

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC 1 (13) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

SIXTEENTH PLENARY MEETING

DUBLIN CASTLE

5 JULY 2013

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The Sixteenth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held at Dublin Castle, Dublin on 5 July 2013.
2. The Irish Government was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, who chaired the meeting. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MLA. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. The Council welcomed Northern Ireland's *Together: Building a United Community* strategy. This will complement the new PEACE Programme and help to build a Northern Ireland strengthened by respect for diversity and sharing a peaceful future.
4. The Council welcomed the success of the G8 Summit which acted as a showcase for Northern Ireland and also benefitted the wider region and discussed how the positive impact can be developed. Ministers also noted the opportunities to develop Tourism including the World Police and Fire Games, the UK City of Culture and the Gathering.

5. Ministers noted developments on the progression of the Narrow Water Bridge project.
6. Ministers discussed the negative impact of illegal fuel on the transport industry, revenue to the exchequers and the environment.

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC MATTERS

7. There was a discussion on the new “Building a Prosperous and United Community” economic package for Northern Ireland and it was agreed that both jurisdictions will co-operate on this.
8. The Council exchanged views on the fiscal challenges facing both jurisdictions. There was discussion on the challenges facing the local banking sector and recognition of the need to co-operate on bank restructuring and NAMA.
9. There was also a discussion on the opportunities through co-operation of attracting trade and investment from developing markets for both jurisdictions. The role of the Irish Embassy network in supporting the Northern Ireland Executive during trade visits was acknowledged.

EU MATTERS

10. Ministers noted that Ireland’s Presidency of the EU had been a great success and noted that there had been good cooperation between both jurisdictions during the Presidency term. The participation of Executive Ministers at Presidency related events, the updates on the Presidency provided at NSMC meetings and by Minister of State Creighton to the Executive Ministers and MLAs was welcomed. The Irish Government thanked the Executive for the provision of premises and staff by the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels and for the provision of seconded staff from the Northern Ireland Civil Service.
11. Ministers noted the implications of the European Council agreement on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework, Common Agriculture Policy Reform, Common Fisheries Policies and the impact of transnational EU programmes such as INTERREG and FP7 which will become Horizon 2020. They acknowledged the importance of North South co-operation in accessing EU funds.
12. Ministers noted the Multi-Annual Financial Framework included provision for funding of €150 million towards a new PEACE Programme as part of the new EU Budget. This budget is subject to European Parliament agreement. They also noted that the size of the programme, including matching funding requirements will depend on the outcome of programme planning. The draft Operational Programme plans are being prepared by the Special EU Programmes Body and finalisation of these will be dependent on agreement on the EU budget and regulations.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

13. There was a discussion on the levels of youth unemployment in both jurisdictions and the action being taken to tackle this issue. Ministers noted that this issue is recognised as being of importance across Europe and that various EU wide initiatives are being implemented to help address youth unemployment levels. Ministers considered the opportunities to collaborate to address this important issue including through the European Union's new Youth Guarantee and to work with relevant stakeholders to maximise the impact of the Youth Guarantee.

JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT

14. The Council noted the Progress Report prepared by the NSMC Joint Secretaries on the work of the North South Bodies and in the other NSMC areas for co-operation and welcomed the following key developments:
 - The business planning case for the establishment of a radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin is further advanced and officials are working together to ensure the effective delivery of the project;
 - A very successful All-Island Child Protection conference was held in May 2013 attended by over 250 delegates. The conference facilitated practitioners, managers, policy makers and legislators from both jurisdictions to share practice knowledge, research, experience and learning in relation to safeguarding and child protection practice;
 - The two Agriculture Departments continue to cooperate closely in dealing with the Chalara fraxinea (Ash Dieback) outbreak;
 - Ministers affirmed the intention of the Education Departments to work to broaden and deepen their co-operation in education matters, and that the stated intentions of part 2 of the joint study on North/South co-operation in education can be achieved as a result of the proposed high-level engagement at official level;
 - Charging for carrier bags is now in place across the island of Ireland following the recent introduction of the carrier bag levy in Northern Ireland;
 - Progress continues on the mutual recognition of penalty points with the commitment to have the necessary primary and secondary legislation in place by 31 December 2014;
 - InterTradeIreland hosted a very successful collaborate to innovate conference on 23 May in the Croke Park Conference Centre which was attended by over 220 delegates. The focus of the conference was on the upcoming expected €70 billion R&D and innovation fund Horizon 2020 which will come on stream in 2014;

- At March 2013, within the Peace III Programme, 214 projects worth €314m/£283M had received letters of offer and within the INTERREG IVA Programme 78 projects worth €223m/£194M had received letters of offer;
- The range of consumer and scientific activities undertaken by The Food Safety Promotion Board (safefood) includes its work on developing an indicator for measuring food poverty and safefood's involvement with the Department of the Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency in a joint campaign focussing on customers' understanding of "best before" and "use by" dates;
- The Loughs Agency is involved in prominent engagement with the UK City of Culture 2013 especially in the important promotional opportunity afforded by the partnership with Tate Britain and the Turner Prize;
- The two Agencies of the Language Body continue to collaborate on governance and promotion issues, including the establishment of a committee to oversee a joint work programme, the current consultation process on the joint Equality Scheme, and funding for 'The Honest Sod', a play in Ulster-Scots and Irish, which has toured to 88 schools and has been seen by over 3,000 pupils;
- With regard to the Ulster Canal, formal planning applications have been granted by Cavan County Council and Clones Town Council. Fermanagh District Council agreed the recommendation for approval and referred it to the Department of the Environment Planning Service who have also approved the application; and
- A new suite of websites were rolled out by Tourism Ireland designed to capitalise on the growing importance of the internet in travel and holiday planning and to harness the growth in social media.

ST ANDREWS AGREEMENT REVIEW

15. Ministers noted that the Terms of Reference 1 is now largely complete; that Senior Officials have met and initiated a work programme to take forward Terms of Reference 2 and 3; and that they will conclude their work and present a report with proposals to the next NSMC Institutional Meeting in the autumn.

NORTH WEST GATEWAY INITIATIVE

16. Ministers welcomed the progress that has been made through the North West Gateway Initiative on a range of initiatives, delivered and planned, which aim to deliver economic and social benefits in the North West. They noted that the consultation has commenced with key stakeholders in the North West on the future development of the NWGI and that a report on the outcome of this exercise will be brought to a future NSMC Institutional meeting.

NORTH SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

17. Ministers noted the current position on a North South Consultative Forum and agreed to review the issue at a future NSMC Plenary.

FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

18. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat, including a NSMC Institutional meeting in October 2013 and the next NSMC Plenary meeting in November 2013.

Joint Secretariat
5 July 2013

ANNEX A

MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL DUBLIN CASTLE – 5 JULY 2013

Irish Government	Northern Ireland Executive
Enda Kenny TD Taoiseach	The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA First Minister
Eamon Gilmore TD Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	Martin McGuinness MLA deputy First Minister
Michael Noonan TD Minister for Finance	Alex Attwood MLA Minister of the Environment
Brendan Howlin TD Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform	Stephen Farry MLA Minister for Employment and Learning
Richard Bruton TD Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	Danny Kennedy MLA Minister for Regional Development
Joan Burton TD Minister for Social Protection	Carál Ní Chuilín MLA Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Jimmy Deenihan TD Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	John O'Dowd MLA Minister for Education
Pat Rabbitte TD Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources	Michelle O'Neill MLA Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Simon Coveney TD Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Edwin Poots MLA Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Frances Fitzgerald TD Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	Jonathan Bell MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
	Jennifer McCann MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister