

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC LAN 1 (12) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY, MEETING

ENNISKILLEN

14 FEBRUARY 2012

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The fourteenth North South Ministerial Council Language Body meeting was held in Enniskillen on 14 February, 2012. The meeting was attended by Carál Ní Chuilín, MLA, Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Dinny McGinley, TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs and OFMDFM Junior Minister Jonathan Bell, MLA. Minister of State McGinley chaired the meeting.
2. The meeting dealt with issues relating to the Language Body and its two constituent Agencies, Tha Boord o Ulstèr Scotch (The Ulster-Scots Agency) and Foras na Gaeilge (The Irish Language Agency).

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY PROGRESS REPORT

3. The Council received progress reports from Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency on collaborative work and other activities of the two agencies including:

- training and induction for new Board members and plans for Language Body Board meetings;
- development of an agenda for cultural showcases for 2012, including participation in the Olympic torch relay;
- sharing expertise and resources on a range of corporate and HR issues, the revision of the Equality Scheme for the Language Body and agreed contracts of employment;
- Foras na Gaeilge's examination system for Irish language editors was established and accreditation certificates were presented to the first cohort of 8 editors in November 2011;
- Foras na Gaeilge awarded a three-year contract to provide specialist Irish language courses to the public sector for the 2011-2014 period;
- in excess of 8,000 participants received music and dance tuition during 2011 from peripatetic tutors funded under a scheme provided by the Ulster-Scots Agency; and
- reviews of the Ulster-Scots Agency's Financial Assistance and Community Workers' Schemes were completed in 2011.

CORPORATE AND BUSINESS PLANS AND BUDGETS

4. The Council approved the North/South Language Body Corporate Plan 2011 - 2013 and Business Plan and Budget 2011 and noted progress on the development of the 2012 Business Plan and Budget.

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS

5. The NSMC noted that the consolidated Language Body 2008 Annual Report and Draft Accounts are being compiled for submission to the Comptrollers and Auditors General and the NSMC with a view to laying them before the Houses of the Oireachtas and Assembly in Spring 2012.
6. Ministers also noted that a revised process to simplify and speed up the consolidation of accounts has been introduced and that work is in hand with a view to laying the Accounts for 2009 and 2010 during 2012.

ULSTER-SCOTS AGENCY - DEVELOPING QUALITY INDICATORS IN PROGRAMMES OF WORK

7. The Council noted progress made by the Ulster-Scots Agency in developing and introducing Quality Indicators for its Tuition Programme. The Agency has adopted the Quality Indicators across a number of work programmes which

demonstrate high value outcomes and increased value for money. Ministers also noted how Quality Indicators are supporting the Accreditation for Schools initiative.

FORAS NA GAEILGE - REVIEW OF CORE FUNDING

8. Ministers noted the progress that has been made to date by Foras na Gaeilge with regard to the development of a new competitive funding model with the objective of achieving significant benefits in relation to value for money and the effective delivery of Foras na Gaeilge's statutory obligations. The Council agreed that, in the context of continuing to achieve satisfactory progress, interim funding may continue to be provided by Foras na Gaeilge to the existing core funded bodies to 30 June 2013. A further progress report will be presented to the next NSMC Language Body meeting.

FORAS NA GAEILGE – REVIEW OF ÁIS

9. The Council noted progress to date in regard to the recommendations of the review of Áis, (the book distribution service of Foras na Gaeilge) and the agreement of a detailed implementation plan with the Sponsor Departments.

FORAS NA GAEILGE – DECENTRALISATION

10. Ministers noted the announcement by the Irish Government, in its public service reform plan published on 17 November 2011, of the cancellation, in light of the current difficult economic situation, of the decentralisation programme, with some projects being cancelled, others being left in situ and others being reviewed. The Council, taking account of the Irish Government's approach to the decentralisation programme in its public service reform plan, and the potential impact for Foras na Gaeilge, tasked officials of the Sponsor Departments with considering, in consultation with Foras na Gaeilge, the possible implications arising and to report back to a future NSMC meeting in language sectoral format.

ST. ANDREWS AGREEMENT REVIEW

11. The Council considered a number of recommendations specific to the Language Body and agreed to forward the following recommendations for consideration to the June 2012 NSMC Plenary:
 - no further action is required concerning engagement between the Language Body Agencies, sharing of services between the Agencies and consolidation of accounts since work is already underway to address each of these issues;
 - no further action is required concerning the remit of the Ulster-Scots Agency to take forward work associated with the promotion of the Ulster-Scots language and culture outside the island of Ireland, since legal advice has indicated that the existing legislation presents no difficulty with this;

- the Sponsor Departments will continue to assist the Ulster-Scots Agency to achieve value for money within existing budgetary constraints; and
- no action is required at present concerning an increase to the Board membership of the Ulster-Scots Agency but this issue will be kept under review, subject to consideration of the legislative and financial implications.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12. The Council agreed to hold its next Language Body meeting in summer 2012.

Joint Secretariat
14 February 2012