

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL 2014 ANNUAL REPORT



North South Ministerial Council
An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas

Caption: Stage 3 of the 97th Giro d'Italia leaving Armagh for Dublin on 11 May 2014.

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FOREWORD

The past year was a busy year for the North South Ministerial Council, with a total of twenty four meetings including two Plenary meetings, which took place within an eight week period, and one Institutional meeting. All these meetings have been characterised by excellent relations between the Ministers and good discussions on opportunities for cooperation for mutual benefit.

Consistent with the last number of years, the challenging economic environment provided an important context for the ministerial meetings. Consequently, a focus of Ministerial discussions in 2014 was on efforts to support economic recovery, job creation, the best use of public funds and the most effective delivery of services for citizens. The intention is to provide a report on these discussions to an Institutional meeting in early 2015.

EU funding was also an important area for discussion in 2014. At the Plenary meeting in October it was agreed that Ministers should consider what opportunities are available within their respective sectors to maximise the drawdown of EU funding, particularly from the competitive funding programmes. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation agreed a joint target to win €175m in funding for North/South projects from the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme. Other Ministers are exploring the opportunities to drawdown EU funding within their own areas of cooperation.

Agreement was also reached by the September 2014 deadline to submit the new INTERREG and PEACE programmes to the European Commission.

Despite the challenging economic climate, departments with North/South responsibilities in partnership with the North/South bodies, continued to deliver key programmes. These included successful programmes to:

- deliver strong growth in the tourism sector;
- tackle childhood overweight and obesity;
- manage our Inland Waterways by keeping over 95% of navigations open;
- promote the Irish language and Ulster Scots;
- manage and develop Foyle and Carlingford Loughs;
- support local businesses and industry; and
- develop the new INTERREG and Peace programmes.

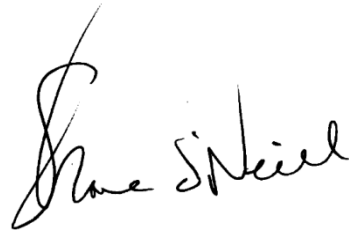
During the year Martin Higgins retired as Chief Executive of *safefood* and we wish him well in his retirement. Ray Dolan was appointed as the new Chief Executive of *safefood* and John Pollock was confirmed as the Chief Executive of the Loughs Agency. We wish both every success in their new appointments.

Finally, our work in Armagh is not possible without the support of our colleagues in the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government departments, the North South

Implementation Bodies and our own staff. Once again we would like to thank them for their valuable cooperation and contributions in 2014.

Handwritten signature of Colm Shannon in black ink.

Colm Shannon
Joint Secretary (North)

Handwritten signature of Shane O'Neill in black ink.

Shane O'Neill
Joint Secretary (South)

CHAPTER ONE: NSMC PLENARY MEETINGS



Minister Charlie Flanagan TD, Tánaiste Joan Burton TD, Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD, First Minister Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA and deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MLA at the NSMC Plenary in Dublin Castle, 3 October 2014



The NSMC Plenary in Armagh, 5 December 2014

NSMC Plenary meetings involve Executive Ministers meeting with their counterparts in the Irish Government to overview the co-operation and work of the North South Ministerial Council. There were two NSMC Plenary meetings in 2014, the first on 3 October in Dublin Castle and the second on 5 December at the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices in Armagh.

Both meetings were well attended with the meeting in Armagh having 29 Ministers, Junior Ministers and Ministers of State in attendance – the largest number ever at a NSMC meeting.

On both occasions the Irish Government delegation was led by the Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD and the Northern Ireland Executive delegation was led by the First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA, and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MLA. The Joint Communiqués issued after the meetings are available at www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org .

Financial and Economic Matters

Financial and economic matters continued to form a key part of the discussions at both plenary meetings. Both Governments welcomed the positive signs within each economy whilst recognising that challenges remain.

Measures to attract investment to each jurisdiction were discussed and at the December meeting the Autumn Statement announcement on Corporation Tax by the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer was noted. Other opportunities such as working together on joint trade missions and on developing new markets were discussed.

Ministers also took the opportunity to recognise the contribution of major events to the economy and welcomed the success of the Giro d'Italia cycling event. At the December meeting both governments expressed their support for the IRFU's bid to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup and agreed that relevant Ministers from each jurisdiction should work closely together to ensure that the strongest possible bid is submitted.

EU Matters/ EU Funding Opportunities

At both meetings Ministers were advised of the current position regarding the new draft PEACE and INTERREG Funding Programmes for the period 2014 – 2020, which had been submitted to the EU Commission in September 2014. The Council noted the importance of EU funding to both jurisdictions and was informed that the current INTERREG and PEACE Programmes for 2007 - 2013 had been fully committed.

The Council also recognised that there are a range of competitive EU Funding Programmes available and agreed that Ministers should consider the potential for cooperation to maximise the drawdown of these funds across all areas. A report on the discussions between Ministers will be brought to a future plenary meeting.

Joint Secretaries' Progress Reports

The Plenary Meetings also provided an opportunity for the Joint Secretaries to provide progress reports on the work taken forward by the NSMC during the year. Key issues highlighted included:

- cooperation on Strategic Transport Planning;
- the work of both Agriculture departments on CAP Reform;

- future enhancement of the Enterprise train service;
- progress on the Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin;
- cooperation to address Educational Underachievement;
- cooperation to encourage Research and Innovation activities and to maximise drawdown of EU funding;
- development of cross border Greenways;
- development of the new draft EU PEACE and INTERREG Programmes;
- work on the development of the Shannon Blueway by Waterways Ireland; and
- the activities by Tourism Ireland to promote growth in the Tourism industry.

Sectoral Priorities

At the October Plenary meeting the Council noted that Ministers had been in discussions regarding their sectoral priorities during the last round of NSMC meetings and that a report on these discussions would be brought to the next NSMC Institutional meeting. Discussions had focussed on efforts to support economic recovery, job creation, ensuring the best use of public funds and the most effective delivery of services for citizens.

North West Gateway Initiative

In October the Council received an update on the North West Gateway Initiative. They noted that the consultation process with stakeholders in the region had been completed and that stakeholders had expressed a desire for a renewed and strengthened strategic focus endorsed by both Governments. It was agreed that relevant Government departments should be consulted on the issues identified during the consultation process.

The Council also reaffirmed its commitment to a future meeting of Ministers and officials in the North West to consider strategic approaches to the development of the region.



Child Protection and e-Safety

At the December meeting the Council had an in-depth discussion on Child Protection issues with a particular focus on e-Safety. The Council recognised that good collaborative work is already taking place on Child Protection, both within the NSMC structures and elsewhere. Ministers also noted that issues of this nature are cross-cutting and cross jurisdictional and will require collaborative working to address.

It was agreed that Ministers with a remit in Child Protection and e-Safety related activities should engage with their counterparts in the opposite jurisdiction to explore the potential for further collaboration and that this topic should be revisited again at a future meeting.

North South Consultative Forum

The current position of the North South Consultative Forum was discussed at both Plenary meetings. Ministers agreed that this would be revisited at a future Plenary meeting.

CHAPTER TWO: NSMC INSTITUTIONAL MEETING



First Minister Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA, deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, MLA and Minister Eamon Gilmore, TD attending the NSMC Institutional meeting, officially launch the digitisation of the records of Irish Soldiers killed in World War at Google's European Headquarters in Dublin.

The NSMC met in Institutional format on 10 January 2014 in Iveagh House, Dublin. The Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore TD, the First Minister the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA, and the deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MLA attended the meeting. A copy of the Joint Communiqué that issued after the meeting is available at www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org.

The meeting was preceded by a visit to Google's European Headquarters in Dublin by the Ministers to officially launch the digitisation of the records of Irish Soldiers killed in World War One. A partnership between Google and the In Flanders Fields Museum has resulted in the digital records of individual Irish Soldiers, who died in World War One, being made available on line.

