

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC WI 2 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

INLAND WATERWAYS MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

27 NOVEMBER 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty first North South Ministerial Council Inland Waterways meeting was held in Armagh on 27 November 2014. The meeting was attended by Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, OFMDFM Junior Minister Jonathan Bell MLA, and Joe McHugh TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs. Minister Humphreys chaired the meeting.

EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

2. Ministers noted the approach being adopted by Waterways Ireland in attempting to maximise the benefit of EU Funding Opportunities.

PROGRESS REPORT

3. The Council received a progress report from Dawn Livingstone, Chief Executive of Waterways Ireland on the activities of Waterways Ireland including the following :

- (i) management and maintenance of waterways continued with over 95% of the navigations open for the period April to September;
- (ii) revised draft Canal Bye-Laws for the south were prepared following a public consultation process and consultation on revised Erne Bye-Laws is scheduled for Winter 2014;
- (iii) capital expenditure is focused on major infrastructure repairs with replacement lock gates at Tarmonbarry on the Shannon, bridge repairs on the Grand Canal ongoing and new floating moorings installed at Crom on Upper Lough Erne;
- (iv) the 2014 Sponsorship Programme continued with 105 events supported;
- (v) 20.4 km of towpath enhancement has taken place on the Royal and Grand Canals through partnerships with local authorities to fund the developments;
- (vi) the development by Waterways Ireland of 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;
- (vii) expansion of the Schools Education Programme with the development of a schools' walking tour exploring the history of the Grand Canal Dock;
- (viii) two new community partnerships to care for the waterways continue to be developed with Mountjoy Prison and Dublin Institute of Technology; and
- (ix) development of two new businesses along the waterways, with a new cruise hire business on the Shannon-Erne Waterway and a new lunchtime food market licensed to use Charlemont Place in Dublin.

WATERWAYS IRELAND DEVELOPMENT OF THE “BLUEWAY” PRODUCT

4. Ministers received a presentation on how Waterways Ireland is developing the “Blueway” product and brand development in order to maximise the use of inland waterway property and infrastructure through the creation of multi-activity trails on and alongside the navigations. This included the potential economic and recreational benefits which long distance routeways can provide.

BUSINESS PLANS AND BUDGETS 2013, 2014 AND 2015 AND CORPORATE PLAN 2014-2016

5. Ministers agreed the 2013 indicative budget of €29.47m (£24.17m) as a baseline for 2014-2016 draft budgets. .
6. They also noted Waterways Ireland's:
 - 2014 draft Business Plan and Budget provision
 - 2015 draft Business Plan and Budget provision
 - Corporate Plan for 2014-2016.
7. In noting the progress with the Business Plans, Ministers also approved a number of key priorities for Waterways Ireland for 2015 and noted that the draft Business Plans and Budgets will be brought to a future NSMC meeting for approval.

UPDATE ON THE RESTORATION OF THE UPPER LOUGH ERNE TO CLONES SECTION OF THE ULSTER CANAL

8. The Council received an update on plans to restore the Upper Lough Erne to Clones section of the Ulster Canal.

PROPERTY DISPOSALS

9. The Council consented to a number of property disposals.

NEXT MEETING

10. The Council agreed to meet again in Inland Waterways sectoral format in spring 2015.

**Joint Secretariat
27 November 2014**

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