

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL TRADE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH, AND BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

25 NOVEMBER 2020

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twentieth North South Ministerial Council Trade and Business Development meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh, and by videoconference on 25 November 2020. The meeting was attended by Diane Dodds MLA, Minister for the Economy, Conor Murphy MLA, Minister of Finance, and Leo Varadkar TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Minister Dodds chaired the meeting.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19

2. The Council noted the impact of the pandemic on society and on the economy, in both jurisdictions, and the measures put in place by both Administrations to support communities and businesses affected by the crisis and to assist economic recovery.
3. Ministers welcomed the productive cooperation between both Administrations and InterTradeIreland in relation to support for businesses facing challenges

arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and noted that InterTradeIreland will continue to provide support to assist businesses in coping with the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in the areas of supply chain management, health and safety and human resources.

IMPLICATIONS OF UK WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EU

4. The Council noted the work being carried out to prepare for the end of the transition period and the implications for co-operation in the Trade and Business Development sector arising as a result of the UK withdrawal.

INTERTRADEIRELAND PROGRESS REPORT

5. The Council welcomed the overall achievements of InterTradeIreland from 2016 to 2020 and recognised the valuable contribution that InterTradeIreland has made through its trade and development programmes for small and medium-sized companies trading across the border and in both jurisdictions.
6. Ministers commended InterTradeIreland for its work in helping businesses to prepare for the UK withdrawal from the EU, and for its research on this issue. The Council recognised the impact of the innovation and technology programmes run by InterTradeIreland, and its support for building relationships between companies and researchers.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE MATTERS

7. The Council approved the InterTradeIreland Business Plans and Budgets/Grants for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, and the InterTradeIreland 2017-2019 Corporate Plan, which have been completed in accordance with agreed guidance issued by the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and have been agreed by Sponsor Departments and Finance Ministers.
8. Ministers noted InterTradeIreland's Annual Reports and Accounts for 2016, 2017 and 2018, which have been certified by the Comptrollers and Auditors General and laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and both Houses of the Oireachtas.
9. Ministers asked Sponsor Departments to consider InterTradeIreland's staffing complement, in consultation with the NSMC Secretariat and the Finance Departments, and to provide an update to the next Trade and Business Development Meeting.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

10. The Council approved the appointment of Martin McVicar (Vice-Chairperson), Michael Hanley and Richard Kennedy, and the re-appointment of Florence Bayliss, Adrienne McGuinness and Micheál Briody, to the Board of the Trade and Business Development Body (InterTradeIreland).

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

11. The Council noted the progress and current position of North/South collaboration in relation to the Horizon 2020 Programme and the achievements and current position of the US-Ireland R&D Partnership.
12. Ministers noted that InterTradeIreland will continue to work with relevant stakeholders, including Sponsor Departments, to explore new ways (both financial and non-financial) to maintain and strengthen Research and Innovation collaboration across both jurisdictions.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECRUITMENT PROCESS

13. The Council noted that the process for appointing a Chief Executive Officer to InterTradeIreland has commenced, using the existing approved process and following consultation with the NSMC Joint Secretariat and the respective Finance Departments.
14. Ministers thanked Aidan Gough and Margaret Hearty for their work in successfully leading InterTradeIreland as Designated Officer and Assistant Designated Officer, respectively, since they were appointed to those positions in September 2017.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

15. The Council agreed to hold its next Trade and Business Development meeting in early 2021.

**Joint Secretariat
25 November 2020**

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