Ministers discussed a range of issues including the economic prospects and challenges for 2014 and the strategies being pursued in each jurisdiction particularly in relation to tackling unemployment. They acknowledged the success of events such as The Gathering 2013 and the Derry~Londonderry UK City of Culture celebrations and welcomed the fact that the Giro d'Italia cycling event in 2014 would have a cross border element. Ministers also endorsed the importance of attracting other high profile sporting events to the island and maintaining the positive momentum with regard to tourism figures.

EU Matters

The Council reviewed progress on the PEACE III and INTERREG IV Programmes and looked forward to the completion of the consultation process on the new Programmes. Ministers also emphasised the importance of using every opportunity to maximise the drawdown of EU funding in both jurisdictions.

St Andrews Agreement Review

The Council discussed the St Andrews Agreement Review and noted that work was underway to implement the decision taken at the 8 November Plenary meeting that Ministers should consider their priorities in their respective sectoral areas. Ministers will consider a report on the outcome of this Ministerial consideration when they meet again in Institutional format.

North West Gateway Initiative

Ministers noted that the engagement by officials with key stakeholders on the future direction of the North West Gateway Initiative was continuing and agreed that a report would be brought to a future meeting of the Council.

Cross-Border Mobility

Ministers welcomed the appointment of Ruth Taillon as Director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies and congratulated her on her appointment.

Ministers were informed that INTERREG IVA funding had been obtained for phase 3 of the Border People Project, that training of Information Advisors and service personnel in the area of cross border mobility was ongoing, and a needs analysis and sustainability plan was being prepared.

North South Bodies Issues

The Council discussed a range of matters relating to the North South Bodies. Ministers noted the progress in respect of their Corporate and Business Plans and the implementation of cumulative efficiency savings within the Bodies. They discussed governance issues including changes to the terms and conditions of staff in the North South Bodies aligned to those of the Irish Public Service, the review of the Financial Memoranda and forthcoming changes to the North South Pension Scheme. Ministers also noted changes to the Boards of the North South Bodies and the process to recruit a permanent Chief Executive to the Loughs Agency. They approved the appointment of Mr Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire to the Board of the North South Language Body (Foras na Gaeilge) for the period 10 January 2014 to 12 December 2015

CHAPTER THREE: NSMC MEETINGS IN SECTORAL FORMAT

This section includes a summary of NSMC meetings in sectoral format in 2014. The Joint Communiqués from these meetings are available at www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org.

AGRICULTURE



Agriculture Meetings

NSMC Agriculture meetings took place on 16 April and 1 October 2014. Ministers in attendance were Simon Coveney TD, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and Defence; Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD); Edwin Poots MLA, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety; Simon Hamilton MLA, Minister of Finance and Personnel and Alan Kelly TD, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and International Trade Issues

The Council noted that implementation plans had been adopted by DAFM and DARD for the Common Agricultural Policy reforms agreed in 2013 and agreed that officials will monitor the development of the implementation process in respect of Pillar I and II decisions.

They also noted that both Administrations sought approval from the European Commission for their respective Rural Development Programmes 2014 – 2020, with DAFM submitting its draft Programme in July 2014 and DARD doing likewise in October 2014.

The Council welcomed the continued close contact between officials from DARD and DAFM on CAP issues.

Ministers also took the opportunity to discuss matters relating to international trade at both meetings.

Co-operation on Animal Health

Ministers noted the importance of the ongoing work on the delivery of the All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Action Plan, in particular:

- that applications have been made by each relevant competent authority to the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) for Peste Des Petites Ruminants (Sheep and Goat Plague) disease free status.
- the completed review of common disease surveillance priorities and the commitment to co-operation in areas of mutual benefit;
- the agreement by DARD and DAFM of a “Common Chapter” dealing with control arrangements for African Horse Sickness;
- the coming into operation of the Welfare of Animals at the Time Of Killing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 on 21 May 2014;
- the progress made by DARD towards OBF (Officially Brucellosis Free) status. DAFM now considering appropriate OBF monitoring regime following the expiry of the mandatory 5 year;
- the progress made by DAFM officials to develop a code of practice for wild animals in circuses; and
- the achievement of an agreement, in principle, to a joint contingency approach on rendering facilities.

Plant Health

The Council welcomed the development of a protocol for the cross border movement of larch logs infected with *Phytophthora ramorum*.

They also noted that the All-Ireland Chalara ash die-back Conference took place in May 2014 and that DAFM and DARD were summarising stakeholder’s responses to key questions. This will help to inform future policy development.

Rural Development

Ministers welcomed the continued co-operation between DARD and Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) across a range of Rural Development issues. Through the Steering Committee for Cross Border Rural Development (SCCBRD), officials from both Departments have met to discuss operational and strategic issues of common interest.

The Council was pleased to note the expected successful completion of all six INTERREG IVA projects during 2014. Funding of €10.4m was committed to the theme of Rural Development across the EU. Notable achievements include: the RIVER project - installation of jetties and associated infrastructure in Portglenone and Belturbet; SoFAB (a project focused on Social Farming across Borders) and

CEEB Rural Regeneration Project – regeneration of Clones including refurbishment of the Canal Stores Building.

Ministers agreed the provision of proactive support by DARD and DECLG for LEADER Cooperation activities, including a specific focus on North South Cooperation.

EDUCATION



Education Meetings

NSMC Education meetings took place on 2 April and 22 October 2014. Ruairí Quinn TD, Minister of Education and Skills represented the Irish Government at the April meeting. Following the Irish Government Cabinet reshuffle in July, Jan O’Sullivan TD, Minister for Education and Skills represented the Irish Government at the October meeting. John O’Dowd MLA, Minister for Education and Nelson McCausland MLA, Minister for Social Development attended both meetings on behalf of the Executive.

The Ministers received a number of presentations at both meetings which included joint presentations from the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and the National Youth Council of Ireland on the linkages between the two organisations and the Chief Inspectors of the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate on their programme of co-operation.

Future Work Programme

Updates were provided on joint departmental workshops on Educational Underachievement that were held in Armagh on 25 March 2014 and in Dublin on 8 October 2014. It was agreed that work would be taken forward to establish a means whereby the experience of schools across the island can be shared in order to support improvement in addressing educational disadvantage.

Ministers also agreed to the development of proposals to scope a cross-border pilot project in support of leadership development involving existing groups of principals in both jurisdictions.

Co-operation between Inspectorates

At the meetings, Ministers recognised the continuing endeavours of the Inspectorates to extend co-operation activities including plans to implement the following key actions in 2014:

- Publish Joint North South work on Literacy and Numeracy; two separate reports by spring 2015;
- Continue with the programme of inspection exchanges and co-operation;
- Invite DES Inspectorate to evaluate ETI work on Promoting Improvement in English and Mathematics (PIEM);
- Joint inspection in agricultural colleges and in Irish Medium Education; and
- Joint work on the development of inspection of well-being in schools.

Special Education Needs

Ministers welcomed the continuing progress being made by the two Education departments and the Middletown Centre for Autism in expanding the Centre's range of services, which are tailored to meet the specific needs of each jurisdiction, and noted that expansion in service included:

- recruitment of additional staff and refurbishment of an existing residential block as office accommodation;
- the provision in the North of intensive multi-disciplinary educational assessment and learning to an increased number of children with complex autism;
- piloting provision of direct outreach assessment and learning to children in the South;
- training for educational professionals and parents in both jurisdictions; and
- expansion in the availability of online information and training resources for parents and professionals.

Progress was reported on plans for a two-day international conference which the Centre for Autism planned to host in Dublin in January 2015 on the theme of *Enabling Education*. Led by experts in autistic spectrum disorders, the programme targets education professionals, parents and carers, and people who have autism.

School, Youth and Teacher Exchanges

Progress was reported on the ongoing activities of the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work and their plans to develop a formal mechanism for the recognition of youth work training programmes at all levels on the island.

Ministers had welcomed the range of activities being delivered in 2014 under the Causeway Youth Exchange programme. This provides an important foundation for young people on these islands to explore together identity in a collaborative and respectful environment, and build capacity for these young people to engage actively in ever more diverse communities.

Teacher Mobility

Ministers also welcomed the continued commitment of both Education departments to work with the Teaching Councils North and South to remove outstanding obstacles to teacher mobility on the island.

