

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC 1 (12) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

FOURTEENTH PLENARY MEETING

FARMLEIGH HOUSE, DUBLIN

15 JUNE 2012

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The fourteenth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held at Farmleigh House, Dublin on 15 June 2012.
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 MP MLA. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. The Council discussed economic developments, including the impact of the euro-zone crisis, fiscal challenges, bank restructuring and lending and NAMA. Ministers re-iterated their commitment to practical cooperation on these issues and to explore areas where potential cost savings might be achieved. The potential benefits of developing markets for both jurisdictions were recognised. Ministers discussed opportunities for co-operation in this area and to maximise the potential from Tourism events.
4. Ministers welcomed continuing collaboration on innovation within the European Union and noted a successful and well attended “Collaborate to Innovate” Conference on European research and innovation funding for SMEs on the

7 June 2012, which was addressed by EU Commissioner Máire Geoghegan Quinn, Minister Arlene Foster and Minister of State Lucinda Creighton.

JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT

5. 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 :

- Tourism Ireland's successful campaign in 2011 and its major initiatives in 2012 and 2013 including ni2012 "Our Time, Our Place", the Derry~Londonderry UK City of Culture, the World Police and Fire Games and 'The Gathering 2013' ;
- InterTradeIreland's activities to promote collaboration to maximise drawdown of funding under the EU Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI) Framework Programme and to improve accessibility to procurement markets for SMEs;
- SEUPB's successful open call for INTERREG IVA applications, which closed in February 2012, with 91 applications worth €217.6 (£189.2) million and of these 13 applications valued at €48.3 (£42) million are being considered further.
- the commencement of programme development on a future PEACE programme and a future INTERREG cross border programme;
- the Food Safety Promotion Board's (safefood) successful collaborative "Knowledge Networks" which will assist knowledge sharing by those involved in the food chain;
- the Loughs Agency's success as lead partners with the University of Glasgow and Queen's University Belfast, in securing funding of £8 million through INTERREG IVA for the project 'Integrated Aquatic Resource Management Between Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland (IBIS)' ;
- completion by Foras na Gaeilge of public consultation on the introduction of new funding arrangements for core-funded bodies with interim funding arrangements extended to 30 June 2013;
- the success of the Ulster-Scots Agency 2012 Burns Night Gala which was attended by 950 people in the Ulster Hall Belfast and its development of a programme of activities to mark the centenary of the Titanic, the centenary of the Ulster Covenant and the 400th anniversary of the Plantation Charters;
- preparation by Waterways Ireland of options for advancing the Ulster Canal project;

- discussions between the Agriculture departments on the proposed reforms to CAP post 2013 and meetings between the two Chief Veterinary Officers and the EU Commission during which the case for the All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy was set out;
- a joint survey to inform cross-border pupil movement and school planning is being undertaken. The results from the survey and proposals on the way forward are to be considered no later than the first NSMC Education meeting of 2013;
- the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are taking forward joint actions on research to support implementation of environmental policy and legislation and are co-operating in supporting researchers seeking European funding for priority environmental research under the EU FP7, INTERREG and LIFE+ programmes;
- continued progress on business planning for the establishment of the Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin which is planned to commence in 2013 and to be operational by 2016;
- a successful North South conference on alcohol misuse was held in Armagh on 26 January 2012. Over 130 delegates from many sectors attended the conference, which included informative presentations from local and international speakers;
- the launch of the Inter-Jurisdictional Protocol in Child Protection for the Transfer of Child Care cases between Northern Ireland and Ireland and work to develop a new cross-border work programme in Child Protection;
- collaboration on road safety including sharing of knowledge and experience on the introduction of lower Blood Alcohol Concentration levels for drivers, improving new driver safety and on the introduction of mutual recognition of penalty points for 4 lesser road traffic infringements; and
- Northern Ireland Rail and Irish Rail have improved the reliability and punctuality of the Enterprise service and have future plans to improve locomotive reliability, reduce fuel consumption and equip Enterprise trains with Wi-Fi.

IRISH EU PRESIDENCY

6. Ministers discussed the challenges and likely priorities for the upcoming Irish EU Presidency in 2013. They explored the potential for co-operative actions during the Presidency, including meetings of senior officials, the hosting of EU events in both jurisdictions and discussion of EU Matters, as an Agenda item at relevant NSMC meetings in sectoral format.

NORTH WEST GATEWAY INITIATIVE

7. There was a discussion on the North West Gateway Initiative and Ministers welcomed progress that has been made on a range of projects delivered and planned which aim to deliver economic and social benefits in the North West. Ministers will meet to reaffirm their commitment to maintaining progress to ensure that the measures to be taken forward through the North West Gateway Initiative, as outlined in the Progress Report, are effectively delivered through the work of their Departments and they noted that a further progress report will be brought forward to the next NSMC Institutional meeting.

