

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

**PAPER NSMC (15) JC**

**NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**TWENTIETH PLENARY MEETING**

**DUBLIN CASTLE**

**5 JUNE 2015**

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The Twentieth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held at Dublin Castle, Dublin on 5 June 2015.
2. The Irish Government was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, who chaired the meeting. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MLA and Minister for Finance Arlene Foster 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 challenges facing both administrations and the policies being implemented to support economic growth, job creation and improve living standards. This included discussions on foreign direct investment and on working together to build trade links with key developing markets.

## **EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

4. Ministers noted the discussions that have taken place across all NSMC sectors in relation to EU Funding Opportunities and the identification of relevant programmes that are available for collaborative funding applications. Ministers agreed to continue to examine opportunities and progress in drawing down collaborative EU funding across all relevant NSMC sectors.
5. Approval of the INTERREG V programme by the European Commission was welcomed and the Council looked forward to the early finalisation of the PEACE IV programme.
6. Ministers welcomed the early indications of good progress towards reaching the joint target of €175 million in terms of cross-border collaborative drawdown under the Horizon 2020 Programme, and the work of InterTradelreland and the All-Island Steering Group in raising awareness of the programme.
7. The Council agreed that a further update on EU Funding Opportunities will be brought to the next Plenary meeting.

## **SECTORAL PRIORITIES**

8. The Council noted that Sectoral Priorities was discussed at the NSMC Institutional meeting on 25 February 2015 and that 'new Sectoral Priorities' will be an agenda item at future Institutional meetings.
9. The Council also noted the decision that was agreed at the NSMC Institutional meeting whereby Ministers would review their current Work Programmes and that endorsement of any changes will be sought at a future NSMC Plenary meeting.
10. Ministers agreed that the matter of Sectoral Priorities and the current review of Work Programmes will be kept under active review.

## **CROSS BORDER SMUGGLING AND FUEL LAUNDERING**

11. Ministers had an extensive discussion on cross-border smuggling and fuel laundering. The issue had been raised at previous Plenary meetings and at recent NSMC Environment, Agriculture and Transport meetings. Ministers noted the on-going efforts by both jurisdictions to tackle the serious issue and noted the introduction of the new fuel marker in both jurisdictions.
12. The Council noted that the issue is also of concern at EU level. The Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries has been in correspondence with Environment Ministers, North and South, concerning latest developments and actions taken to address the issue.

13. The Council recognised the importance of closer co-operation between agencies in tackling and combating cross-border smuggling and fuel laundering and agreed that the topic be revisited at a future meeting.

#### **NORTH WEST GATEWAY INITIATIVE**

14. The Council noted the continued engagement between officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister with stakeholders concerning the future development of the North West Gateway Initiative and the ongoing discussions on arrangements to hold a meeting of relevant Ministers in the North West.
15. The Council further noted the current work by Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council to develop new and collaborative cross-border arrangements at local government level to promote the development of the North West region consistent with the aims of the North West Gateway Initiative.
16. Ministers noted that these arrangements aim to place cross-border cooperation in the North West on a more formal basis within local government led structures; and will allow for the development of the future direction and priorities for the region, in cooperation with central government, and other stakeholders.
17. Ministers also noted the ongoing work on the A5.

#### **BOARDS OF THE NORTH SOUTH IMPLEMENTATION BODIES AND TOURISM IRELAND**

18. The Council noted that, in line with the decision taken at the NSMC Institutional Meeting on 25 February 2015, the Joint Secretariat has consulted with Sponsor Departments and with Board members of the Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Limited regarding the proposal to extend the existing terms of appointment of Board Members for 12 months. This consultation is currently ongoing.
19. The Council agreed that decisions on Board appointments will be made before the expiry of the current Board members' terms of office in December 2015.

#### **JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT**

20. 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 continues with regard to EU related Transport issues. At their recent meeting in April 2015, Ministers noted the opportunity to strengthen

the TEN-T application process through the development of Co-operation Statement templates which will support project applications. Ministers also noted the position with regard to the INTERREG programmes including the update on the INTERREG IV funding of the Belfast-Dublin Enterprise Service upgrade and Drogheda viaduct works.

