

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

TENTH INSTITUTIONAL MEETING

STORMONT CASTLE, BELFAST

25 FEBRUARY 2015

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The tenth North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Institutional meeting was held in Stormont Castle, Belfast on 25 February 2015.
2. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by the First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA and the deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MLA. The Irish Government was represented by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charlie Flanagan TD and Minister of State for Development, Trade Promotion and North-South Co-operation, Seán Sherlock TD. The First Minister and deputy First Minister chaired the meeting.
3. Ministers discussed a range of issues impacting on the economies in each jurisdiction. The importance of connectivity in encouraging economic growth was also highlighted.

SECTORAL PRIORITIES

4. In line with the Stormont House Agreement of the 23 December 2014, the Council agreed to note a report presented on New Sectoral Priorities. Ministerial discussions at sectoral level have focussed on areas of mutual benefit including economic recovery, job creation and improving service delivery. Ministers will now be asked to review formally the work programmes in their various sectors and an update paper on these discussions will be brought to the June 2015 Plenary meeting. It was agreed that a paper will be

brought to a future Institutional meeting on longer term sectoral priorities and that 'New Sectoral Priorities' will be an agenda item at future NSMC Institutional Meetings.

EU MATTERS

5. The Council received an update on the ongoing Ministerial discussions which are examining the potential for collaboration to maximise drawdown of EU funds across all the NSMC Areas of Cooperation. Ministers agreed that these discussions should continue and that a report should be brought to the next NSMC Plenary Meeting.
6. Ministers also noted the joint target of €175million which has been set for drawdown of funding under the Horizon 2020 Programme.

NORTH SOUTH BODIES ISSUES

7. The Council discussed a range of matters relating to the North South Bodies. It was noted that all Bodies had prepared Business Plans for 2015 which will deliver the agreed efficiency savings of 8% compared to the 2013 budget.
8. Ministers also discussed other governance issues and noted that the Boards of the Bodies are fully operational, that there have been staffing changes at a senior level across a number of Bodies, and that the North/South Pension Scheme is in the process of being reformed.
9. The Council also noted that the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are taking forward a review of the Bodies' Financial Memoranda and the outcome of the review will be brought to a future NSMC meeting.

BOARDS OF THE NORTH SOUTH BODIES AND TOURISM IRELAND

10. The Council noted that the terms of appointment for some board members of North South Bodies are due to expire later this year and considered a proposal on the terms of appointment for board members. It was agreed that the Joint Secretariat should investigate this proposal and that a paper on board member appointments would be brought to the next NSMC plenary meeting.

AMENDMENT TO THE NORTH/SOUTH PENSION SCHEME

11. Ministers agreed an amendment to the North/South Pension Scheme. The amendment will move the scheme to a defined contribution scheme and will link the scheme pension age to the state pension age in each jurisdiction.

NORTH WEST GATEWAY INITIATIVE

12. Ministers noted that following engagement with key stakeholders in the region on the future direction of the North West Gateway Initiative officials have now consulted with relevant government departments. The Council also noted developments in relation to local government in the North West, and agreed that a meeting of relevant Ministers should be held in the North West in May 2015, in line with the Stormont House Agreement.

NSMC ANNUAL REPORT 2014

13. The Council noted the NSMC Annual Report for 2014 which will be published before the end of March 2015.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14. The Council agreed to meet again in Institutional format in autumn 2015.

**Joint Secretariat
25 February 2015**