

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC SEU 1 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

30 MAY 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The seventeenth North South Ministerial Council Special EU Programmes meeting was held at the NSMC Joint Secretariat offices Armagh on 30 May 2014. The meeting was attended by Simon Hamilton MLA, Minister for Finance and Personnel, Brendan Howlin TD, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and OFMDFM Junior Minister Jennifer McCann MLA. Minister Hamilton chaired the meeting.

SECTORAL PRIORITIES

2. Ministers had a discussion on various priorities within their remit and noted that these will be contained in a report to be considered at a future NSMC Institutional meeting as part of the ongoing review into sectoral priorities.

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES PROGRESS REPORT

3. The Council received a detailed progress report from the Chief Executive of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), Mr Pat Colgan, who reported on the various activities of the Body including progress on the implementation of the

PEACE III and INTERREG IVA Programmes. Ministers noted that at the end of March 2014:

- (i) the PEACE III Programme has approved 217 projects with a combined value of €332.03m (£274.4m) which represents a 100% commitment level. The cumulative expenditure as of 31 March 2014 is €224.02m (£185.1m). The remaining €108.9m must be expended before the end of 2015;
 - (ii) SEUPB has now reallocated the funding from the withdrawal of the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre. This surplus has now been re-allocated to the Peace Partnerships, those existing projects which did not receive the full value of their letter of offer at the time of issue due to budget constraints and two waitlisted projects—the Earls project and Voices from the Valley;
 - (iii) the INTERREG IVA Programme had approved 88 projects at a combined value of €264.3m (£218.4m) which represents a 103% commitment level. Cumulative expenditure as of 31 March 2014 is €152.8m (£126.3m). The remaining €103.2m to be spent by the end of 2015;
 - (iv) following the withdrawal of the Narrow Water Bridge Project agreement has been reached to reallocate these INTERREG funds to upgrade the Enterprise Service and refurbish the Drogheda viaduct. Ministers remain supportive of the concept of the Narrow Water Bridge.
4. Ministers noted that the Body continues to facilitate North South participation in the INTERREG IV Transnational and Inter-regional Programmes. 67 project partners have been secured drawing down a total of €11m in ERDF for NI across the relevant programmes and the majority of these are now coming to an end, and receiving final payments. Preparation work is well underway for the new transnational programmes, and the SEUPB is guiding potential applicants on the content of the new programmes.
 5. The SEUPB continues to communicate the positive impacts of the EU Programmes through high profile events, such as the official launch of the City Garden of Reflection project in Derry-Londonderry on 23 January 2014 and a ground breaking ceremony for the Girdwood Hub project in Belfast on 10 April 2014. Two conferences will be held in the summer and autumn to highlight the achievements of the PEACE and INTERREG IVA Programmes.

FUTURE EU PROGRAMMES

6. Ministers were updated on the progress of the preparation work for the new EU Programmes for Cross Border Co-Operation (INTERREG V and PEACE IV) and noted that it is intended that Operational Programmes for PEACE IV and INTERREG V will be presented to the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government and the Scottish Government (INTERREG V only) in September 2014, following a formal consultation process, with submission to the European Commission taking place by the 22 September 2014.

7. Public consultations are due to commence in early June.

STAFFING REVIEW PARTS 1 and 2

8. Ministers discussed the recommendations of both parts of the Staffing Review and agreed that the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with the SEUPB would continue to examine the future options.

NORTH SOUTH PENSION SCHEME

9. Ministers approved changes to the North/South Pension Scheme and noted that consultation on further reform of the North/South Pension Scheme is underway.

NEXT MEETING

10. The Council agreed to hold its next Special EU Programmes meeting in autumn 2014.

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