Teacher Qualifications

Work is progressing on a desk-based Qualifications Assessment process that will commence following completion of the professional accreditation of revised programmes of initial teacher education in the South, expected to be completed in early 2015.

It was reported that the Teaching Council of Ireland (TCI), in consultation with the General Teaching Council (GTCNI), is also working to simplify assessment of qualifications of teachers for the purposes of their registration with the TCI and that this process will follow on from the completion of work on the review and redesign of teacher education programmes in Ireland, expected to finish in the first quarter of 2015.

Irish Language Requirement

The Teaching Council of Ireland (TCI) is progressing the development of outcomes-based criteria for the Irish Language Requirement registration condition with a view to securing TCI's approval in December 2014 and then making them available to St Mary's University College and other Higher Education Institution (HEI) providers.

The ongoing implementation of a programme plan related to North/South Irish Medium Programme of Work for 2014/15 (developed by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS)) was approved by both departments in September 2014.

Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS)

The 12th Annual SCoTENS conference took place on 21 and 22 October 2014.

ENVIRONMENT



Minister Mark H Durkan, MLA, Minister Alan Kelly, TD and Minister Danny Kennedy, MLA at the NSMC Environment meeting in November 2014.

Environment Meetings

NSMC Environment meetings took place on 8 May and 13 November 2014. Phil Hogan TD, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government represented the Irish Government at the May meeting. Following the Irish Government Cabinet reshuffle in July, Alan Kelly TD, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government represented the Irish Government at the subsequent meeting in November. Mark H Durkan MLA, Minister of the Environment and Danny Kennedy MLA, Minister for Regional Development attended both meetings.

Environmental Protection

In February 2014, the contract for an all-island air quality research study into the issue of airborne pollution from the combustion of residential solid fuels, in particular smoky coal was awarded. At the May meeting Ministers received a presentation on progress of the research study. In November they noted that an interim report is being considered by officials and will be presented to Ministers in the near future. They also noted that the study is due to commence its second and final phase before the end of 2014 and is expected to be completed in the first half of 2015. A final report will be presented to a future NSMC Environment meeting.

Waste Management

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 close to zero.

The Ministers received a presentation at the November meeting from Co-Operation Ireland in relation to their recent scoping study outlining the opportunities for greater North/South cooperation in the area of Waste Management.

Ministers also welcomed the publication of Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme – “Road to Zero Waste” on 30 September 2014 which focused on using materials more efficiently and not sending waste to landfill or other disposal. This will impact favourably on the economy, helping to promote and support ‘green jobs’ protect the environment and conserve resources.

The Council noted the publication of Ireland’s latest National Waste Prevention Programme, ‘Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland’; the final report on the review of the ‘Producer Responsibility Initiative’ (PRI) system in Ireland and the ‘National Hazardous Waste Management Plan’ for Ireland.

Ministers noted the intention to make legislation in Northern Ireland, before the end of the year, to ban separately collected food waste being dumped in landfill and the regulations recently introduced by the Irish Government in relation to the traceability of waste to counter the trade in stolen metal.

The Ministers welcomed the ongoing work on the development of a new Used Tyre Scheme in Ireland which may inform the development of a complementary scheme in Northern Ireland.

Cross Border Movements of Waste

Works at 9 out of the 17 identified sites containing historically and illegally landfill deposited waste have now been completed. The Council noted that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has in place a programme of work for 2014-2015 which was agreed with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) and Dublin City Council (DCC) and the first of these repatriation sites was commenced in August 2014 with completion expected by the end of November 2014.

Dublin City Council has established a Framework Agreement for the Disposal of Repatriated Waste. The City Council is continuing to progress the public procurement process for the haulage of excavated waste to authorised disposal facilities.

It was reported that resources continue to be targeted into joint enforcement action against illegal operators including carrying out co-ordinated inspections and exchanging intelligence and information on problem areas.

Ministers discussed the negative impact of fuel smuggling on the environment. They commended the action of agencies on both sides of the border with the finds, at that time, of an illegal fuel plant in County Monaghan and of a large amount of toxic waste in south Armagh.

Water Quality

Coordination continues between both jurisdictions in relation to preparations for the second-cycle river basin management plans in Ireland and Northern Ireland under the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).

They welcomed the collaborative work on development of the River Trusts including the cross border River Blackwater Trust and the Erne River Trust and the revised WFD governance arrangements put in place in Ireland.

Ministers also welcomed the continued coordination on the Clean Coast and Coastcare Schemes and the continued cooperation regarding the development of Programmes of Measures for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Environmental Reporting and Research

Ministers noted that the contract for the all island research project into the Environmental Impacts of Unconventional Gas Exploration & Extraction (UGEE - fracking) has been awarded.

The Council noted that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) held its 2014 National Information Day, entitled 'Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 5' on 2 October and that they published their research strategy for the period 2014-2020, with the evaluation of the first call for proposals currently underway.

The Council welcomed that NIEA and DECLG are exploring the possibility of a joint LIFE Programme workshop in 2015.

They also welcomed the continued collaboration between the EPA and the NIEA to identify emerging research needs and strategic planning of research funding programmes with European funding remaining a high priority for joint actions.

EU Funding Opportunities

Ministers noted the opportunities for cooperation on EU Funding that are ongoing including Horizon 2020, Life Programme and INTERREG V Transnational and Inter-Regional Programmes. They noted the ongoing collaboration in pursuing a joint €72m INTERREG VA bid covering the terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments.

The Council noted that a Horizon 2020 workshop related to "*Climate Action, Environment, Resource Efficiency and Raw Materials*", will be held in Derry~Londonderry in November 2014 with a view to bringing together parties from both jurisdictions in order to encourage and support those who may decide to enter into a joint project.

Ministers welcomed the then recent announcement confirming the success of the *REMEDIATE* Horizon 2020 project bid worth €3.5m which will employ 14 researchers and its aims to establish a training network for specialists dealing with the remediation of contaminated land.

Ministers also welcomed that collaboration will continue to maximise drawdown of EU Funding and encouraged officials to seek new opportunities for potential projects which can attract EU funding.

HEALTH



Construction underway at the Radiotherapy Centre at Altnagelvin Hospital, Derry.

Health Meetings

There were two NSMC Health and Food Safety meetings in 2014 on 30 April and 12 November. James Reilly TD, Minister for Health and Edwin Poots MLA, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety attended the April meeting and their successors as Ministers for Health Leo Varadkar TD, and Jim Wells MLA, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety attended the November meeting. Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development attended both meetings. James Reilly TD also attended the November meeting as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to which he had been appointed following the Irish Government Cabinet reshuffle in July.

Health Promotion

The Ministers received an update on a range of health promotion work which is ongoing across the island of Ireland. This included progress on alcohol-related harm prevention strategies in both jurisdictions, the work of the North/South Alcohol Policy Advisory Group and the establishment of a North/South Hidden Harm Group facilitated by Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT).

Minimum Unit Pricing of Alcohol (MUP) was discussed by the Ministers. They were informed that the findings from the jointly commissioned University of Sheffield Study on the potential impact of MUP in both jurisdictions and that an addendum report was under consideration by both departments. The Ministers committed to work

towards introducing MUP at the same time, subject to the decision of the European Court.

The Ministers noted that the EU Tobacco Products Directive came into force in May 2014 following the European Union Member States final approval. The progress in relation to the development of the two new suicide prevention strategies was welcomed by the Ministers as well as the commitment to share knowledge arising from media and public information campaigns on mental health promotion campaigns.

Ministers noted the ongoing work under the EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity and the collaborative work between the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland on the voluntary display of calorie information on menus in catering business. An online 'calorie calculator' was launched in Ireland on 9 April 2014 and it will also be made available in Northern Ireland.

Cancer and Health Research Co-Operation

Ministers received an update on the Radiotherapy Centre at Altnagelvin. A Memorandum of Understanding and Service Level Agreement for the operation of the Unit has been signed, works commenced on site in July 2014 and the project remains on target for completion within the agreed timeframe with the operational date for the Unit being Autumn 2016.

