

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL INLAND WATERWAYS MEETING NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES ARMAGH

12 MAY 2025

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The thirtieth North South Ministerial Council Inland Waterways meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 12 May 2025. The meeting was attended by James Browne TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage; Liz Kimmins MLA, Minister for Infrastructure, and Pam Cameron MLA, Junior Minister at the Executive Office. Minister Browne chaired the meeting.

PROGRESS REPORT

2. Ministers welcomed the achievements of Waterways Ireland since the last meeting and the valuable contribution it makes through its various activities including:
 - i. developments made in four strategic projects - Ulster Canal, Carnroe Weir, Tullamore Centre of Excellence & Masterplan and Dublin Masterplan; and major projects such as Camden Lock, Barrow Navigation and Connaught Harbour;
 - ii. the significant developments that have been made on the Royal Canal Greenway and the Grand Canal Greenway and the completion of an initial public consultation in relation to route options for the Limerick to Scarriff Greenway;
 - iii. the rollout across the organisation of an Emergency Response Service;

- iv. Waterways Ireland's achievement of accreditation with the ISO 45001:2018 Health and Safety Standard; and
- v. the recognition and awards achieved by Waterways Ireland including being a finalist in the Green Public Sector Organisation of the Year, shortlisted for an award at the Public Sector Digital Transformation awards and Best Large Website and Best Overall Website at the National Digital Awards; and being selected as a United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Champion for 2024 – 2025.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS

- 3. The Council welcomed the Waterways Ireland response to Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability issues and noted the themes within the Waterways Ireland Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Plan 2030 and the update from Waterways Ireland on embedding sustainability within the organisation.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE MATTERS

- 4. The Council approved Waterways Ireland's 2025 Business Plan and recommended the Budgets/Grants for 2025.
- 5. The Council noted that the Waterways Ireland Annual Reports and Accounts for 2023 have been laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and both Houses of the Oireachtas and that the Annual Report and Accounts for 2024 have been submitted to the Comptrollers and Auditors General in both jurisdictions.

PROPERTY DISPOSALS AND ACQUISITIONS

- 6. Ministers consented to a number of property disposals and acquisitions.

WATERWAYS IRELAND ASSET DEVELOPMENT

- 7. The Council welcomed a presentation from Waterways Ireland outlining the current position with the Ulster Canal Restoration Project; the completion of the repairs to Carnroe Weir; Waterways Ireland's plans for its current premises in Tullamore and the planned relocation to a purpose-built depot; and the Body's plans for Grand Canal Dock and the Canals and Dockland area of Dublin.

WATERWAYS IRELAND CEO

8. The Council approved the reappointment of Mr John McDonagh as CEO of Waterways Ireland.

NARROW WATER BRIDGE

9. Officials from Louth County Council presented to Ministers on the progress achieved to date on the construction of the Narrow Water Bridge, which is located between Cornamucklagh, Co. Louth, and Warrenpoint, Co. Down.
10. The Council agreed to hold its next Inland Waterways meeting in late 2025.

Joint Secretariat
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Website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org