

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC ENV 1 (16) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

14 SEPTEMBER 2016

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-second North South Ministerial Council Environment meeting was held in NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 14 September 2016. The meeting was attended by Denis Naughten TD, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Michelle McIlveen MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and Chris Hazzard MLA, Minister for Infrastructure. Minister Naughten chaired the meeting.

IMPLICATIONS OF UK REFERENDUM

2. Ministers had an initial discussion on the implications of the UK EU Referendum result.

UPDATE ON EU FUNDING

3. The Ministers welcomed the continuing cooperation on the main sources of EU Funding in the Environment sector- Horizon 2020, INTERREG V and LIFE- including joint meetings of Northern Ireland and Ireland contact points, joint training and information events in both jurisdictions, and reciprocal access to partner search databases.

4. The Council noted that cross-border road show events had taken place in April and May 2016 on Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2 and 5 and that a National Information Day for Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 5 will be hosted by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in late September/early October 2016.
5. The Council also noted that co-operation between both jurisdictions continues on preparations for a package of joint projects with a value in excess of €70 million covering the terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments with the INTERREG VA programme.
6. Ministers noted that the call for proposals under the LIFE 2016 opened on 19 May 2016 and will close in September 2016 and that a small number of proposals containing projects within Ireland and Northern Ireland are expected to be submitted.

REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME

7. The Council noted that the Work Programme will be kept under review at future NSMC Environment sector meetings having regard in particular to matters arising from the outcome of the UK Referendum on EU membership.
8. Ministers agreed that within the Work Programme, consideration should be given to co-operation on water and sewerage services as well as opportunities for co-operation on wider environmental issues.
9. Ministers also agreed the proposed updated Work Programme will be considered at a future NSMC Plenary meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF FUEL LAUNDERING

10. The Council noted that since the introduction in both jurisdictions of a new fuel marker in April 2015 there has been a decline in the reporting of flytipping incidents involving waste arising from fuel laundering.
11. The Council also noted the number and cost of diesel laundering waste clean-up operations undertaken by relevant authorities in border counties to date.
12. Ministers agreed that officials should continue to work jointly with all the relevant agencies to tackle the scourge of fuel laundering and its links to organised crime.

CROSS BORDER MOVEMENTS OF WASTE

13. The Council noted that the agreed Repatriation Programme for 2015-2016 has been completed with the removal and repatriation of waste from two illegal waste landfill sites. Site works at the first site located at Altnamackan were completed in November 2015 and the second site at Mayobridge was completed in March 2016.
14. Ministers noted that discussions are underway between officials from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE)

and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) with a view to agreeing a work programme to complete the remaining repatriation sites.

15. Environment Ministers reaffirmed they are continuing to work together and target resources into joint enforcement action against those involved in illegal waste activity including the continued exchange of intelligence and information on problem areas with the continuation of co-ordinated joint inspections.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

16. The Council noted that pay by weight for household waste collections has been introduced in Ireland. It was also noted by the Council the publication of the three regional waste management plans in Ireland and the transboundary consultation which was undertaken with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in the context of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process associated with the development of the plans.
17. The Council noted the continued investment in recycling in Northern Ireland and the latest recycling rate. It was also noted by the Council the introduction in Northern Ireland of legislative measures to reduce the amount of food waste sent to landfill as well as the introduction of further legislation to discourage criminality in the waste industry.
18. The Council also noted that DCCAE commissioned study on the export of waste from Ireland was published in November 2015 and the consultation period closed on 14 March 2016.
19. Ministers noted developments in the establishment of a tyres PRI (Producer Responsibility Initiative) in Ireland and that DAERA officials continue to attend the Tyres Working Group Meetings.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, REPORTING AND RESEARCH

20. The Council noted that the EPA offered funding of over €8 million to a total of 43 projects across a broad spectrum including climate, water, sustainability and green enterprise in 2015 and that its 2016 research call was announced in May 2016.
21. Ministers noted that the report of the NSMC commissioned “all-island” air quality research study has been finalised and presented to relevant Ministers and is available through the DAERA and DCCAE websites.
22. The Council noted that a report on Phase 1 of the “All Island Joint Research Programme into UGEE-fracking” is expected in the latter part of 2016.
23. The Council also noted the establishment across both jurisdictions of a collaborative evidence programme known as ‘ShARE’ under which a programme of research has been developed with 10 ongoing projects and that new project calls in priority areas is likely to commence later this year.

WATER QUALITY

24. Ministers welcomed the establishment of the new Local Authority and Waters and Communities Office in Ireland.
25. Ministers noted that the public consultation on “Significant Water Management Issues” (SWMI) closed in Ireland on 18 December 2015 and that the final second cycle River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) for Northern Ireland were published on 22 December 2015.
26. Ministers acknowledged the cross border cooperation on development of River Trusts including promotion, awareness and community engagement in the cross border River Blackwater Catchment.
27. Ministers recognised the continued co-ordination on the Clean Coast and Coastcare Schemes and welcomed the level of beach awards in both jurisdictions for 2016.
28. The Council noted the continued engagement between the Department for Infrastructure, DCCA, Irish Water and Northern Ireland Water on exploring opportunities for cooperation including applications to access EU INTERREG V Funds.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

29. It was agreed to hold the next Environment meeting in spring 2017.

**Joint Secretariat
14 September 2016**

Website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org