The Ministers welcomed the continued progress of the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium and that the 5th in its series of international cancer conferences will take place in Belfast in May 2015.

The Ministers noted the continued success of the US-Ireland R&D Partnership. They welcomed the approval of a further project which aims to develop a novel test for prostate cancer. The tri-jurisdictional Steering Group for the Partnership took place on 29 September 2014. Among the matters discussed at the meeting were the various application success rates in the different research priority areas, opportunities for promoting partnership to increase visibility, particularly in the US, the opportunities for expanding cooperation in the agri-food area and new funding mechanisms including centre-to-centre collaboration.

Ministers also welcomed the update on the ongoing work of the All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care including the launch of the Children and Young People website (www.cypph.com) in October 2014.

Child Protection

Ministers recalled the discussions at the NSMC Plenary in Dublin on 3 October 2014 on issues which impact on the protection of children, particularly in relation to e-Safety. They received an update on the progress of the Child Protection work programme and noted that a North/South Child Care in Practice conference on authoritative early intervention was held on 22 October 2014 in Dundalk. They welcomed the development of an 'App' to allow access to the North South Child Protection Hub.

EU Funding Opportunities

Ministers noted the considerable funding opportunities available in this sector and encouraged officials to continue to identify projects which can attract EU Funding. They welcomed the collaboration that is taking place to draw down funding, in particular the CAWT project, which is delivering cross-border health services to improve patient care.

TOURISM



Minister Arlene Foster, MLA with Niall Gibbons, CEO Tourism Ireland at the launch of a campaign to promote Northern Ireland's strong association with the hit TV series *Game of Thrones*.

Tourism Meeting

Tourism Ireland Ltd is responsible for marketing overseas the island of Ireland as a tourist destination. It has a Board of 12 directors appointed by the NSMC. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are Mr Brian Ambrose and Mr Jim Flannery. Current directors are listed in Annex Three. The Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland is Mr Niall Gibbons. Further details are available at www.tourismireland.com.

A NSMC Tourism meeting was held on 22 January 2014. Arlene Foster MLA, Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Leo Varadkar TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport and Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure attended the meeting.

Ministers continued to recognise the importance of the Tourism Industry to the economy in both jurisdictions. They looked forward to the hosting of the Giro d'Italia in May starting in Armagh and finishing in Dublin, with television coverage across 170 counties. Building on cross border cooperation in hosting major events, the establishment of a working group to examine the feasibility of launching a bid to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup, the 4th largest global sporting event, was welcomed by Ministers.

The Chairperson and the CEO updated Ministers on the work of the Tourism Ireland Board in implementation of its 2013 Business Plan. Ministers welcomed the

implementation of recommendations of the GB Path to Growth Strategy throughout 2013.

Ministers heard of the success of Tourism Ireland in exceeding its objectives throughout 2013 and the strong focus on the success of The Gathering and the Derry-Londonderry City of Culture 2013. Ministers welcomed the figures and industry sentiment indicating a positive year of tourism growth in 2013, with significant year on year growth of overseas visitors to the island. Ministers also noted the increase in air capacity.

Giro d'Italia

The May launch of the Gran Partenza of the 2014 Giro d'Italia, with television coverage across 170 counties, was cited as offering an excellent marketing opportunity to build on the success of 2013. Starting in Belfast and travelling via Armagh for a finish in Dublin the Giro provided significant tourism marketing opportunities for both Northern Ireland and Ireland. New developments, including the Wild Atlantic Way and awarding Limerick the title of Ireland's City of Culture 2014, as well as building the prominence of Titanic Belfast and the Causeway Visitor's Centre, also offered important opportunities to boost tourism.

Building on cross border cooperation in hosting major events, the establishment of a working group to examine the feasibility of launching a bid for the 2023 Rugby World Cup, the 4th largest global sporting event was welcomed by Ministers.

Reappointment of CEO

Niall Gibbons was reappointed as the Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland and Ministers approved Tourism Ireland's 2014 Business Plan and its Corporate Plan for the period 2014-2016. Over the lifetime of the Plan, Tourism Ireland aims to continue growing overseas tourism to the island of Ireland and support Northern Ireland to reach its tourism potential.

Minsters also took the opportunity to discuss their sectoral priorities for the future and noted that these will be presented to a future NSMC Institutional meeting.

TRANSPORT



Transport Meetings

There were two NSMC Transport meetings in 2014 on 16 April and 5 November. Minister Danny Kennedy MLA, Minister for Regional Development and Minister Mark H Durkan MLA, Minister of the Environment attended both meetings. Minister Leo Varadkar TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport attended the April meeting, and his successor Minister Paschal Donohoe TD attended the November event.

There was good discussion during both meetings on many areas under the Transport Sector. This included discussion of the introduction in autumn 2014 of the UK HGV levy and it was agreed to continue to liaise on the issue and any potential impacts its introduction may pose.

Roads

On major road projects, Ministers noted the ongoing public consultation which was informing the new Environmental Statement and confirmed their commitment to the A5 road scheme. Good progress on the A8 road project, expected to open in spring 2015, was also noted.

Rail

At the April meeting Ministers welcomed the proposal to use INTERREG IVA funds to upgrade the Enterprise Service on the Dublin-Belfast rail line and to refurbish the Drogheda viaduct. At the November meeting Ministers noted respective strategies

and priorities for maintaining existing networks and the potential for opportunities for cooperation on future infrastructure investment.

Strategic Transport Priorities

At their meetings Ministers welcomed the continued cooperation between their departments in taking forward strategic priorities, noting the opportunities for cooperation in developing the strategic road network on the island, enhancing East West connections, driving a shift to more sustainable forms of transport and the potential for shared cross border public transport services.

EU Funding Opportunities

The Council acknowledged the ongoing cooperation in pursuing EU Funding for transport projects to the mutual benefit of all.

Cycling/Cross Border Greenway

At their November meeting Ministers welcomed the continued investment in the promotion and development of sustainable transport options, including cycling and welcomed the joint decision to cooperate on identifying cross border Greenways. The Council supported exploring potential EU funding for the development of this cycling/walking infrastructure.

Mutual Recognition of Penalty Points

While it was recognised that there were challenges in delivering this complex project, at their November meeting Ministers agreed that the Steering Group would continue to meet to explore issues relating to the penalty point regimes in both jurisdictions. Ministers noted that an EU Directive due to come into force in 2017 will cover relevant penalty point offences and a European Commission review of the need to strengthen cross-border enforcement with regard to traffic offences was underway.

Road User and Vehicle Safety

Against a tragic backdrop of increasing road traffic fatalities across the island, Ministers welcomed the continued sharing of knowledge and experience between officials on the delivery of road safety measures. The progress and enactment of various legislative measures in both jurisdictions was welcomed by Ministers, including measures and proposals to address drug driving and reform the learner driver regime.

The Ministers noted the various road safety campaigns that were adopted throughout the year aimed at reducing the number and severity of injuries across the island, including in enforcement operations and promotional campaigns.

Ministers welcomed the continuing cooperation targeting a wide range of illegal activity within the good haulage and passenger transport industries. They also noted the establishment of a Tripartite Enforcement Planning Forum which aimed to maximise the benefits of enforcement efforts and to coordinate enforcement approaches.

Ministers also took the opportunity to discuss their sectoral priorities for the future and noted that these will be presented to a future NSMC Institutional meeting.

AQUACULTURE AND MARINE



Aquaculture and Marine Meetings

The NSMC meets in Aquaculture and Marine sectoral format to take decisions on policies and actions to be implemented by the Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (FCILC). The FCILC has a Board of 12 members appointed by the NSMC. The Board exercises the functions of the Body in relation to the Foyle and Carlingford areas through the Loughs Agency. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are Mr Winston Patterson and Mr Alan McCulla. The current Board members are listed in Annex Three. The Chief Executive of the Loughs Agency is Mr John Pollock. Further details are available at www.loughs-agency.org.

During 2014 there were NSMC Aquaculture and Marine meetings on 21 February, 27 June and 5 December.

