

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC FCIL 2 (11) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

AQUACULTURE AND MARINE MEETING

FOYLE, CARLINGFORD AND IRISH LIGHTS
COMMISSION (FCILC)

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH

14 OCTOBER 2011

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The eighteenth North South Ministerial Council Aquaculture and Marine meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 14 October 2011. The meeting was attended by Fergus O'Dowd TD, Minister of State, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Michelle O'Neill, MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and Nelson McCausland, MLA, Minister for Social Development. Minister of State O'Dowd chaired the meeting.

PROGRESS REPORT

2. Ministers welcomed a progress report on the work of the Loughs Agency, presented by the Agency's Chairperson Tarlach O Crosain and the Chief Executive, Derick Anderson.

3. The Council strongly condemned continuing attacks on the Loughs Agency's enforcement staff and on volunteer River Watchers and acknowledged their dedication in seeking to detect and prevent illegal fishing activity.
4. Ministers discussed the improvement in length frequency of the standing stock of oysters in Lough Foyle. They noted that the 2011 salmon counts indicated relatively healthy fish runs in some systems but that there are concerns about others, specifically the River Mourne.
5. The Council also noted and welcomed the significant progress made on the Agency's application for INTERREG IVA funding for the Integrated Aquatic Resource Management project along with Glasgow University and Queens University Belfast.

PRESENTATION ON LOUGHS AGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

6. Ministers welcomed the presentation by the Loughs Agency on the provision of environmental education programmes and noted that such programmes facilitate excellent stakeholder engagement, particularly with young people and play an important role in changing the mindset of stakeholders about their role in managing the Foyle and Carlingford catchments and ensuring their sustainability.

PROCUREMENT OF MMV OSTREA – INTERNAL AUDIT INVESTIGATION

7. The Council noted with concern a report of an investigation by DARD Internal Audit into the procurement by the Loughs Agency of its monitoring vessel MMV Ostrea which had identified significant weaknesses and control issues in the management of this project. They also noted that the report found that there was no evidence of fraudulent activity, the objectives of the project were achieved and the finished vessel provides value for money in terms of the current market value of the vessel and its capacity for operational effectiveness.
8. Ministers endorsed the actions taken, and the additional controls requested by the FCILC Board and noted that progress on the implementation of the actions arising from the Internal Audit Report will be reported at the next NSMC Aquaculture and Marine meeting.

LOUGHS AGENCY BUSINESS PLAN 2012

9. Ministers noted progress on the preparation of the Loughs Agency Business Plan 2012 and that the Sponsor Departments will continue to work together with the Agency to finalise the Plan and that it will be brought forward for approval before the end of 2011.

LEGISLATION

10. Ministers welcomed the progress on the delivery of the Loughs Agency's, Legislation Implementation Plan, approved one set of regulations and noted that further regulations will require NSMC approval in 2012.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11. The Council agreed to meet again in Aquaculture and Marine sectoral format in February 2012.

**Joint Secretariat
14 October 2011**