

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC ENV 2 (13) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

30 OCTOBER 2013

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The eighteenth North South Ministerial Council Environment meeting was held in NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 30 October 2013. The meeting was attended by Phil Hogan T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mark H. Durkan MLA, Minister of the Environment and Danny Kennedy MLA, Minister for Regional Development. Minister Hogan chaired the meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

2. EU Directives in the area of environmental quality and protection generally contain provisions requiring cooperation between Member States in relation to cross border issues and significant transboundary effects. The Council received a presentation from officials on the proposed all-island air quality research study into the issue of airborne pollution from residential smoky coal combustion. The Terms of Reference for the research study were approved in July 2013 and the procurement process for the study has commenced. It is expected that the study will commence in November 2013 and be completed by May 2013.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

3. The Department of the Environment (DOE) published a revised Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland in October 2013 which shifts the focus of waste management from resource management to resource efficiency and this is reflected in the title "Delivering Resource Efficiency". The Council welcomed the publication of this report.
4. The Council agreed that the North South Market Development Steering Group will consider how the recommendations of "The All Island Bulky Waste Reuse Best Practice Management Feasibility Study" will be brought forward. The study, published in July, found that there is an opportunity to increase the reuse of bulky waste items on the island of Ireland based on demand from reuse organisations.
5. The Council noted that The North West Region Waste Management Group appointed a Preferred Bidder on 23 May 2013 and is working towards reaching contract close. The arc21 Bidder launched a public consultation on its proposed site and has hosted a number of public events to engage with local residents.
6. Ministers discussed the successful introduction of the carrier bag levy in Northern Ireland. The Minister of the Environment advised that the carrier bag levy for single use bags is to be kept at 5 pence and that legislation, if approved by the Assembly, will extend the cost to low cost reusable carrier bags from April 2014.
7. Council noted that the Department of the Environment is currently revising its Waste Tyre Action Plan to incorporate the Environment Committee's twelve revised recommendations in its final Used Tyre Report.

CROSS BORDER MOVEMENTS OF WASTE

8. Joint enforcement action to deal with illegal operators continues to be a priority for both Environment Ministers and their Departments along with continued targeting of resources to this action.
9. The Council was provided with an update on the process to repatriate the illegally dumped waste. Works at 6 out of the 15 identified sites have now been completed with a further 9 sites remaining to be cleared of waste. Waste repatriation from three sites will be completed during 2013-14 and site investigation works have been carried out at the first site in County Tyrone. Removal of waste from this site commenced in early October 2013.
10. Ministers noted that Dublin City Council has established a Framework Agreement for the Disposal of Repatriated Waste, and is continuing to progress the public procurement process for the haulage of excavated waste to authorised disposal facilities.

WATER QUALITY

11. The Council was advised that coordination is taking place between both jurisdictions in relation to preparations for the second-cycle river basin management plans under the EU Water Framework Directive.
12. The Clean Coast Coastcare Scheme is a Wales/Ireland initiative that encompasses the island of Ireland coastline and is facilitated through a partnership of Northern Ireland Environment Agency, An Taisce and Tidy Towns Northern Ireland. Ministers welcomed progress on this initiative. Both jurisdictions will participate in the next symposium which will take place on the 28th November 2013.
13. Ministers welcomed the presentation of the Blue Flag awards in both jurisdictions but noted that there is a decrease since the previous year due to stricter award criteria set out in the revised Bathing Water Directive.
14. Minister Durkan commented that the Northern Ireland 2013 bathing water results have been exceptional, with all 23 identified sites meeting the mandatory standards. Of those 23 sites, 20 sites met the higher guideline standards of the Directive and these are the best results since the original sites were identified in 1994.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING AND RESEARCH

15. Ministers welcomed the continued success of the QUESTOR research partnership in securing European funding for environmental science and technology projects that involve Ireland, Northern Ireland, Europe and globally. QUESTOR research partnership has recently secured funding for a Framework Programme (FP7) research project to deliver innovative technologies and optimise energy delivery along the biomass supply chain.
16. Council noted the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently finalising the Terms of Reference for a comprehensive research study into the environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing (fracking).
17. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency's second State of the environment Report is due for publication by the end of 2013.
18. Ministers were advised that the EPA is in the process of developing a new research programme for the period 2014-2020.
19. The Council was briefed on the legislation currently before the Oireachtas, and due to be enacted by year end. This will enable Science Foundation Ireland to provide research funding on an all-island basis.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

20. It was agreed to hold the next Environment meeting in May 2014.

**Joint Secretariat
30 October 2013**