

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC LAN 2 (11) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY, MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

12 OCTOBER 2011

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The thirteenth North South Ministerial Council Language Body meeting was held in Armagh on 12 October, 2011. The meeting was attended by Carál Ní Chuilín, MLA, Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Jimmy Deenihan, TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dinny McGinley, TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs and OFMDFM Junior Minister Jonathan Bell, MLA. Minister Ní Chuilín chaired the meeting.
2. The meeting dealt with issues relating to the Language Body and its two constituent agencies, Tha Boord o Ulstèr Scotch (The Ulster-Scots Agency) and Foras na Gaeilge (The Irish Language Agency).

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY PROGRESS REPORT

3. The Council received progress reports from Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency on collaborative work and other activities of the two agencies including:

- further development of the lecture series 'Aspects of our Shared Heritage' to include a new lecture on the history of the languages dealing with the Flight of the Earls, the Plantation of Ulster and their linguistic effects;
- co-operation with the Lyric Theatre and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to produce an award-winning play about work in the mills;
- provision of joint information stands recently at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Castlewellan Agricultural Show, the Stormont Family Fun Day and the Boccia World Cup and preparations are in hand for a joint cultural showcase in Belfast supporting the twinning of Listowel, Co. Kerry and Downpatrick, Co. Down;
- sharing expertise and resources on a range of corporate and HR issues;
- implementation by Foras na Gaeilge of the accreditation scheme for editors, including provision of specialised training and ongoing development by Foras na Gaeilge of the national database of terms (www.focal.ie); and
- delivery by the Ulster-Scots Agency of music/dance tuition to over 8,000 participants through the peripatetic tutor programme, and 31 Ulster-Scots community summer schemes.

CORPORATE AND BUSINESS PLANS AND BUDGETS

4. The Council discussed progress on the development of the North/South Language Body Corporate Plan 2011 - 2013 and Business Plan and Budget 2011.
5. Ministers noted that the draft 2012 Business Plans for Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency have been prepared with the Plans focusing on each Agency's key priorities. The draft plans are awaiting approval from the respective Boards before submission to Sponsor and Finance Departments for approval. The finalised plans will be brought forward for approval by the NSMC at a future meeting.

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS

6. The NSMC noted that the 2008 Annual Report and Draft Accounts have been submitted to the C&AGs in both jurisdictions and, following certification and consolidation, will be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and both Houses of the Oireachtas as soon as possible.
7. Ministers further noted that audit fieldwork has been completed in respect of the 2009 Annual Report and Accounts and consolidation will follow on as soon as

possible. Draft accounts have been filed in respect of 2010 and dates are awaited from the C&AGs in regard to audit fieldwork.

8. Ministers also noted that a new simplified consolidation process will be introduced subject to the approval of Finance Departments. A further progress report on these matters will be made at the next NSMC Language Body meeting.

FORAS NA GAEILGE – EXTENSION OF CEO CONTRACT

9. The NSMC noted that the Board of Foras na Gaeilge has extended the contract of the CEO of Foras na Gaeilge, Ferdie Mac an Fhailigh, for a further period of 5 years.

FORAS NA GAEILGE - REVIEW OF CORE FUNDED BODIES

10. Ministers noted the progress that has been made to date by Foras na Gaeilge with regard to the preparation of a portfolio of draft schemes for the new competitive funding model which has the objective of achieving significant benefits in relation to value for money and the effective delivery of Foras na Gaeilge's statutory obligations.
11. Having considered this progress, the NSMC requested Foras na Gaeilge to:
 - a) take forward a further twelve week consultation about the portfolio of draft schemes, particularly with the core funded bodies;
 - b) ensure that relevant statutory bodies are given the opportunity to consider the impact of the draft schemes on their areas of operation;
 - c) amend the portfolio of draft schemes as necessary and appropriate, having regard to the extended consultation process;
 - d) prepare a detailed business case, if necessary with independent assistance, in support of the portfolio of draft schemes; and
 - e) prepare a revised project plan, in conjunction with the Sponsor Departments, that will have due regard to the completion of the review process as a matter of urgency.
12. The NSMC agreed that an Order be made at the appropriate time under section 28(2)(b) of the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999 (No.1 of 1999) to delete the reference to the organisations listed in the table to the section.
13. Ministers requested a further progress report at the next NSMC Language Body meeting.

FORAS NA GAEILGE – REVIEW OF ÁIS

14. The NSMC noted the completion of the review of Áis, the book distribution service of Foras na Gaeilge and requested that Foras na Gaeilge agree a detailed implementation plan with the Sponsor Departments in regard to the recommendations in the review of Áis and report on progress at the next NSMC Language Body meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

15. The Council agreed to hold its next Language Body meeting in February 2012.

**Joint Secretariat
12 October 2011**