The February meeting was attended by Pat Rabbitte TD, Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Fergus O'Dowd TD, Minister of State, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and Nelson McCausland MLA, Minister for Social Development.

The June meeting was attended by Ministers O'Neill, O'Dowd and McCausland. Minister Alex White TD, who succeeded Minister Rabbitte as Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Joe McHugh TD, who succeeded Minister O'Dowd as Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, attended the December meeting along with Minister O'Neill and Minister Mervyn Storey MLA, Minister for Social Development.

Sectoral Priorities

In February Ministers considered a paper on Sectoral Priorities and also discussed other priorities within their respective sectoral areas. It was agreed that these priorities would be communicated to the Joint Secretaries in line with the Plenary decision of 8 November 2013.

Progress Reports

At each meeting the Council received a progress report on the work of the Loughs Agency from the Chairperson, Winston Patterson, and the Chief Executive, John Pollock. Ministers welcomed progress made including the Loughs Agency's partnership with Co-operation Ireland in developing the Foyle River Ambassadors Citizenship Scheme and the Agency's efforts to contain *Bonamia ostreae* within Lough Foyle. In addition, Ministers congratulated the Agency on the successful delivery of an international conference on salmon stocking and are looking forward to the distribution of the film "Atlantic Salmon – Lost at Sea" which the Loughs Agency had participated in.

Ministers welcomed progress on the activities of the Loughs Agency, including the Agency's ongoing conservation and protection efforts, the participation in Operation Salar and the planting of trees in the Glenshane Pass Area as part of the Climate Change Adaptation Initiative of Northern Ireland.

Ministers welcomed the update on the Management Agreement, the progress on the Loughs Agency's Financial Statements 2012 and the Foyle Ambassador Programme.

Acoustic Tracking of Salmon

The Council welcomed a presentation on the movements of Atlantic salmon and noted the valuable contribution these research projects will make to the management and development of this important fishery. They also noted the latest position on their survival in the Foyle and Carlingford catchments and the ongoing conservation and protection efforts.

They also noted the position on the survival of the Native Lough Foyle Flat Oyster and the need to balance the conservation imperative with sufficient economic opportunity for the stakeholders in the industry.

Ministers also welcomed progress on the IBIS project, which is a partnership between the Loughs Agency, Queen's University of Belfast and the University of Glasgow. It aims to enhance aquatic resources management across Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The project is supported by the EU's INTERREG IVA programme.

Emergency Framework

The Council approved the continuation of the framework designed to support the Loughs Agency in dealing with emergencies such as a serious pollution incident for a

further period of 1 year with effect from 20 July 2014 and agreed to review the operation of this procedure including its possible renewal based on a report from the Body and the sponsor departments before 20 July 2015.

All-Island Aquaculture Shellfish Conference

In February the Council recommended that the competent authorities in each jurisdiction consider jointly hosting an All-island Aquaculture Shellfish Conference and that it is planned for June 2015.

Loughs Agency Corporate Plan 2014-16 and Business Plan 2014

The NSMC approved the Loughs Agency Corporate Plan 2014 – 2016 and Business Plan 2014 and noted the recommended budget provision for 2014 of £4.127m (€4.799m) and noted the indicative budgets of £3.950m (€4.593m) for 2015 and £3.774m (€4.388m) for 2016. The NSMC noted that the key objectives for the Loughs Agency in 2014-2016 will be to:

- conserve and protect the fisheries in the Foyle and Carlingford Areas;
- license and develop aquaculture and shellfisheries;
- develop Marine Tourism and Angling; and
- effectively and efficiently deliver on its statutory mandate and responsibilities.

The Council also noted the benefits to the Foyle and Carlingford areas of the Agency's investment strategy for local and community initiatives.

At the December meeting the Council noted that the Loughs Agency has applied the required efficiency savings to the 2015 budget in accordance with agreed guidance issued by Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) and that sponsor department Ministers and DFP/DPER have approved the Business Plan and Budget/Grant.

The NSMC approved the Loughs Agency 2015 Business Plan and recommended the 2015 budget/grant provision of £3.950/€4.877 million.

Marketing the Loughs' Resources

Ministers welcomed the report on the activities of the Loughs Agency in promoting and marketing Foyle and Carlingford Loughs. In particular they noted marine leisure infrastructural developments, outreach and community activity and promotion of local seafood products.

Annual Report and Draft Financial Statements 2013

The NSMC noted the Loughs Agency's Annual Report and draft Financial Statements for 2013 and 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.

Amendment to the Loughs Agency Pension Scheme

The NSMC approved the determinations made by the Loughs Agency and the parallel determinations of the other North South Bodies that the North/South Pension (Amendment No.5) Scheme should apply to all North/South Bodies including the Loughs Agency.

The NSMC also approved the determination made by the Loughs Agency that the Foyle Fisheries Commission Pension (Amendment) Scheme 1979 be closed and that simultaneously its members transfer to the North/South Pension (Amendment No. 5) Scheme.

EU Funding Opportunities

The Council noted the report on the funding opportunities available to the Loughs Agency and future plans for funding applications which would benefit the Foyle and Carlingford catchments.

Appointment of CEO

At the North South Ministerial Council meeting held on 2 April 2014 the Council approved the appointment of Mr John Pollock as Chief Executive Officer of the Loughs Agency.

FOOD SAFETY



Food Safety Meetings

The NSMC meets on Food Safety matters to take decisions on policies and actions to be implemented by the Food Safety Promotion Board (FSPB). FSPB operates under the brand identifier 'safefood'. It has an Advisory Board of 12 members, appointed by the NSMC, principally charged with promoting food safety and supporting scientific co-operation between institutions working in that field.

The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Board are Mr Paul Gibbons and Ms Darina Allen respectively. The current Board members are listed in Annex Three. The Chief Executive of safefood is Mr Ray Dolan. Further details are available at www.safefood.eu

During 2014 there were NSMC Food Safety meetings on 30 April and 12 November. James Reilly TD, Minister for Health and Edwin Poots MLA, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety attended the April meeting and their successors as Ministers for Health, Leo Varadkar TD and Jim Wells MLA attended the November meeting. Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development attended both meetings. James Reilly TD also attended the November meeting as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to which he had been appointed following the Irish Government Cabinet reshuffle in July.

Progress Reports

At these meetings Ministers received progress reports from the Chairperson and Chief Executive on the activities of *safefood* and included updates on scientific and promotional activities undertaken by the Body including:

- the continued development of the consumer awareness campaign targeting childhood overweight and obesity which is now in its second year of a three year multi media campaign. This is run in partnership and cooperation with the Health Service Executive, the Irish Government Department of Health and the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland. In 2014 the awareness campaign focused on two new messages: 'the theme of active play' and 'dealing with treats'. *safefood* has also written to the five largest supermarket chains on the island of Ireland calling on them to remove sweets and chocolates from all checkouts. In May *safefood* welcomed that Tesco Ireland announced plans to remove these treats from all checkouts.
- the success and development of *safefood*'s Community Food Initiatives (CFI) which are progressing well. The aim of this three year programme which entered its second year in 2014 is to promote greater access and availability of healthy and safe food in low income areas through a programme of local projects using a community development approach. More than 12,000 individuals took part in CFI activity during the first year 2013 which introduced people from marginalised backgrounds to the benefits of healthy eating.
- the international food safety conference held at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) in April 2014 which was jointly delivered by the Institute for Global Food Security at QUB and *safefood*. The conference attracted over 350 delegates and was addressed by speakers from China, Netherlands, USA, Germany, the UK and Ireland as well as the EU Commission and the European Food Safety Authority.
- *safefood* launched a new website www.Eatright.eu to focus on healthy eating, food safety and physical activity.
- a range of research reports and surveys completed by *safefood* in 2014, for example, *safefood* issued the results of a label survey on the sugar levels in a wide selection of popular drinks for children. During the year *safefood* commissioned a review of the potential impacts of climate change on food safety and public health from an island of Ireland perspective.

Presentation

Ministers received a presentation in relation to the *safefood* Scientific Advisory Committee report on Nutrition Surveillance on the Island of Ireland. They noted the recommendations from the report on taking an all-island approach to nutrition surveillance.

