



NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL TWENTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

ARMAGH

20 JUNE 2025

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-ninth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held in Armagh on 20 June 2025.
2. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by the First Minister, Michelle O'Neill MLA, and the deputy First Minister, Emma Little-Pengelly MLA who jointly chaired the meeting. The Government of Ireland was led by the Taoiseach, Micheál Martin TD. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. This was the first meeting of the NSMC in plenary format since the new Government of Ireland took office and since the publication of both the Government of Ireland and the NI Executive's Programmes for Government and the meeting provided an opportunity for Ministers to discuss a wide range of issues of mutual interest and concern.

BUSINESS AND TRADE MATTERS

4. The NSMC had an exchange of views on the business and trade implications of recent developments in the international sphere. The Council noted the respective strategies in each jurisdiction in business and trade related areas such as industrial policy, competitiveness, and Artificial Intelligence.
5. The Council agreed that, in what is an increasingly complex and unpredictable international trading environment, it is important that the two Administrations remain engaged with one another, at political and official level, on business and trade matters.
6. The NSMC agreed that, where appropriate, the NSMC sectors should continue to consider how agreed collaborative approaches can contribute to the promotion of economic growth.

JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT

7. The NSMC noted that since the last NSMC Plenary meeting in September 2024, Ministers have met in 10 sectors and meetings in the remaining sectors will take place by end July 2025.
8. The Council reported that it had considered a number of Corporate Governance matters in each of the North-South Implementation Bodies' sectors including Business Plans, Budgets and Annual Reports and Accounts.
9. It was noted that Board Members, including Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons were appointed to a number of North South Implementation Bodies and that the NSMC approved the reappointment of the CEOs of InterTradeIreland and Waterways Ireland.
10. The NSMC noted that engagement on a wide range of policy areas continues across all NSMC work sectors and that Ministers have discussed climate change and loss of biodiversity at the relevant Sectoral meetings.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT CO-OPERATION

11. Ministers welcomed the decision by the Northern Ireland Executive to proceed with the A5 Western Transport Corridor project and await of the outcome of the recent legal proceedings.
12. The Council noted that Waterways Ireland continues to progress Phase 3 (Castle Saunderson to Clonfad) of the Ulster Canal restoration project.
13. Ministers also noted the ongoing work to progress the *All-Island Strategic Rail Review's* recommendations and the increase in passenger numbers through the hourly service on the Belfast-Dublin corridor.
14. Ministers noted the progress that has been made on the Narrow Water Bridge project and welcomed the Government of Ireland's Programme for Government commitment to engage with all relevant stakeholders to establish air connectivity between Dublin and City of Derry airports.
15. The NSMC noted the work being done on cross-border greenways including the opening of the Carlingford Lough Greenway later in the year and the review on further potential greenway opportunities.
16. Ministers noted the progress that has been made on the Ulster University, Magee Expansion Project.
17. The Council also noted the progress that has been made on delivery of collaborative Research and Innovation programmes.
18. Ministers welcomed the implementation of the PEACEPLUS programme and the discussions with relevant stakeholders on the potential for a successor to the current PEACE PLUS Programme.

MOTHER AND BABY INSTITUTIONS, MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES AND WORKHOUSES

19. The Council welcomed the ongoing North/South engagement on a potential reciprocal agreement to disregard redress payments for means-tested benefits for the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme and noted upcoming respective engagements of officials in relation to the forthcoming Truth Recovery Redress Scheme.
20. The NSMC also noted the ongoing North/South co-operation in sharing knowledge and identifying lessons learnt from the redress schemes.
21. The Council noted that Executive Office officials attended an engagement event on the development of the National Centre for Research and Remembrance in Dublin.
22. Ministers noted the ongoing engagement between Public Records Office of Northern Ireland and the National Archives of Ireland on records and that comparable legislation for the preservation of private records related to institutions is now in place in both jurisdictions.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS TACKLING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

23. Ministers recognised the unacceptably high levels of Gender Based Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls which are prevalent in both jurisdictions and noted that addressing this issue will require a whole of society approach.
24. The NSMC agreed that officials should continue to explore opportunities for joint working in this area, recognising the common challenges faced.

SCHEDULE OF FUTURE MEETINGS or FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

25. Ministers agreed a future schedule of NSMC meetings to take place across the various sectors and that the next NSMC Plenary meeting would take place in Dublin in Autumn 2025.

Joint Secretariat

20 June 2025

www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org

**MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
20 JUNE 2025**

Northern Ireland Executive	Government of Ireland
Michelle O'Neill MLA First Minister	Micheál Martin TD Taoiseach
Emma Little-Pengelly MLA deputy First Minister	Simon Harris TD Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade; and Minister for Defence
Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA Minister for the Economy	Jack Chambers TD Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
Paul Givan MLA Minister of Education	Helen McEntee TD Minister for Education and Youth
Liz Kimmins MLA Minister for Infrastructure	Darragh O'Brien TD Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment; and Minister for Transport
Andrew Muir MLA Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	Norma Foley TD Minister for Children, Disability and Equality
John O'Dowd MLA Minister of Finance	Peter Burke TD Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment
	Dara Calleary TD Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht; and Minister for Social Protection
	Patrick O'Donovan TD Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport
	James Browne TD Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
	Jim O'Callaghan TD Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

	Martin Heydon TD Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
	James Lawless TD Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
	Mary Butler TD Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach