

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC FCIL 2 (13) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

AQUACULTURE & MARINE MEETING

FOYLE, CARLINGFORD & IRISH LIGHTS COMMISSION (FCILC)

23 OCTOBER 2013

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty third North South Ministerial Council Aquaculture and Marine meeting was held in Derry on 23 October 2013. The meeting was attended by Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Pat Rabbitte TD, Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Fergus O'Dowd TD, Minister of State, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and Junior Minister Jonathan Bell MLA. Minister O'Neill chaired the meeting.

PROGRESS REPORT

2. The Council received a progress report on the work of the Loughs Agency from the Chairperson, Winston Patterson, and the Acting Chief Executive, John Pollock. Ministers welcomed the Loughs Agency's participation in the City of Culture and, in particular, its proactive role in partnering with Tate Britain to supply local oysters at Turner Prize events in the city. The Turner Prize, now in its 29th year, is widely recognised as the most prestigious award for contemporary art.

3. The Ministers congratulated the Agency on receiving a Tourism Award, for the best Tourism initiative, at the Chamber of Commerce Business Awards 2013, for its high profile role in both the Flavours of the Foyle Seafood and Carlingford Oyster Festivals, which attracted 18,000 and 10,000 visitors respectively and, its successful role in hosting the Sea Angling Competition in the World Police and Fire Games.
4. The Agency provided a progress report on a number of EU funded Marine Tourism initiatives, including securing £208,400 of INTERREG IVA funding to develop the area around Malin Head, the most northerly point in Ireland, to facilitate visitors to this iconic site and, in partnership with Limavady Borough Council, securing £486,500 INTERREG IVA funding for the development of the visitor experience at Benone.
5. Ministers also discussed the key issue of conservation. The Council was advised that the rivers Faughan and Roe are maintaining relatively stable populations of Atlantic salmon and are meeting their management targets and conservation limits. In addition, the Agency reported that there had been an incremental improvement in the populations in the rivers Finn and Mourne since 2010/11.

2013 OYSTER SURVEY PRESENTATION

6. The development of the Oyster stock in Lough Foyle is an important priority for the Loughs Agency. A presentation by Ciaran McGonigle from the Agency on the monitoring of oyster stocks in Lough Foyle highlighted recent improvements in trends within the population dynamics in Lough Foyle for 2013. The presentation also provided updates on the improvement in landings and reduction in disease related mortalities from the oyster fishery.
7. Included in the presentation was an overview of research being carried out through the IBIS INTERREG Research Project. This project, which is helping to provide information to aid the management of the native oyster resource, will recommend future proposals to help increase its sustainability through habitat improvement and stock enhancement projects.

LOUGHS AGENCY BUSINESS PLAN 2013 & ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2012

8. Ministers approved the Loughs Agency's Business Plan 2013 and recommended a budget provision for 2013 of £4.2527m (€5.1862m). The key priorities for 2013 include the conservation and protection of the fisheries of the Foyle & Carlingford Areas, the licensing and development of Aquaculture and the development of Marine Tourism and Angling.
9. Ministers received an update on the Loughs Agency Annual Report and draft Financial Statements 2012, and were informed that following certification of the Financial Statements by the Comptrollers and Auditors General, they will be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Oireachtas.

LOUGHS AGENCY CORPORATE PLAN 2014-16 AND BUSINESS PLAN 2014

10. The Council acknowledged the progress on the development of the Loughs Agency's Corporate Plan 2014-16 and Business Plan 2014-16; and agreed that the Loughs Agency will apply further efficiency savings to the 2014-16 budgets. The Council also agreed the key priorities for the Corporate Planning period including carrying out a strategic review and economic appraisal of Agency premises and accommodation needs, and carrying out a strategic review of the Loughs Agency enforcement and development roles. The Corporate and Business Plans will be brought for approval to a future NSMC meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11. The Council agreed to meet again in Aquaculture and Marine format in February 2014.

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