

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC TB 2 (15) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

TRADE & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

2 DECEMBER 2015

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The nineteenth North South Ministerial Council Trade and Business Development meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat offices, Armagh on 2 December 2015. The meeting was attended by Richard Bruton, TD, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Jonathan Bell, MLA, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, and Carál Ní Chuilín, MLA, Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure. Minister Bruton chaired the meeting.

PRESENTATION ON ALL-ISLAND RETAIL STUDY

2. Ministers received a joint presentation by the Northern Ireland Independent Retail and Trade Association (NIIRTA) and Retail Excellence Ireland (REI) on their joint study into the retail, sector across both jurisdictions. The Council noted the summary findings of the NIIRTA/REI joint 2014 survey into the retail sector including that the two retail agencies intend to establish a Retail Forum comprising representatives from both jurisdictions.

PROGRESS REPORT

3. The Council received a presentation from Martin Cronin, Chairperson and Thomas Hunter McGowan, CEO on InterTradelreland's performance and business activity against 2015 business plan targets.
4. Ministers noted that during the first ten months of 2015, InterTradelreland had delivered the following:
 - Assistance provided to 65 First Time Innovators;
 - Assistance provided to 44 First Time Exporters;
 - Delivery of 4% efficiency savings;
 - a total jobs impact of 916; and
 - delivery of a total business value of £67m/€84m.
5. Ministers were advised that there was strong demand for InterTradelreland Programmes in 2015. Business and economic research activities carried out by InterTradelreland included continued production of the InterTradelreland quarterly *Business Monitor*, a report on '*SMEs, Credit Constraints and Growth*' – *A Cross Border Study relating to Access to Finance* and most recently '*Mapping the Potential for All-Island Sectoral Ecosystems*' which examines opportunities for developing the potential of clusters across both jurisdictions.

INTERTRADEIRELAND 2016 BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET

6. Ministers noted the current position of the 2016 Business Plan and that officials were continuing to engage in discussions on the Plan.

INTERTRADEIRELAND 2014 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

7. The Council noted InterTradelreland's Annual Report and Accounts for 2014, which had been certified by the Comptrollers and Auditors General and laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

INTERREG VA

8. Ministers received a presentation by officials from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation previewing the implementation of the Research and Innovation theme of the new INTERREG Va Programme for the period 2015-2020.

HORIZON 2020

9. Ministers noted a paper prepared by InterTradelreland providing an update on the Horizon 2020 Programme and the early results for the period January 2014 to May 2015. Twenty-two collaborative projects, involving 64 applicants, have been successful to date, securing €29.67m in funding, of that total Northern Ireland partners have secured €14.24m and partners from Ireland have secured €15.43m. The average award per partner is €463,500.

10. Ministers welcomed the wide range of activities organised by InterTradeIreland to encourage engagement to date. This included a total attendance of 486 participants at 'Focus On' events, the hosting of a range of conferences, organisation of Advisory Service workshops and provision of financial assistance for scoping out partnerships and proposal opportunities.
11. Ministers also noted that InterTradeIreland has identified and will undertake additional promotional and awareness-raising activities in conjunction with the Horizon 2020 All-Island Steering Group. This will utilise the contact point networks in each jurisdiction, to drive delivery of the €175m target. The work by InterTradeIreland with Horizon 2020 applicants to identifying further resubmission opportunities was also noted.

NEXT MEETING

12. The Council agreed that the next Trade and Business Development meeting should be held in spring 2016.

**Joint Secretariat
2 December 2015**