FSPB 2014-2016 Corporate Plan and Business Plan 2014

At the NSMC Aquaculture & Marine meeting on 17 June 2014, the Council approved FSPB's Business Plan 2014 and noted the recommended budget provision for 2014 is €8.16m (£7.01m).

Subsequently at the NSMC North South Language Body meeting held on 18 December 2014, Ministers noted that *safefood* has applied efficiency savings to the 2015 budget in accordance with agreed guidance issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel. They also approved the *safefood* 2015 Business Plan and recommended the 2015 budget/grant provision of €7.820m (£6.334m).

***safefood* Annual Report and Accounts 2013**

The Body's Annual Report and Accounts for 2013 were certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland and the Irish Comptroller and Auditor General and, once approved by both sponsor departments, they would be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Board and CEO Appointments

At the NSMC Agriculture meeting on 1 October 2014, the NSMC approved the appointment of Mr. Raymond Dolan as the new Chief Executive Officer of FSPB (*safefood*) with effect from 1 October 2014.

At the NSMC North South Language Body meeting on 18 December 2014, Ministers approved the appointment of Mr Paul Gibbons to serve as Chair on the Advisory Board of the Food Safety Promotion Board from 12 December 2014 to 12 December 2015, following the resignation of Lynn Ní Bhaoighealláin on 1 December 2014.

INLAND WATERWAYS



Inland Waterways Meetings

Waterways Ireland is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of the inland navigable waterway systems throughout the island, principally for recreational purposes. It is currently responsible for the following waterways: Barrow navigation, Erne System, Grand Canal, Lower Bann Navigation, Royal Canal, Shannon-Erne Waterway and Shannon Navigation amounting to approximately 1,000km of navigable waterways. The headquarters for Waterways Ireland is in Enniskillen, and regional offices are located in Carrick-on-Shannon, Dublin and Scarriff. Further information available at www.waterwaysireland.org

The NSMC met in Inland Waterways Sectoral format in Enniskillen on 3 April and Armagh on 27 November. Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Dinny McGinley TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs represented the Irish government at the April meeting. Following the Irish Government Cabinet reshuffle in July, Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Joe McHugh TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs represented the Irish Government, with Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister of Culture Arts and Leisure and OFMDFM Junior Minister Jonathan Bell MLA having attended both meetings.

Key achievements for Waterways Ireland in 2014 included:

- management and maintenance of the 1,000 km of navigation in its care, with over 95% of waterways open for navigation for the period April to September;

- development by Waterways Ireland of the Shannon Blueway, Ireland's first Blueway (a multi-activity trail running alongside water) between Drumshanbo and Carrick-on-Shannon in Co Leitrim in conjunction with the National Trails Office, Canoeing Ireland, Leitrim County Council and Leitrim Tourism;
- commercial opportunities created with a new cruise hire business on the Shannon-Erne Waterway and a new lunchtime food market licensed to use Charlemont Place in Dublin; and
- a Built Heritage Study and a GIS based navigation guide have been completed on the Lower Bann Navigation.

Presentations

Two separate presentations were delivered by Waterways Ireland at the sectoral Meetings. The first *“Ireland’s Inland Waterways – Building a Tourism Destination”* provided an overview of the progress being made by Waterways Ireland in placing the waterways and the waterway experience at the centre of the tourism offering both in Ireland and internationally. It focused in particular on the collaborative work undertaken by Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland Limited highlighting recent collaborative initiatives. These included the new Lakeland Treasures App, the Barrow Audio Guide and App, and the progress on the Waterways Ireland digital mapping exercise the digitisation of a navigation guide for the Lower Bann Navigation.

The second presentation; *‘The Potential of the “Blueway” Product and Brand Development for Waterways Ireland’* provided an overview of Waterways Ireland work in developing "Blueways" to create an island wide brand for promotion of multi-activity trails on or beside the navigations. It outlined the economic potential of the "Blueways" to increase the contribution which the inland navigations can make to communities who live alongside the waterways.

Update on the Restoration of the Ulster Canal from Upper Lough Erne to Clones

Progress continues on preparation for the restoration of the Clones to Upper Lough Erne section of the Ulster Canal. Planning approval has been received from all relevant authorities. The business case to proceed with the project is being updated so that the next steps in the project can be considered in the context of the new capital framework in the South. Following this, the next steps will be considered further, including the option of commencing the restoration project by enabling access from Upper Lough Erne to the International Scout Centre at Castle Saunderson near Belturbet in county Cavan. Meanwhile, the Inter-Agency Group on the Ulster Canal continues to examine alternative funding opportunities for the project, including EU funding.

EU Funding Opportunities

Waterways Ireland is actively exploring both Competitive and Non-competitive EU funding opportunities in order to deliver future key strategic programmes. In the context of EU Competitive Funding, Waterways Ireland has already commenced

mapping out relevant funding programme priorities and held exploratory discussions with a number of potential project partners. EU Competitive Funding opportunities being considered include: Transnational Programmes (INTERREG B); Horizon 2020; Life +; Connecting Europe Facility; Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI) and Health for Growth. Waterways Ireland is working with local authorities and communities to develop projects which could be developed from non-competitive EU funds such as INTERREG and LEADER programmes.

LANGUAGE

Language Body Meetings

The Language Body comprises two separate agencies, the Irish Language Agency/Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency/Tha Boord O Ulstèr-Scotch. The Agencies promote the Irish language and Ulster Scots language and culture, respectively. The Board of the Language Body is appointed by the NSMC. The Chairperson of Foras na Gaeilge is Liam Ó Maoilmhichíl. The Chairperson of Tha Boord O Ulstèr-Scotch is Tom Scott. Mr Ó Maoilmhichíl and Mr Scott are joint Chairpersons of the Language Body.

There are 15 other members on the Board of Foras na Gaeilge and 7 other members on the Tha Boord O Ulstèr-Scotch. The current Board members are listed in Annex Three. Mr Ferdie Mac an Fhailigh is the Chief Executive of Foras na Gaeilge. Mr Ian Crozier is the Chief Executive of Tha Boord O Ulstèr-Scotch. Further details are available at www.forasnagaeilge.ie and www.ulsterscotsagency.com.

There were three NSMC Language meetings in 2014 on 3 April, 27 November and 18 December. Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Dinny McGinley TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs represented the Irish government at the April meeting. Following the Irish Government Cabinet reshuffle in July, Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Joe McHugh TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs represented the Irish Government at the November meeting, with Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister of Culture Arts and Leisure and OFMDFM Junior Minister Jonathan Bell MLA having attended both April and November meetings.

A special meeting was arranged for 18 December to consider the approval of business plans for the Language Body and for a number of the North South Bodies. Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Seán Sherlock TD Minister of State with special responsibility for Overseas Development Aid, Trade Promotion & North South Cooperation and Minister Simon Hamilton, MLA, Minister for Finance and Personnel attended this meeting.

At the April and November meetings, Ministers received progress reports from the Chairpersons and CEOs of both agencies. Key developments discussed included:

a) **Foras na Gaeilge:**



Minister Joe McHugh, TD and Liam Ó Maolmhicil, Chair of the Foras na Gaeilge at the launch of a new Foras na Gaeilge Scheme.

Further progress on the new funding arrangements which included eight meetings of the Partnership Forum and two meetings of the Language Development Forum. An overall high-level strategic plan in addition to three year plans for each of the six strategic areas has been agreed.

The new online newspaper [Tuairisc.ie](http://www.tuairisc.ie) (www.tuairisc.ie) was launched with a budget of €1.2m under a four year contract and the online lifestyle magazine [Nós](http://www.nosmag.com) (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). A revised timetable was approved within the existing budget enabling additional material to be developed, which will exceed previously agreed project targets. The publication of a printed version is expected in 2016.

A contract was 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.

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).

Foras na Gaeilge and Bòrd na Gàidhlig in Scotland are committed to continuing the delivery of the Colmcille project in support of Gaelic language development initiatives in both jurisdictions and in Scotland.

