

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

10 JUNE 2024

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-fourth North South Ministerial Council Environment meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 10th June 2024. The meeting was attended by Eamonn Ryan TD, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Malcolm Noonan TD, Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Andrew Muir, MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Aisling Reilly MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office and Pam Cameron, MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office. Minister Ryan chaired the meeting.

Review of Priorities and Work Programme

2. The NSMC noted that officials from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Department for Environment Climate and Communications, and the Department for Housing, Local Government and Heritage have reviewed the Work Programme of the NSMC Environment Sector;
3. Ministers noted that both jurisdictions place a strong focus on efforts to tackle the challenges surrounding climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and agreed a revised Work Programme for the Environment sector.

Climate and Biodiversity

4. Ministers were invited to welcome the presentation on climate change and biodiversity A Shared Island approach to Climate and Biodiversity Research, which highlights the potential benefits of a collaborative approach to environmental challenges and particularly in respect of climate change and biodiversity, through the themes of Shared Ambition, Shared Experience and Shared Opportunities and Challenges.

Research Funding Opportunities

5. The NSMC welcomed the ongoing collaboration and continued delivery of environmental priorities such as those under the PEACE PLUS Programme (2021-2027) and Shared Island Initiative.
6. Ministers noted the shared challenges faced in both jurisdictions and recognise that there are opportunities to work together in terms of research to manage/protect the environment through informed, evidence based policy development;
7. Ministers welcomed the strong links between research bodies in both jurisdictions in the field of environmental research and agreed that both Administrations will continue to work together to maximise opportunities in terms of environmental research, including those offered by PEACEPLUS, Horizon Europe, Ireland's North/South Research Programme and the jointly funded research co-centres.

Air Quality

8. The NSMC noted that improving air quality is a key priority for both jurisdictions and acknowledged the progress achieved and the challenges faced by both Administrations in improving air quality and in particular strategies, initiatives, and collaboration to tackle air pollution on cross border basis, and
9. Ministers agreed to continue collaboration on the key issues affecting air quality such as solid fuels, communication, and policy alignment.

Water Quality and Waste Water Management

10. The Council noted the significant issue of blue-green algae and its impacts on water quality/safety of water use, and the new approaches needed to address its causes and manage monitoring. The current position in relation to the particular challenges surrounding Lough Neagh was highlighted. The NSMC noted that Departmental officials and wider stakeholders across both jurisdictions are actively sharing knowledge and expertise on water quality issues including through the North South Water Framework Directive Coordination Group.

11. Ministers welcomed the overall continued high quality of the bathing waters in both jurisdictions and noted the continued engagement between the Department for Infrastructure (DFI), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), Uisce Éireann and Northern Ireland Water on exploring opportunities for cooperation including applications to access funding under the EU's PEACE PLUS programme.
12. The NSMC welcomed the opportunity for cross-jurisdictional collaboration in the pilot catchment work plan to be undertaken in the Newry, Fayne, Glyde and Dee catchment.

Date of Next Meeting

13. The Council agreed to hold the next meeting in this sector in autumn 2024.

JOINT SECRETARIAT

10 June 2024

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