

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC 1 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

EIGHTEENTH PLENARY MEETING

DUBLIN CASTLE, DUBLIN

3 OCTOBER 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The Eighteenth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held at Dublin Castle, Dublin on 3 October 2014.
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 MLA. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC MATTERS

3. There was a discussion on the employment situation in both jurisdictions and measures to encourage job creation. These included discussions on actions to build trade links with developing markets, attraction of foreign direct investment and issues relating to banking, in particular lending to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. Progress on the disposal of NAMA's Northern Ireland portfolio was welcomed by Ministers. Ministers also discussed economic and budgetary challenges facing both administrations and measures aimed at rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy.

4. Ministers welcomed the success of the Giro d'Italia cycling event which secured widespread global media coverage. Ministers also noted the opportunities for tourism and trade through the hosting of all-island events and agreed to continue to cooperate on a joint bid for the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

EU MATTERS

5. Ministers were updated on the current situation with respect to the INTERREG IVA and PEACE III Programmes. Both Programmes are fully committed and the challenge will be to ensure full expenditure by the end of 2015.
6. Progress on the development of the new INTERREG V and PEACE IV Programmes for the period 2014 – 2020 was discussed. The Council noted that the draft Programmes had been submitted to the EU commission by the deadline of 22 September 2014.
7. Ministers noted several other new European programmes which may present opportunities for cooperation to maximize the drawdown of EU funding to the island and agreed that these should be further examined.
8. Ministers also reviewed other EU related developments.

SECTORAL PRIORITIES

9. The Council noted that discussions on Sectoral Priorities have now taken place, following the decisions taken at the last NSMC Plenary in November 2013 and NSMC Institutional in January 2014. These discussions focused on efforts to support the economic recovery, job creation, ensuring the best use of public funds and the most effective delivery of services for citizens.
10. Ministers agreed that it had been useful to review progress and identify opportunities within the existing agreed work programmes and noted that a report on other priorities identified during the Ministerial discussions will be brought to the next NSMC Institutional Meeting.

NORTH WEST GATEWAY INITIATIVE

11. Ministers noted the conclusion of the consultation process that had been carried out with regional stakeholders relevant to the North West Gateway Initiative.
12. The Council also noted the views of the North West Gateway Initiative regional stakeholders on the direction, and priorities for the North West region, including the desire for a renewed and strengthened strategic focus endorsed by both Governments.

13. Ministers agreed that further consultation with relevant Government Departments should be undertaken on the issues identified during the consultation process.
14. The Council also reaffirmed its commitment to a future meeting of Ministers and officials in the North West to consider strategic approaches to the development of the region.

JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT

15. 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:
 - Cooperation is continuing on Strategic Transport Planning throughout the island. Opportunities for further cooperation have been identified in the following areas:
 - developing the strategic road network of the island;
 - enhancing connections to the North West of the island;
 - the future enhancement of the Enterprise Service;
 - driving a shift to public and more sustainable modes of transport and the potential for shared cross border public transport services in border areas; and
 - development of cross border Greenways.
 - At the NSMC Health meeting in April Ministers were informed that the business planning process for the Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin was progressing with work almost complete on finalising a Memorandum of Understanding and Service Level Agreement for the operation of the unit. Since that meeting contracts have been finalised and building work started on the site in July;
 - An 'App' to allow smart phone and tablet access to the North South Child Protection Hub was launched by Childlink in February 2014;
 - Both Agriculture Departments continue to work closely on the policy options arising from the reform of CAP;
 - A Joint Workshop on Educational Underachievement was held in Armagh on 25 March 2014 and proposals to scope a cross border pilot in support of Leadership Development involving existing groups of principals in both jurisdictions was agreed;

- The contract for the all-island research study into the issue of airborne pollution from residential solid fuels, in particular smoky coal, has been awarded;
 - Both Enterprise Departments and InterTradeIreland are working to encourage support for Research and Innovation activities and recognise that there is potential for North South collaboration to increase drawdown of funding. At their meeting in January Ministers welcomed the establishment of the Horizon 2020 Steering Group and the appointment of the NI joint chair to the US Ireland R&D partnership, both of which are positive developments in this area;
 - At the Special EU Programmes meeting on 30 May 2014 SEUPB reported that all available funding under Peace III and Interreg IV had now been committed.;
 - The second phase of the multi-media consumer campaign targeting childhood obesity is focusing on the importance of exercise in tackling overweight and obesity in children;
 - The Loughs Agency in partnership with Co-operation Ireland has developed the Foyle River Ambassadors Citizenship Scheme. This is a pilot youth leadership project which brings together young people from across the City in a personal development and citizenship programme, the theme of which is to promote the recreational and educational activities provided on the river;
 - Foras na Gaeilge has selected the six new lead organisations, operating on an all-island basis, to take forward the new funding arrangements for delivery of its strategic priorities;
 - The Ulster Scots Agency recently awarded over £300k to organisations to promote and deliver Ulster Scots music and dance;
 - Plans to restore the Upper Lough Erne to Clones section of the Ulster Canal are being pursued by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; and
 - Official figures and sentiment showed a positive year of tourism growth in 2013. The Gathering Ireland 2013 and Derry~Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013 were cited as successes by the vast majority of those in the industry. Trade and industry feedback in relation to 2014 prospects and sentiment are generally positive.
16. Ministers also acknowledged the ongoing work in relation to reform of the North South Bodies Pension Scheme, including recently approved amendments to ensure the Scheme complies with employment legislation and best practice in both jurisdictions and to increase employee contributions.

NORTH SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

17. Ministers noted the current position on a North South Consultative Forum.

FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

18. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat, including a NSMC Institutional meeting in Autumn 2014 and the next NSMC Plenary meeting in December 2014.

Joint Secretariat
3 October 2014

ANNEX A

MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL DUBLIN CASTLE – 3 OCTOBER 2014

Irish Government	Northern Ireland Executive
Enda Kenny TD Taoiseach	The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA First Minister
Joan Burton TD Tánaiste & Minister for Social Protection	Martin McGuinness MLA deputy First Minister
Michael Noonan TD Minister for Finance	Stephen Farry MLA Minister for Employment and Learning
James Reilly TD Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	Arlene Foster MLA Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Charles Flanagan TD Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	Simon Hamilton MLA Minister for Finance and Personnel
Paschal Donohoe TD Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport	Carál Ní Chuilín MLA Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Heather Humphreys TD Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht	John O'Dowd MLA Minister for Education
Damien English TD Minister of State for Skills Research and Innovation	Michelle O'Neill MLA Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Gerald Nash TD Minister of State for Small Business and Collective Bargaining	Jim Wells MLA Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Ann Phelan TD Minister of State for Rural Economic Development and Rural Transport	Jonathan Bell MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
	Jennifer McCann MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister