the Ulster-Scots sector to provide a modern showcase on Ulster-Scots culture for the general public;
- Waterways Ireland has developed the *Shannon Blueway*, Ireland's first Blueway (a multi-activity trail running alongside water) between Drumshanbo and Carrick-on-Shannon in Co Leitrim in conjunction with the National Trails Office, Canoeing Ireland, Leitrim County Council and Leitrim Tourism. The Body continue to engage with relevant organisations, interested in further development of Blueways or Greenways including exploring opportunities that may exist for EU funding; and
- the British-Irish Visa Scheme was officially announced by the UK and Irish Governments on 6 October 2014. Under the first phase of the scheme, Indian and Chinese nationals will be able to visit the UK and Ireland using just one visa, removing the need for those visiting Northern Ireland to apply for a separate visa to travel across the border, and vice versa. It is anticipated that the scheme will significantly boost business and holidaymaker visitors.

NORTH SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

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

FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

14. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat, including a NSMC Institutional meeting in early 2015 and the next NSMC Plenary meeting in early summer 2015.

**Joint Secretariat
5 December 2014**

ANNEX A

MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ARMAGH – 5 DECEMBER 2014

| Northern Ireland Executive | Irish Government |
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| The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA First Minister | Enda Kenny TD Taoiseach |
| Martin McGuinness MLA deputy First Minister | Joan Burton TD Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection |
| Mark Durkan MLA Minister of the Environment | Brendan Howlin TD Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform |
| Stephen Farry MLA Minister for Employment and Learning | Richard Bruton TD Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation |
| David Ford MLA Minister of Justice | Frances Fitzgerald TD Minister for Justice & Equality |
| Simon Hamilton MLA Minister for Finance and Personnel | James Reilly TD Minister for Children & Youth Affairs |
| Danny Kennedy MLA Minister for Regional Development | Leo Varadkar TD Minister for Health |
| Carál Ní Chuilín MLA Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure | Charlie Flanagan TD Minister for Foreign Affairs |
| John O'Dowd MLA Minister for Education | Jan O'Sullivan TD Minister for Education & Skills |
| Michelle O'Neill MLA Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development | Alex White TD Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources |
| Mervyn Storey MLA Minister for Social Development | Paschal Donohoe TD Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport |
| Jim Wells MLA Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety | Heather Humphreys TD Minister for Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht |
| Jonathan Bell MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister | Gerald Nash TD Super Junior Minister of State with responsibility for Business & Employment with special |

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| | responsibility for small business , collective bargaining and low pay commission |
| Jennifer McCann MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister | Sean Sherlock TD Minister of State with special responsibility for ODA, Trade Promotion and North South Cooperation |
| | Simon Harris TD Minister of State with special responsibility for OPW, Public Procurement and International Banking |