

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC ENV 1 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

8 MAY 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The nineteenth North South Ministerial Council Environment meeting was held in NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 8 May 2014. The meeting was attended by Mark H. Durkan MLA, Minister of the Environment, Phil Hogan T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, and Danny Kennedy MLA, Minister for Regional Development. Minister Durkan chaired the meeting.

SECTORAL PRIORITIES

2. Ministers had a discussion on various priorities within their remit and noted that these will be contained in a report to be considered at a future NSMC Institutional meeting as part of the ongoing review into sectoral priorities.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

3. Ministers welcomed the presentation on progress of the all-island air quality research study into the issue of airborne pollution from the combustion of residential solid fuels, in particular smoky coal, and noted that the contract has been awarded and the study is expected to be completed by August 2014.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

4. The Council welcomed the consideration by the North South Market Development Steering Group of a new programme to investigate opportunities related to the circular economy. This requires a new way of thinking in all aspects of the value chain and aims to keep the added value in products for as long as possible and to cut residual waste to close to zero.
5. The Council noted the current position in respect of the Waste Infrastructure Programme.
6. They also noted that the Northern Ireland carrier bag levy currently applied to single use bags will be extended to low cost reusable carrier bags from January 2015.
7. Ministers welcomed the engagement in discussions regarding the proposals for a new Used Tyre Scheme in Ireland and the exploration of the potential for a complementary scheme in Northern Ireland.

CROSS BORDER MOVEMENTS OF WASTE

8. Ministers noted that works at 9 out of the 17 identified sites containing historically and illegally landfill deposited waste have now being completed. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has in place a proposed programme of work for 2014-2015 which is being reviewed and will be agreed with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and Dublin City Council with the intention of starting the next phase of site clearance shortly.
9. 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.
10. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to continue to target resources into joint enforcement action against illegal operators and called on all relevant departments to engage on tackling this issue.

WATER QUALITY

11. Ministers noted the coordination that is continuing between both jurisdictions in relation to preparations for the second-cycle River Basin Management Plans under the EU Water Framework Directive and welcomed the publication in Northern Ireland of the Consultation on Significant Water Management Issues.
12. They also welcomed the provision of funding by both jurisdictions for the cross-border pilot project for the management of invasive flora and fauna on the River Blackwater in Northern Ireland and the continued coordination in relation to the Clean Coast and Coastcare Schemes.

13. The Council also welcomed the commencement of discussions on common approaches to the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING AND RESEARCH

14. The Council noted that tenders for the Environmental Protection Agency's research project into the Environmental Impacts of Unconventional Gas Exploration & Extraction (fracking) are currently being evaluated.
15. Ministers noted that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's second State of the Environment Report was published in December 2013 and welcomed the publication of the Environmental Protection Agency's 'Who's Who' of Environmental Research Expertise in Ireland which will assist collaboration by environmental researchers from the Island of Ireland in Europe-wide research projects.
16. They also noted that the Environmental Protection Agency's research strategy for the period 2014-2020 will be published by the end of June 2014 and that Science Foundation Ireland may now fund environmental research on an all-island basis.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17. It was agreed to hold the next Environment meeting in November 2014.

Joint Secretariat
8 May 2014

Website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org