

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

**PAPER NSMC TRAN 2 (13) JC**

**NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**TRANSPORT MEETING**

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,  
ARMAGH**

**28 NOVEMBER 2013**

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. A North South Ministerial Council Transport meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat offices, Armagh on 28 November 2013. The meeting was attended by Minister Varadkar, TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Minister Mark H Durkan MLA, Minister of the Environment and Minister Kennedy, MLA, Minister for Regional Development. Minister Varadkar chaired the meeting.

**OPENING REMARKS**

2. Ministers discussed opportunities for further co-operation within the Transport sector and asked that officials consider relevant issues in relation to Strategic Transport Planning.
3. Minister Varadkar noted that while he is engaging with relevant Ministers on the Rugby World Cup bid, it will have implications for transport co-operation on the island.

4. Ministers recognised the potential benefits of the Narrow Water Bridge project. They remain conscious that the priority is not to lose the EU funding available to transport on the island.

## **MAJOR ROAD PROJECTS**

### **A5**

5. The Council noted that following the Court ruling on 8 April 2013, work is progressing on an Appropriate Assessment process, which upon completion, may lead to publication of an updated Environment Statement which will be the subject of a public consultation exercise that is expected to take place in Spring 2014.
6. The Ministers noted the Northern Ireland Executive has agreed the reallocation of funds from the A5 to other projects, in both the 2013/14 and 2014/15 financial years.
7. Both the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive reaffirmed their commitment to the A5 scheme and the Irish Government reaffirmed its funding commitment of £25 million per annum in 2015 and 2016.
8. Ministers noted that once the environmental reviews are completed and the position in relation to the project programme has been clarified, updated programme/project milestones will need to be prepared for agreement by both the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, taking account of financial commitments in place.

### **A8**

9. Ministers welcomed that the construction work on the A8 project is progressing well and is expected to be completed by Spring 2015.

## **MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF PENALTY POINTS**

10. Ministers noted that the steering and working groups are continuing to meet and take forward the work on the mutual recognition of penalty points and to work through all the issues identified, some of which are proving complex and difficult to resolve.
11. They also noted that the Department of the Environment's public consultation on the proposals ran from 12 March to 14 May 2013 with a majority of responses received in favour of the proposals.
12. Ministers were updated on a number of emerging issues and have asked officials to provide further advice to help them decide how best to proceed.

## **ROAD USER SAFETY**

13. The Council welcomed the continued sharing of knowledge and experience between officials from both jurisdictions on the delivery of road safety strategies. They also noted that officials continue to liaise on the best approach towards reducing the number and severity of injuries across the island, including in enforcement operations and promotional campaigns.
14. Ministers welcomed the excellent new and ongoing road safety initiatives being undertaken in both jurisdictions including:
  - The 'Once' seatbelt wearing campaign launched by DOE on 10 October 2013 in support of the 'Share the Road to Zero' campaign;
  - The Department of Environment (DOE) and Road Safety Authority (RSA) 'Crashed Lives' campaigns over the Christmas and New Year period;
  - DOE and PSNI work with Coca Cola on its Designated Driver initiative over the Christmas and New Year period;
  - Continuation of the Road Safety Education and Awareness Campaign of the RSA;
  - The RSA campaign to remind road users to ensure their vehicles are serviced and winter ready;
  - The RSA and Garda Síochána high visibility promotional campaign that shall culminate in a National High Visibility Day on the 21<sup>st</sup> December; and
  - The recently launched 'Check it Fits' RSA child restraint roadshow.
15. The Council noted the recent publication of Northern Ireland's *Road Safety Strategy to 2020* Annual Statistical Report 2013.
16. The Council also welcomed progress on Ireland's Road Traffic (No. 2) Bill 2013 and Northern Ireland's Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill which will include a number of significant changes designed to further improve road safety:
  - further reform of driver testing and licensing (both).
  - penalty points regime (Ireland)
  - make a number of amendments to legislation regarding Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Testing (Ireland)
  - will include provisions to tackle drink driving (NI).
  - mandatory wearing of helmets when riding a quad bike on public roads (NI).

## **VEHICLE SAFETY POLICY AND ENFORCEMENT**

17. Ministers welcomed the continuing proactive cross-border co-operation targeting 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's (RSA's) 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 Driver & Vehicle Agency's continuing recruitment of additional enforcement officers with the aim of increasing the level of roadside enforcement carried out in Northern Ireland; and
  - continuing liaison on successful, targeted cross border enforcement operations in 2013 in both jurisdictions which has resulted in prohibition actions for non compliance of vehicle and driver regulations.
18. The Ministers welcomed the focus in recent months on the misuse of fuel in the freight industry and the close cooperation by the various agencies in this regard and the recent revocation of a number of NI road haulage operator licences following action taken by the Department of the Environment's Transport Regulation Unit. Ministers expressed concern at the continuing impact of fuel laundering on the transport industry and the environment and welcomed the expected impact of new technology of fuel markers in both jurisdictions.
19. Ministers discussed the implications of HGV vehicle height differentials that exist between both jurisdictions.
20. Ministers also welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Ireland and the UK on mutual recognition of vehicle type approval, the continued excellent co-operation on enforcement of EU tachograph and driver's hours' rules and the training exchange for enforcement officers which took place in 2013 with similar initiatives planned for 2014.

## **EU MATTERS**

21. Ministers discussed the ongoing positive cooperation between relevant departments on EU related Transport Issues.
22. Ministers welcomed progress since the last NSMC Transport Meeting on key EU Dossiers of mutual interest including:
- Transport European Networks – Transport Regulations (TEN-T);
  - Connecting Europe Facility Regulation (CEF);
  - 4th Rail Package;
  - Better Airports Package;
  - Roadworthiness Package;
  - Clean Power for Transport; and
  - Ports Policy Regulation.
23. The Council agreed that officials should continue to pursue the possible inclusion of Thematic Objective 7: Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures in the final INTERREG VA Programme for 2014-20.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

24. The Council agreed to hold its next NSMC Transport meeting in April 2014.

**Joint Secretariat**  
**28 November 2013**

**Website [www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org](http://www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org)**