PROGRESS ON A5 and A8 ROAD PROJECTS

8. The Council discussed progress to date on the A5 (North West Gateway to Aughnacloy) and A8 (Belfast to Larne) projects. Ministers noted that the NI Executive has announced an investment package including two sections of the A5 and the A8 project. They also noted that the Irish Government remains committed to the completion of the co-funded A5 project.

THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

9. Ministers discussed the importance of co-operation on Third Level Education, taking account of the likely increase in student mobility between both jurisdictions and the importance of continuing collaborative action between third level institutions to assist with cost savings and on research and development.

ST. ANDREWS AGREEMENT REVIEW

10. Ministers endorsed the following recommendations concerning North South Bodies:

Waterways Ireland

- sponsor departments to consider options around the setting up of a Board that would deliver the benefits of improved accountability and governance for Waterways Ireland but comprising less than twelve members and to present proposals for consideration at a future NSMC Inland Waterways meeting;
- sponsor departments to implement as appropriate, through changes to the legislation or other administrative means, a de minimis provision for dealing with Waterways Ireland disposal of a waterway or part of a waterway;
- sponsor departments to review the current provisions in relation to Waterways Ireland's commercial activities to ensure that these are adequate and to report to a future NSMC Inland Waterways meeting; and
- taking account of the current economic and fiscal circumstances, no further action is taken at this time to extend the remit of Waterways Ireland.

Language Body

- no further action is required concerning engagement between the Boards of the Language Body, sharing of services and consolidation of accounts since work is already underway to address each of these issues;

- no further action is required concerning the remit of the Ulster-Scots Agency to undertake work associated with the promotion of Ulster-Scots language and culture outside the island of Ireland, since legal advice has indicated that the existing legislation presents no difficulty with this;
- sponsor departments will continue to assist the Ulster-Scots Agency to achieve value for money within existing budgetary constraints; and
- no action is required at present concerning an increase in the Board membership of the Ulster-Scots Agency but this issue will be kept under review, subject to consideration of the legislative and financial implications.

Loughs Agency

- the Loughs Agency to establish and provide services to producer organisations for the development of marine products with any legislative obstacles identified by the agency to be addressed by the two Sponsor Departments;
- an amendment is sought to the Magistrates' Courts (Costs in Criminal Cases) Rules (Northern Ireland) 1988 to enable costs awarded to better reflect the cost of bringing prosecutions. DARD will keep under review the opportunity to amend the Foyle Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1952 to allow for a fixed penalty regime.

SEUPB

- taking account of existing EU monitoring arrangements, the cost of a Board, to administer just 3% of the SEUPB budget, would be difficult to justify;
- the two sponsor Departments will examine the governance arrangements for the SEUPB that are currently in place and will report to the next NSMC SEUPB meeting in October 2012.

FSPB

- there should be no change in the status of the current board of the FSPB from "advisory" to "executive"; and
- the FSPB may intervene in the event of a food scare situation if invited to do so by the lead authorities in both jurisdictions, provided there is no legal impediment to doing so.

11. Ministers noted that work is progressing on a review of the Financial Memoranda of the North/South Bodies with the aim of having the review completed by end-December 2012. In relation to shared services, it was noted that work has commenced on exploring the potential for providing efficiency savings within the North/South Bodies with a view to a report to the NSMC in Autumn 2012.
12. The Council noted that the First Minister, deputy first Minister, Taoiseach and Tánaiste will reflect and consult on Terms of Reference 2 and 3 with a view to decisions being taken at the November 2012 Plenary meeting

NORTH SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

13. The Council noted the background and recent developments on the North South Consultative Forum and agreed to resolve this issue at the next NSMC Plenary.

NORTH SOUTH PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

14. The Council noted the latest developments on a North South Parliamentary Forum and expect deliberations to be finalised shortly.

FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

15. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat, including a NSMC Institutional meeting in October 2012 and the next NSMC Plenary meeting on 2 November 2012.

**Joint Secretariat
15 June 2012**

ANNEX A

MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL FARMLEIGH, DUBLIN – 15 JUNE 2012

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 MP MLA deputy First Minister
Michael Noonan TD Minister for Finance	Alex Attwood MLA Minister of the Environment
Ruairí Quinn TD Minister for Education and Skills	Stephen Farry MLA Minister for Employment and Learning
Richard Bruton TD Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	David Ford MLA Minister of Justice
Joan Burton TD Minister for Social Protection	Danny Kennedy MLA Minister for Regional Development
Jimmy Deenihan TD Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Nelson McCausland MLA Minister for Social Development
Phil Hogan TD Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government	Carál Ní Chuilín MLA Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Alan Shatter TD Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence	John O'Dowd MLA Minister for Education
Simon Coveney TD Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food	Michelle O'Neill MLA Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Frances Fitzgerald TD Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	Jennifer McCann MLA Junior Minister OFMDFM
James Reilly TD Minister for Health	