- At the NSMC Health and Food Safety meeting held at Altnagelvin Area Hospital on 15 April 2015 Ministers discussed ongoing cooperation in health care. They welcomed the presentation by the Western Health and Social Care Trust representatives on the Radiotherapy Unit and had the opportunity to view the construction underway on the Unit which they were advised is on target for completion within the agreed timeframe.
- At the NSMC Agriculture meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2015 Ministers noted the recent developments in plans for implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy reforms agreed in 2013, including administrative measures for Direct Payment Schemes.
- The Middletown Centre for Autism successfully hosted a major international conference on the theme of “Enabling Education” targeted at professionals and parents of children with autism. The event, attended by in excess of one thousand delegates, was opened by both Education Ministers and featured a range of eminent speakers from across the globe. Progress continues to be made by the two Departments and the Centre in facilitating the expansion of the Centre’s range of services.
- At the NSMC Environment meeting on 13 May 2015 Ministers received an update on the agreed repatriation of waste programme for 2015 under which two illegal waste landfill sites will be addressed. The issue of fuel laundering was discussed and Ministers expressed concern at the impact of fuel laundering and stressed the importance of closer co-operation between agencies to tackle this issue.
- At their meeting in January 2015, Ministers noted the various support structures put in place by InterTradeIreland to assist with the jointly agreed €175m target for cross border applications under the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme. Ministers also noted that early results were positive with 45 cross border applications to the Programme and an economic value of €8.8m for successful cross border Horizon 2020 collaboration at that time.
- The draft PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programmes (2014-2020) were submitted to the European Commission on 22 September 2014, in line with the regulatory deadline. The INTERREG VA Programme was formally adopted on the 13th February 2015 with calls expected to launch in early summer. A number of outstanding issues still remain within the PEACE IV Programme and high level discussions are ongoing between the Member States and the EU Commission. It is hoped that the PEACE IV Programme will be approved shortly and be open for calls later in the year.

- At the NSMC Health and Food Safety Meeting in April 2015, Professor Chris Elliott of Queen's University Belfast gave a presentation on the topic of "Food Safety and Traceability- an all island imperative" which provided Ministers with valuable insight to this important subject.
- Ministers welcomed reports on the activities of the Loughs Agency in promoting and marketing Foyle and Carlingford Loughs in particular marine leisure infrastructural developments, outreach and community activity and promotion of local seafood products.
- Progress continues on the publication of the new English/Irish dictionary flagship project ([www.focloir.ie](http://www.focloir.ie)). An App for the New English-Irish Dictionary will be available in the near future.
- Progress continues on the Ulster-Scots Community Impact Programme which has been extended for a second year following a positive evaluation.
- In February 2015, Minister Heather Humphreys announced the approval of the restoration by Waterways Ireland of a 2.5km stretch of the Ulster Canal, connecting Castle Saunderson International Scouting Centre to the Erne basin at an expected cost of approximately €2 million.
- Last year was another great year for Tourism. Total overseas visitors to Northern Ireland for the first nine months of 2014 grew by +3% year-on-year. Overseas visitors to Ireland increased by +14% in the January 2015 - March 2015 period when compared to the same three month period a year earlier.

21. The Council also noted the very successful Greenways and Blueways information sharing and networking event hosted by the Joint Secretariat on 30 April 2015.

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

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

#### **FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS**

23. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat, including a NSMC Institutional meeting in Autumn 2015 and the next NSMC Plenary meeting in November 2015.

**Joint Secretariat  
5 June 2015**

## ANNEX A

### MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL DUBLIN CASTLE – 5 JUNE 2015

<b>Irish Government</b>	<b>Northern Ireland Executive</b>
Enda Kenny TD Taoiseach	Martin McGuinness MLA deputy First Minister
Joan Burton TD Tánaiste & Minister for Social Protection	Arlene Foster MLA Minister for Finance and Personnel
Michael Noonan TD Minister for Finance	Mark Durkan MLA Minister of the Environment
Brendan Howlin TD Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform	Stephen Farry MLA Minister for Employment and Learning
Frances Fitzgerald TD Minister for Justice & Equality	David Ford MLA Minister of Justice
James Reilly TD Minister for Children & Youth Affairs	Simon Hamilton MLA Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Leo Varadkar TD Minister for Health	Danny Kennedy MLA Minister for Regional Development
Charlie Flanagan TD Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	Carál Ní Chuilín MLA Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Alex White TD Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources	John O'Dowd MLA Minister of Education
Paschal Donohoe TD Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport	Mervyn Storey MLA Minister for Social Development
Heather Humphreys TD Minister for Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht	Michelle McIlveen MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Tom Hayes TD Minister of State with special responsibility for Food, Forestry, Horticulture and Food Safety	Jennifer McCann MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Sean Sherlock TD Minister of State with special responsibility for ODA, Trade Promotion and North South Cooperation	