

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC TRAN 1 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

TRANSPORT MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES

ARMAGH

16 APRIL 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. A North South Ministerial Council Transport meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat offices, Armagh on 16 April 2014. The meeting was attended by Minister Danny Kennedy, MLA, Minister for Regional Development, Minister Mark H Durkan MLA, Minister of the Environment, and Minister Leo Varadkar, TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. Minister Kennedy chaired the meeting.

OPENING REMARKS

2. Ministers discussed the recently introduced UK road user levy for HGVs and in particular its impact on road hauliers using Northern Ireland roads. They agreed to continue to liaise on the matter, in particular with the possible exemption of the A5 from the levy.
3. Ministers discussed the need to continue to share vehicle keeper data following the recent announcement of the centralisation of vehicle registration and licensing functions to Swansea.

SECTORAL PRIORITIES

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

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PLANNING & EU MATTERS

5. The NSMC welcomed the continued co-operation between the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department for Regional Development on Strategic Transport Planning throughout the island.
6. Ministers noted the opportunities for cooperation in the following areas:
 - developing the strategic road network of the island;
 - enhancing connections to the North West of the island;
 - the future enhancement of the Enterprise Service in particular and investment in the wider overall railway infrastructure; and
 - driving a shift to public and more sustainable modes of transport and the potential for shared cross border public transport services in border areas.
7. The Council noted that the Department for Regional Development is currently undertaking a 'Northern Ireland Gateways and Connectivity Review' to assess whether principal gateways and cross-border connections are sufficient to support the delivery of the Executive's economic goals.
8. The Council noted, with regard to EU Transport policy, the continued cooperation by officials in influencing the strategic direction of European Policy as demonstrated during the TEN-T and CEF negotiations and in securing EU investment in cross-border connections.
9. Ministers noted the opportunity that exists for EU funding on transport related projects on the island and that officials continue to press the case for inclusion of transport related themes within the forthcoming Interreg Programme.
10. The Council also discussed opportunities to develop walking and cycling Greenways within each jurisdiction and on a cross border basis.
11. Ministers agreed to the possibility of holding a seminar relating to all island cycling strategies.

MAJOR ROAD PROJECTS

A5

12. The Council noted that work is progressing on reports to inform the Appropriate Assessment process to address impacts on all designated environmental areas and propose mitigation.

13. Ministers noted that these reports will be the subject of a public consultation exercise expected to commence at the end of April 2014 and that a review of other matters considered in the Environmental Statement is ongoing and will lead to the publishing of an updated Environmental Statement, which will also require a public consultation exercise.
14. The Council noted the development of an outline programme which may lead to a further Public Inquiry in spring/summer 2015 and that the draft Vesting Order and Direction Order will also be reviewed and published at the same time as the updated Environmental Statement.

A8

15. Ministers welcomed that construction work on the A8 project is progressing well and that the road is expected to be fully open to traffic by spring 2015.

BELFAST-DUBLIN RAIL LINK

16. The Council welcomed the proposal to use INTERREG IVA funds to upgrade the Enterprise Service (approximately £12.24m) and refurbish the Drogheda viaduct (approximately €6.2m) and welcomed the cooperation of both jurisdictions in ensuring the successful completion of these projects.
17. Ministers noted that a report on prioritisation of railway capital expenditure over the period 2015-2035, including the Enterprise Service will be published shortly by the Department for Regional Development.
18. The Council welcomed that the Department for Regional Development and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport have successfully worked together during the negotiations leading up to the agreement on the TEN-T and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) 2014-2020 Regulations which resulted in the Cork-Dublin-Belfast railway line being included in the 2014-2020 TEN-T Core Network.
19. Ministers welcomed the continued cooperation between the Department for Regional Development and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in future investment plans for the Enterprise Service.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF PENALTY POINTS

20. Ministers noted the good progress made in 2012 and 2013 by the joint Steering and Working Groups in working through all the issues identified, including through a public consultation, some of which are complex and difficult to resolve.
21. The Council noted that meetings of the Steering and Working groups have been paused so that officials can further examine and pursue relevant issues identified. When progress has been made on these issues Ministers will be updated to allow them to decide how best to proceed.

22. The Council noted that a further update will be provided to the next NSMC Transport meeting.

ROAD USER SAFETY

23. The Council welcomed the continued sharing of knowledge and experience between officials from both jurisdictions on the delivery of road safety measures. In light of the casualty figures in 2013, Ministers noted approaches being taken in each jurisdiction to reducing the number and severity of injuries across the island.
24. Ministers also welcomed the new and ongoing road safety campaigns and the work to enhance road safety education services including:
- the '7 Deaths' and 'Attentive Driver 2014' campaigns by the Department of the Environment and the focus on motorcyclist safety by the Department of the Environment and the Road Safety Authority;
 - the roll-out of new campaigns by the Department of the Environment addressing cyclist safety and anti-speeding;
 - the 'Weekly Statistics' high-profile road safety media campaigns by the Road Safety Authority and An Garda Síochána;
 - the implementation by the Department of the Environment of cycling proficiency recommendations, ongoing outreach to schools and plans for on-road training; and
 - the rollout by the Road Safety Authority of various road safety campaigns in 2014 addressing anti-drug driving and speeding and to support the introduction of increased penalty points and driver support changes to the licensing system.
25. The Council welcomed the introduction of Ireland's Road Traffic Act 2014 that includes provisions to further reform the driver licensing regime, adjust the penalty points regime and make a number of amendments to legislation regarding Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Testing.
26. The Council welcomed progress on Northern Ireland's Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill that will include provisions to tackle drink driving and reform the learner and restricted driver regime, graduated driver licensing and mandatory wearing of helmets when riding a quad bike on public roads.

VEHICLE SAFETY POLICY AND ENFORCEMENT

27. Ministers welcomed the continuing proactive co-operation to target a wide range of illegal activity within the goods haulage and passenger transport industries including:
- enhanced roadside enforcement as part of the Road Safety Authority Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Reform programme which has resulted in an increase in the number of roadside checkpoints and an increased focus on the standard of school buses;

- the Department of the Environment's recruitment of additional enforcement officers with the aim of increasing the level of roadside enforcement carried out in Northern Ireland;
 - an increasingly targeted approach towards enforcement; and
 - continuing liaison on successful cross border enforcement operations in 2014 in both jurisdictions which has resulted in prohibition actions for non compliance of vehicle and driver regulations.
28. Ministers welcomed the continued co-operation on enforcement of EU tachograph and drivers' hours rules and the training exchange for enforcement officers planned for 2014.
29. The Council welcomed the recent establishment of a Tripartite Enforcement Planning Forum to maximise the benefits of enforcement efforts and to identify synergies from a co-ordinated enforcement approach.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

30. The Council agreed to hold its next NSMC Transport meeting in November 2014.

Joint Secretariat
16 April 2014

Website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org