

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

**PAPER NSMC P2 (12) JC**

**NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**FIFTEENTH PLENARY MEETING**

**ARMAGH**

**2 NOVEMBER 2012**

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The fifteenth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held in Armagh on 2 November 2012.
2. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MP MLA, who chaired the meeting. The Irish Government was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. Ministers extended their sympathies to the family of David Black who was brutally murdered on his way to work yesterday and condemned those who carried out this atrocity. Ministers reaffirmed their determination that actions such as this will not be allowed to drag us back to the past.
4. The Council discussed the economic challenges being faced within each jurisdiction and the work being undertaken to address the Global Economic crisis. Ministers specifically discussed challenges in the banking sector, NAMA, Corporation Tax and the benefits of working together to build trade links with economies such as China. Ministers also discussed the importance of tourism to both economies and recognised the importance of maximising the benefits of

major initiatives such as the World Police and Fire Games, the UK City of Culture celebrations and The Gathering 2013.

5. The topic of farm safety was also discussed and Ministers expressed their sympathies to everyone who has lost loved ones in farm related accidents.
6. There was a discussion on the St Andrews Agreement Review and it was agreed that Senior Officials would meet and bring forward proposals before the end of the year.
7. Ministers re-iterated their commitment to the North West Region and noted that further discussions would take place on the North West Gateway Initiative.

## **IRISH EU PRESIDENCY**

8. Ministers discussed Ireland's Presidency of the EU during the first half of 2013. They noted the priorities for the Presidency term and that a full programme of events is planned. The Council noted that a central theme of the Irish Presidency will be improving the European Union's global competitiveness, promoting economic growth and creating jobs. These priorities will be reflected across all of Ireland's Presidency Programme. Also discussed was how the outcome of negotiations on the future financing of the EU through the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) will be critical for Europe's future economic development and competitiveness in vital areas such as the reform of the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies. The importance of engagement within the NSMC in order to maximise mutual benefit from the Irish EU Presidency was recognised. It was noted that arrangements have been put in place to enable Irish Ministers to brief their Executive Counterparts on Presidency related issues at NSMC meetings and that consideration is being given to joint participation by Northern Ireland Executive Ministers at Presidency-related events.

## **JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT**

9. The Council noted the Progress Report prepared by the NSMC Joint Secretaries on the work of the North South Bodies and that 24 NSMC meetings had taken place so far this year. The Council also welcomed the following key developments:
  - construction of the radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin is to commence in 2013 with the unit being operational in 2016;
  - the Child Protection Steering Group has developed a future work programme which is to be taken forward through five specific work streams;
  - an MOU has been agreed in relation to protecting the Island of Ireland from exotic animal disease incursion which underlines the commitment to key principles in the All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy;

- a joint inspection of the Middletown Centre for Autism by the Education Departments concluded that “the centre is meeting very effectively the needs of the young people, their peers, parents and professionals and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained improvement”. At their meeting on 17 October, Education Ministers agreed to continue to support the efforts of both administrations to ensure the agreed expansion of the Middletown Centre for Autism is delivered as soon as possible;
- work has now commenced on the repatriation of illegally dumped waste at a further two sites in County Tyrone, Seskinore and Eskra, Clogher. Joint enforcement action to deal with illegal operators remains a priority for both Environment Ministers and Departments continue to target resources on this;
- a timetable of key milestones has been agreed to enable the necessary legislation to be put in place by end 2014 for the mutual recognition of penalty points across the Island;
- InterTradelreland created/sustained 115 Jobs in the first half of this year against a full year target of 150 and, in the period June 2011 – July 2012, has facilitated the drawdown of €20M from the FP7 Programme for 19 cross-border projects. InterTradelreland is also running two new Programmes (Challenge and Elevate), which are designed specifically to help SMEs develop their innovative and exporting capabilities. Both Programmes have generated considerable interest and strong initial returns;
- development on post 2013 Territorial Cooperation EU Programmes has commenced with several public consultations having already been held;
- the Food Safety Promotion Board’s (*safefood*’s) “Stop the Spread” obesity awareness campaign won the gold award in the healthcare sector at the 2012 An Post Integrated Direct Marketing Awards;
- the Loughs Agency’s significant contribution to the Clipper Round the World event and its preparations for the sea and trout angling events of the 2013 World Fire and Police Games;
- the Ulster-Scots Agency is developing plans to promote and support Ulster-Scots Hairyland areas with its aim to preserve, protect and present Ulster-Scots heritage through geographical designations;
- Foras na Gaeilge provided a revised implementation plan for the review of core funding at the NSMC Language meeting in July 2012. Final proposals will be brought to the next NSMC Language meeting in December 2012;
- the restoration of the Ulster Canal from Clones to Upper Lough Erne is progressing through the planning application process in both jurisdictions.

An inter-agency group has been set up to examine all possible options to advance the project; and

- Tourism Ireland is currently rolling out major promotional campaigns for “*The Gathering Ireland 2013*” and the “*UK City of Culture 2013*”.

#### **NORTH SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

10. The NSMC noted the current position on a North South Consultative Forum and to agree to review this issue at a future NSMC Plenary.

#### **NORTH SOUTH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION**

11. Ministers welcomed the establishment of the North South Inter-Parliamentary Association and noted that it held its inaugural meeting in Dublin on 12 October 2012. Ministers noted that members of the Assembly and the Oireachtas had discussed the Ulster Canal and Child Protection and agreed to meet again in April 2013.

#### **FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS**

12. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat, including a NSMC Plenary meeting in July 2013.

**Joint Secretariat  
2 November 2012**

**ANNEX A****MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL  
ARMAGH, 2 NOVEMBER 2012**

<b>Northern Ireland Executive</b>	<b>Irish Government</b>
The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA First Minister	Enda Kenny TD Taoiseach
Martin McGuinness MP MLA deputy First Minister	Eamon Gilmore TD Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
Alex Attwood MLA Minister of the Environment	Michael Noonan TD Minister for Finance
Stephen Farry MLA Minister for Employment and Learning	Ruairí Quinn TD Minister for Education and Skills
Arlene Foster MLA Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Richard Bruton TD Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
John O'Dowd MLA Minister for Education	Joan Burton TD Minister for Social Protection
Michelle O'Neill MLA Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development	Jimmy Deenihan TD Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Edwin Poots MLA Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	James Reilly TD Minister for Health
Sammy Wilson MP MLA Minister of Finance and Personnel	Leo Varadkar TD Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport
Jonathan Bell MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Shane McEntee TD Minister of State with special responsibility for Food, Horticulture, and Food Safety
Jennifer McCann MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	