New administrative arrangements for Colmcille were approved, 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.

b) Ulster-Scots Agency:



The Agency delivered a successful Burns Night Concert on 25 January 2014 at the Waterfront Hall in conjunction with the Ulster Orchestra. The concert featured Eddi Reader, with performances from the Ulster-Scots Agency Juvenile Pipe Band and Markethill Ulster-Scots Dancers.

In January 2014 the Agency relocated its Belfast headquarters from Great Victoria Street to the Corn Exchange Building in Gordon Street in the Cathedral Quarter area. This move will provide the Agency with improved office accommodation at a lower cost. The building also houses the new Discover Ulster-Scots Centre and was developed in conjunction with a number of partners. It will maximise the opportunity for collaboration within the Ulster-Scots sector and provide a modern showcase on Ulster-Scots culture for the general public.

The Agency delivered a presentation outlining the Bruce heritage trail project to commemorate the 700th anniversary of Edward Bruce in Ireland in 2015. This

project complements the Agency's ongoing work in the areas of education and cultural tourism.

The Agency developed an Ulster-Scots Innovators' Gallery in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Science Park. This was installed in the Thompson Dock, where the Titanic was built and was launched at the Belfast Maritime Festival in May.

A Fair Faa Ye touring drama project completed a run of 100 performances in schools throughout Ulster in March 2014. Initial feedback from schools has been very positive, especially regarding learning outcomes for the children.

The Agency has developed two levels of accreditation for Lambeg drumming which have been approved by the Open College Network (OCN). The Agency is currently going through the process of being recognised as an OCN Centre.

Three "Community Impact" grants were awarded to local groups in Kilkeel, Newtownstewart and Belfast towards the cost of full-time community development workers who will support and develop Ulster-Scots in their respective areas. Grants to a total value of £104,360 were awarded, with the groups expected to secure combined match funding of £26,250.

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.

Involvement in the area of education has increased to in excess of 100 schools in Ulster this year. This includes 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.

c) Progress on collaboration between the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge, including:

A joint project in the integrated schools sector was taken forward by both Agencies along with the NI Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). This resulted in the development of a six week pilot programme 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.

The revised Codes of Conduct for staff and Board members of Foras na Gaeilge and Tha Boord o Ulstér-Scotch were reviewed and updated in particular to take into account issues related to potential conflict of interests.

There was continued cooperation between the two agencies 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.

Joint work also included the revision of the joint equality scheme and updating of the safeguarding policy on cyber-bullying.

EU Funding Opportunities

The Agencies of the Language Body recognise the potential of EU funding and actively pursue some possibilities and have jointly secured assistance from experts who have experience in EU funded projects.

Foras na Gaeilge has identified two significant projects for further development for possible EU Funding.

The Ulster-Scots Agency is currently investigating opportunities within the forthcoming PEACE IV Programme, with a focus in particular on the Civic Society strand. A possible cultural tourism trail is also being developed that may attract funding from the forthcoming INTERREG V Programme.

The Agency is also exploring funding opportunities within the EU Erasmus+ Programme.

Annual Reports and Accounts

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 and it is envisaged that the consolidated Language Body Annual Report and Accounts 2013 will be laid by spring 2015.

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES



Special EU Programmes Meetings

The role of the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) is to effectively manage and implement funding programmes on behalf of the two Governments and the European Union. The aim of the programmes is to deliver social and economic improvements to the people in Northern Ireland and Ireland through cross border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation. The Chief Executive of the SEUPB is Mr Pat Colgan. Further details are available at www.seupb.eu

A NSMC SEUPB meeting took place on 30 May 2014 in Armagh. This meeting was attended by Simon Hamilton MLA, Minister for Finance and Personnel, Brendan Howlin TD, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, and OFMDFM Junior Minister Jennifer McCann MLA. Minister Hamilton chaired the meeting. A second meeting was due to take place in December 2014 but was postponed due to ministerial involvement in the political talks that subsequently led to the Stormont House Agreement. It was agreed that the meeting would be rescheduled for early 2015.

At the meeting, Ministers received a detailed report from the CEO, Mr Pat Colgan on the implementation of the PEACE III and INTERREG IVA Programmes. Ministers noted that at the end of March 2014:

- (i) the PEACE III programme had approved 217 projects with a combined value of €332.03m (£274.4m) which represents a 100% commitment level. The cumulative expenditure as of 31 March 2014 is €224.02m (£185.1m). The remaining €108.9m must be expended before the end of 2015;

- (ii) SEUPB had reallocated the funding from the withdrawal of the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre. This surplus had been re-allocated to the Peace Partnerships, those existing projects which did not receive the full value of their letter of offer at the time of issue due to budget constraints and two waitlisted projects—the Earls project and Voices from the Valley;
- (iii) the INTERREG IVA Programme had approved 88 projects at a combined value of €264.3m (£218.4m) which represents a 103% commitment level. Cumulative expenditure as of 31 March 2014 is €152.8m (£126.3m). The remaining €103.2m to be spent by the end of 2015; and
- (iv) following the withdrawal of the Narrow Water Bridge Project agreement had been reached to reallocate these INTERREG funds to upgrade the Enterprise Service and refurbish the Drogheda viaduct. Ministers remain supportive of the concept of the Narrow Water Bridge.

Ministers also noted that the Body continues to facilitate North South participation in the INTERREG IV Transnational and Inter-regional programmes. Sixty seven project partners have been secured drawing down a total of €11m in ERDF for Northern Ireland across the relevant programmes and the majority of these are now coming to an end and receiving final payments. Preparation work is well underway for the new transnational programmes and the SEUPB is guiding potential applicants on the content of the new programmes.

The SEUPB continued to communicate the positive impacts of the EU programmes through high profile events such as the official launch of the City Garden of Reflection project in Derry-Londonderry on 23 January 2014 and a ground breaking ceremony for the Girdwood Hub project in Belfast on 10 April 2014.

Future EU Programmes

Ministers were updated on the progress of the preparation work for the new EU Programmes for Cross Border Co-Operation (PEACE IV and INTERREG V).

The Operational Programmes for PEACE IV and INTERREG V were subsequently presented to the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government and the Scottish Government (INTERREG V only) in September 2014, following a formal consultation process, and were then submitted to the European Commission by the deadline of 22 September 2014

TRADE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Trade and Business Development Meeting

The Trade and Business Development Body, known as InterTradelreland, was established to exchange information and co-ordinate work on trade, business development and related matters, in areas where the two administrations specifically agree it would be in their mutual interest. InterTradelreland has a Board of 12 members appointed by the NSMC. The current Board members are listed in Annex Three. Further details are available at www.intertradeireland.com.

One NSMC Trade and Business Development meeting was held in Armagh on 22 January 2014. The meeting was chaired by Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Jobs Enterprise and Innovation and Arlene Foster MLA, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment and John O'Dowd MLA, Minister for Education as the accompanying Minister also attended.

Ministers received Progress Reports from the Chairperson and Chief Executive on the activities of InterTradelreland throughout 2013. These included:

- InterTradelreland's performance for 2013 against business plan targets as delivering a 8:1 return on investments, assisting 56 first time innovators and 56 first time exporters and overall delivery of 9% efficiency savings; and
- the generation in 2013 of £56.4M/ €64.8M of Business Value from participating companies.

Ministers received a presentation by DETI/DJEI officials on Horizon 2020 and welcomed the plans in place to strengthen collaboration between both jurisdictions under the programme to maximise mutual benefit.

The Council then welcomed the recently published InterTradeIreland report on *'Access to Finance for Growth in SMEs on the island of Ireland'*. Key findings from the report were noted including:

- that the demand for finance is now at least as important as the supply of finance for SMEs;
- there is a lack of diversity in the SME financing landscape; and
- that late payments and poor cashflow management continue to place pressure on working capital.

It was also noted that the significant majority of businesses who apply for new credit are successful in whole or in part.

Recommendations from the report will be taken forward by InterTradeIreland through liaison with relevant departments and stakeholders.

Ministers also took the opportunity to discuss their sectoral priorities for the future and noted that these will be presented to a future NSMC Institutional meeting.

