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NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

27 NOVEMBER 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-second North South Ministerial Council Language Body meeting was held in Armagh on 27 November 2014. The meeting was attended by Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Joe McHugh TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and OFMDFM Junior Minister Jonathan Bell MLA. Minister McHugh chaired the meeting.

EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

2. Ministers noted that the Agencies of the Language Body are actively engaged in identification of possible opportunities to maximise the benefits of EU funding.

PROGRESS REPORT

3. Ministers noted progress reports from the Chairpersons and the Chief Executive Officers of Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency which include the following achievements relating to the period from April – October 2014:

Foras na Gaeilge

- Further progress on the new funding arrangements, including 8 meetings of the Partnership Forum, 2 meetings of the Language Development Forum, and agreement of an overall high-level strategic plan in addition to three year plans for each of the six strategic areas;
- Launch of the new online newspaper Tuairisc.ie (www.tuairisc.ie) with a budget of €1.2m under a four year contract and the online lifestyle magazine Níos (www.nosmag.com) with a budget of €204,600 under a three year contract;
- Targets continue to be met in regard to the new English/Irish dictionary flagship project (www.focloir.ie) for publication of 70% of the final material, including sound files, on the live site before year-end in addition to development of the App specification which will be available early in 2015;
- Contract awarded to carry out analysis on the results of the 2013 major all-island survey on attitudes to the Irish language. This work will contribute significantly in terms of identifying future priorities and policy formulation generally; and
- The consultation exercise for the review of the Irish Language Community Scheme (Scéim Phobail Ghaeilge) 2015-17 ran from mid July to 24 November 2014. Foras na Gaeilge is considering the responses received and the timetable for implementation. The process also incorporated consultation on the Irish Language Networks (Líonraí Gaeilge).

Ulster-Scots Agency

- Development of the new *Discover Ulster-Scots Centre*, at the Corn Exchange Ulster-Scots Hub in Victoria Street, Belfast. This was developed in conjunction with a number of partners and will maximise the opportunity for collaboration within the Ulster-Scots sector and provide a modern showcase on Ulster-Scots culture for the general public;
- Two East/West school twinning projects between primary schools in Ulster and Scotland have commenced - twinning on the theme of shipbuilding heritage between Cregagh Primary School in Belfast and Castle Park Primary School in Irvine, and twinning on the theme of Robert Burns and Ulster-Scots poetry between Glynn Primary School, Larne and Catrine Primary School, Ayrshire;
- Funding and support for 22 summer schools (an increase of 7 summer schools on 2013) were provided at a range of community venues with an outreach to over 1,000 young people; and
- Involvement in the area of education has increased to in excess of 100 schools in Ulster this year, including ongoing delivery of 29 after-school

clubs and funding for music and dance tuition programmes from September to December 2014 in 49 schools, including 5 in the border counties.

The Ministers also noted progress on collaboration between the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge, including:-

- Development of a six week pilot programme, commencing in December 2014, in 4 integrated post-primary schools, exploring the concept of culture generally and more specifically in regard to different aspects of Irish and Ulster-Scots culture; and
- Ongoing inter-agency cooperation in regard to governance issues and promotion of the work of the Language Body, including finance matters, commemoration projects such as the James Duffy blue plaque project in Co. Donegal and meetings of the full Language Body board.

INDICATIVE BUDGETS FOR 2013, DRAFT BUSINESS PLANS AND BUDGETS FOR 2014 AND 2015, AND DRAFT CORPORATE PLANS 2014-2016

4. Ministers agreed the 2013 indicative budgets of €16,514,672 (£13,542,031) for Foras na Gaeilge and £2,662,080 (€3,246,439) for the Ulster-Scots Agency which are used as the baseline for the 2014-2016 budgets.
5. They also noted:-
 - 2014 draft Business Plans with budgets of €15,358,645 (£13,208,435) for Foras na Gaeilge and £2,475,734 (€2,878,761) for the Ulster-Scots Agency;
 - 2015 draft Business Plans with budgets of €15,193,498 (£12,306,734) for Foras na Gaeilge and £2,449,114 (€3,023,597) for the Ulster-Scots Agency;
 - Draft Corporate Plans 2014-16 for Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency with indicative budgets of €14,532,911 (£11,771,658) for Foras na Gaeilge and £2,342,630 (€2,892,136) for the Ulster-Scots Agency in 2016, which will be subject to budgetary considerations by the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive; and
 - The positive outcome arising from the use of the 2013 indicative baseline, with the proposed 2015 allocation bringing the budgets for the period 2014-2015 in line with the overall cumulative requirements for efficiency savings agreed by the Finance Departments.
6. In noting the progress with the Business Plans, Ministers also approved a number of key priorities for the Agencies in 2015 and noted that the draft Business and Corporate Plans and Budgets will be brought to a future NSMC meeting for approval.

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS

7. The Council noted that the 2012 consolidated Language Body Annual Report and Accounts were laid in the Houses of the Oireachtas and in the Northern Ireland Assembly on 24 October 2014.
8. They also noted that the field audits in regard to the 2013 accounts have been completed and, following work by the Comptrollers and Auditors General to finalise the accounts of each Agency, it is envisaged that the consolidated Language Body Annual Report and Accounts 2013 will be laid by Spring 2015.
9. Ministers noted that both Agencies are on target to submit their draft 2014 Annual Report and Accounts to the Sponsor Departments by 31 March 2015.

FORAS NA GAEILGE - COLMCILLE

10. Ministers noted that Foras na Gaeilge and Bòrd na Gàidhlig are committed to continuing the delivery of the Colmcille project in support of Gaelic language development initiatives in both jurisdictions and in Scotland.
11. The Council approved new administrative arrangements for Colmcille, comprising the following key elements:-
 - Foras na Gaeilge will continue to promote Colmcille in both jurisdictions and Bòrd na Gàidhlig will continue to promote Colmcille in Scotland, without direct budgetary and administrative links;
 - An inter-agency joint working group will be established to focus on strategic projects, to discuss funding priorities and other collaborative initiatives as well as to share best practice and create sustainable community links; and
 - Ringfenced co-funding for Colmcille will continue to be provided to Foras na Gaeilge annually by the two Sponsor Departments.

ULSTER-SCOTS AGENCY – BRUCE HERITAGE TRAIL

12. Ministers received a presentation from the CEO of the Ulster-Scots Agency outlining the Bruce heritage trail project to commemorate the 700th anniversary of Edward Bruce in Ireland and acknowledged that this project complements the Agency's ongoing work in the areas of education and cultural tourism.

NEXT MEETING

13. The Council agreed to meet again in Language Body sectoral format in Spring 2015.

Joint Secretariat

27 November 2014

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