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NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT MEETING

CUSTOM HOUSE, DUBLIN

23 APRIL 2013

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The seventeenth North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Environment meeting was held in the Custom House, Dublin on 23 April 2013. The meeting was attended by Alex Attwood MLA, Minister of the Environment, Danny Kennedy MLA, Minister for Regional Development and Phil Hogan T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. Minister Attwood chaired the meeting.
2. Ministers discussed the informal meeting of the Council of EU Environment that was held over the previous two days and in particular, the issue of air quality, which was one of the main themes of the meeting.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

3. The Council noted that the All Island Bulky Waste Reuse Best Practice Management Feasibility Study will be published shortly and that the Department of the Environment expects to publish a revised Waste Management Strategy in May 2013.
4. Ministers noted that following the recent introduction of the carrier bag levy in NI, charging for carrier bags is now in place across the island.

5. The Council noted the publication of the all-island used tyre survey report, which indicated a significant level of used tyre recycling. The report will be further considered by officials in both jurisdictions.
6. Ministers also noted that the consultants appointed by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to conduct a Review of the Producer Responsibility Initiative (PRI) Model in Ireland are in the final stages of completing their examination.
7. The Council noted that a meeting of the North South Market Development Steering Group, which was established to promote market opportunities for recycled products, was held on 7 March 2013. The Chairperson will be invited to provide Ministers with an update on progress at a future NSMC Environment meeting.

CROSS BORDER MOVEMENTS OF WASTE

8. Ministers noted that work on the two sites at Clogher, County Tyrone (Seskinore and Eskra) that were planned for in the 2012-2013 programme have been completed. In total, more than 15,000 tonnes of waste was removed from both sites. A programme for work for 2013-14 has been agreed.
9. The Council noted that joint enforcement action to deal with illegal operators is a priority for both Environment Ministers and those Departments continue to target resources on this.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

10. Ministers noted that officials have further considered opportunities for mutually beneficial joint working to facilitate more effective and efficient policy approaches in the context of EU Directives on Air Quality.
11. The Council agreed that, in order to improve air quality on an 'all island' basis, officials should prepare terms of reference for a study and have them approved as soon as practicable at another NSMC meeting. The study will examine the issue of airborne pollution from residential smoky coal combustion and the social and economic implications of potential policy options.

WATER QUALITY

12. Ministers noted that coordination is taking place between both jurisdictions in relation to preparations for the second-cycle river basin management plans in Ireland and Northern Ireland under the EU Water Framework Directive.
13. The Council also welcomed the continued co-ordination in relation to the Clean Coast and Coastcare Schemes and the symposium held in November 2012 involving representatives from both jurisdictions.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING AND RESEARCH

14. Ministers welcomed the success of the QUESTOR research partnership in securing funding for an INTERREG North West Europe project to develop a research and innovation network for the recovery of valuable materials from waste.
15. The Council noted that following preliminary research by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) into the environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and that a more comprehensive research study is planned. The Terms of Reference for this study were subject to a public consultation process, which ended on 8 March.
16. They also noted that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's second State of the Environment Report is due for publication by the end of 2013.
17. Ministers noted that the review of the EPA's research programme, STRIVE (Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for the Environment), and the intention to develop a new research programme for the period 2014-2020.
18. The Council noted that legislation currently before the Oireachtas will enable Science Foundation Ireland to provide research funding on an all-island basis.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19. Ministers agreed to hold the next Environment meeting on 30 October 2013.

Joint Secretariat
23 April 2013

Website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org