CHAPTER FOUR: NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



During 2014 the Joint Secretariat arranged various outreach activities for local groups.

Democracy Project

On 15 January 2014 the NSMC Joint Secretariat hosted a democracy event with four local post primary schools. The event was supported by the PSNI in Armagh who highlighted the topical issue of Cyber Safety. NSMC Joint Secretariat staff delivered a presentation tailored to approximately forty Year 11 pupils to reflect the role of the NSMC and the work of the Joint Secretariat. This was followed by an interactive presentation on Cyber Safety from the PSNI. The students then engaged in open discussion on Cyber Safety with a North/South dimension and reported their findings, role playing as NSMC Ministers and officials in a mock plenary format.

The seminar was a huge success and the Joint Secretariat received support from the schools and the PSNI to arrange a similar event for 2015, which will include post primary schools from the south and An Garda Síochána.

Work Experience



Minister Danny Kennedy MLA and Minister Pascal Donohoe, TD with Lisanally pupils at a NSMC Transport meeting in November 2014.

The Joint Secretariat also continued its engagement with Lisanally Special School in Armagh. The work experience project provides pupils with the opportunity to assist with arrangements and delivery of a number of NSMC meetings. This included being present for the arrival of Ministers and assisting with a diverse range of preparation duties and helping with the catering.

The programme provided Lisanally pupils with a busy environment with new people and a functional task which allowed them the opportunity to transfer the skills they learn at school and college to a workplace.

The Joint Secretariat personnel managing this project are actively involved in community/voluntary organisations and have received Access NI approval for those volunteer roles. Specific Joint Secretariat colleagues with previous involvement in working with community groups and with those with special needs mentored the pupils.

Tajikistan Delegation Visit to Armagh

On 30 April a delegation from Tajikistan, which included the Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade, senior public officials and experts in cross-border trade and economic development, visited the Joint Secretariat. The Joint Secretariat provided a briefing on the work they do and the extent of cross-border cooperation between Ireland and Northern Ireland. It also arranged a briefing for them by Dawn Livingstone, the CEO of Waterways Ireland.

Premises Usage

The NSMC premises have also been used for a variety for additional activities in support of cross community and cross border co-operation.

Armagh City & District Council, the Joint Secretariat's landlord, has availed of the facility for a number of events. During the refurbishment of the District Council's Chamber the main conference room was adapted to host a meeting of the Council on 14 April.

Armagh City & District Council in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) hosted a reception in the North South Ministerial Council premises on the morning of Sunday 11 May 2014 to mark the third leg of the Giro d'Italia Gran Partenza which started in Armagh and finished in Dublin.

The event was attended by Minister Foster, the Lord Mayors of Dublin and Armagh, Church leaders and special guests, including the NITB Ambassador for the event Stephen Roche.

Additionally the premises facilitated a number of cross-border events including meetings hosted by Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT), EU PEACE Programme co-ordinators and officials progressing North South Pension matters.

ANNEX ONE

NSMC MEETINGS IN 2014

The following table shows the NSMC meetings which were held.

NSMC Meeting	Date	Location
Plenary	03/10/14	Dublin Castle
	05/12/14	NSMC HQ
Institutional	10/01/14	Iveagh House
Agriculture	16/04/14	NSMC HQ
	01/10./ 4	NSMC HQ
Education	02/04/14	NSMC HQ
	22/10/14	NSMC HQ
Environment	08/05/14	NSMC HQ
	13/11/14	NSMC HQ
Health and Food Safety	30/04.14	NSMC HQ
	12/11/14	NSMC HQ
Tourism	22/01/14	NSMC HQ
Transport	16/04/14	NSMC HQ
	05/11/14	NSMC HQ
Aquaculture & Marine	21/02/14	NSMC HQ
	27/06/14	Invest NI West Regional Office
	05/12/14	NSMC HQ
Inland Waterways	03/04/14	Waterways Ireland HQ
	27/11/14	NSMC HQ
Language	03/04/14	Waterways Ireland HQ
	27/11/14	NSMC HQ
	18/12/14	Stormont Castle
Special EU Programmes	30/05/14	NSMC HQ
Trade & Business Development	22/01/14	NSMC HQ

ANNEX TWO

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL JOINT SECRETARIAT

The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) is supported by a standing Joint Secretariat staffed by members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Irish Civil Service. The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is the parent Department of the Northern Ireland civil servants and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is the parent Department of the Irish civil servants.

Colm Shannon is the Joint Secretary (North) and Shane O'Neill Joint Secretary (South).

FUNCTIONS

The functions of the Joint Secretariat include:

- arranging the schedule of Council meetings in different formats;
- securing prior political agreement to agendas for meetings of the Council;
- preparing or commissioning papers for meetings of the Council, including in relation to its work programme;
- drafting Joint Communiqués and Records of Decisions of the Council;
- communicating decisions of the Council and monitoring their implementation;
- drafting an annual report on the proceedings of the Council;
- acting as a channel of communication with Implementation Bodies;
- liaising, where appropriate, through the designated Department or Office in either jurisdiction, with the Secretariat of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, the Secretariat of the British-Irish Council and with the North/South joint parliamentary forum and independent consultative forum when established; and
- carrying out such other tasks as the Council may direct.

FUNDING

Staff costs are met by OFMDFM and DFAT. All other costs associated with the Joint Secretariat and the NSMC are shared between the two administrations. The cost of running the Joint Secretariat in 2014 amounted to ££1,467,100/ €1,816,505.

ANNEX THREE

BOARD MEMBERS OF NORTH SOUTH BODIES

FOOD SAFETY PROMOTION BOARD ADVISORY BOARD

Paul Gibbons (Chairperson-appointed 12 December 2014)
Lynn Ní Bhaoighealláin (resigned 1 December 2014)
Darina Allen (Vice Chairperson)
Julie Andrews
Thomas Burns
Brendan Kehoe
Alan McGrath
Helen O'Donnell
Edward Spellman
Hannah Su
Campbell Tweedie
Mary Upton
Jane Wells

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY

FORAS NA GAELIGE

Liam Ó Maolmhichíl
(Chairperson of Foras na Gaelige/Joint Chairperson of An Foras Teanga)
Eoghan Mac Cormaic (Vice Chairperson)
Pól Callaghan
Colm Cavanagh
Áine Ní Chiaráin
Bríd Ní Chonghóile
Liam Kennedy (resigned 25 March 2014)
Seosamh Mac Donncha
Tomás Mac Eochagáin
Marcas Mac Ruairí
Seán Mícheál Ó Domhnaill
Dónal Ó hAiniféin
Éamonn Ó Gribín
Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire (appointed 10 January 2014)
Cáitríona Ní Shúilleabháin
Therese Ruane

THA BOORD O ULSTÈR SCOTCH

Tom Scott
(Chairperson of Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch/Joint Chairperson of North South Language Body)
Tony Crooks (Vice Chairperson)
Ida Fisher
William Leathem
Val O'Kelly
Hilary Singleton
Sharon Treacy-Dunne
Trevor Wilson

THE FOYLE, CARLINGFORD AND IRISH LIGHTS COMMISSION

Winston Patterson (Chairperson)
Alan McCulla (Vice Chairperson)
Laurence Arbuckle
Andrew Duncan
Phil Mahon
Joe Millar
Michael J McCormick
Mick Murphy
Theresa McLaverty
Seamus Rogers
Donal Tipping
Jim Wilson

THE TRADE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BODY

Martin Cronin (Chairperson)
Joanne Spain (Vice Chairperson)
Brendan Butler
Tarlach Ó Crosáin (appointed 22 October 2014)
Rosemary Delaney
Jake Gallagher
Ray Hayden
Hubert Brown Kerr
Timothy Mayes
Patricia McKeown
Kevin Norton
Terri Scott

TOURISM IRELAND LIMITED

Brian Ambrose (Chairperson)
Jim Flannery (Vice-Chairperson)
Ciara Burke
Denis Cregan
Howard Hastings
John Healy
David Lyle
Christoph Mueller
Elaine Murphy
Derek Reaney
David Rodway
Shaun Quinn