



PAPER NSMC P2 (16) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

TWENTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICE,
ARMAGH**

18 NOVEMBER 2016

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-third Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 18 November 2016.
2. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by the First Minister, the Rt Hon. Arlene Foster MLA, and the deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness MLA. The First Minister and deputy First Minister chaired the meeting. The Irish Government was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.

OPENING REMARKS

3. The Council welcomed this opportunity to have a further discussion on the implications of the UK Referendum.
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4. The Council noted that the bid to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup had been formally launched earlier in the week. The Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government reaffirmed their commitment to work together closely to deliver a world class proposal for hosting the tournament.

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC MATTERS

5. The Council had a discussion on the performance of the economies in each jurisdiction. The Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government remain committed to growing their local economies and Ministers spoke about various initiatives under way in each jurisdiction to support economic growth.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE UK REFERENDUM

6. The Council had a discussion on the implications of the result of UK referendum on membership of the EU. It was noted that full sectoral audits had been carried out by departments of both the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government to identify the possible impacts, risks, opportunities and contingencies which may arise following the UK's intended withdrawal from the EU.
7. Ministers will continue their discussions at NSMC sectoral level in the coming months and that bilateral discussions will continue, as required, between relevant Ministers and officials.
8. The Council was also advised that the Northern Ireland Executive will continue its bilateral discussions with the UK Government and, along with the other UK devolved administrations, will continue the internal discussions with the UK Government within the Joint Ministerial Council.
9. The Irish Government will also continue its regular bilateral engagement with the UK Government, the EU Institutions and with fellow EU Member States.
10. Ministers noted that senior officials from the Executive Office (TEO), the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will continue to meet regularly on an Northern Ireland Executive to Irish Government bilateral basis to review developments serving as a high-level working group on Brexit issues.
11. The Council was advised that in taking forward their discussions, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government will be guided by some common principles.

FRESH START SECTION E COMMITMENTS

12. The Council received an update on the progress being made in the implementation of the various commitments under Section E of the Fresh Start Agreement.
13. Ministers noted that a Public Inquiry into the A5 scheme was underway and that the Inspector's report was expected around May 2017. Subject to the successful completion of statutory procedures, a decision can then be made

regarding progression to the construction stage, which remains programmed for late 2017.

14. The Council welcomed the meeting held in October between officials and key stakeholders about the possible options for the Narrow Water Bridge Project and noted that further discussions will be held in January 2017.
15. It was noted that Phase 1 of the re-opening of the Ulster Canal from Lough Erne to Castle Saunderson is progressing and that the tender for the final stage of Phase 1 is expected to issue shortly with a planned site commencement in spring 2017. Ministers also welcomed the establishment of an Ulster Canal Advisory Forum of key stakeholders which held its first meeting in September.
16. The Council was advised that Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council have agreed a formal Partnership Agreement which outlines the governance, financial management and administrative arrangements for the €5m North West Development Fund.
17. Ministers agreed that a further update on the Fresh Start Section E Commitments will be brought to the next NSMC Plenary meeting.

NORTH WEST GATEWAY INITIATIVE

18. The Council welcomed that Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council are working to fully implement the arrangements outlined in their *North West Strategic Growth Plan*.
19. The Council noted the Irish Government's allocation of €2.5m to the North West Development Fund and that the Northern Ireland Executive is finalising its match allocation.
20. The Council was advised that formal governance, financial management and administrative arrangements for oversight and delivery of the *North West Strategic Growth Plan* and the associated North West Development Fund have been agreed by the two Councils.
21. Ministers welcomed the establishment of the *North West Strategic Growth Partnership* and that in accordance with the July Plenary decision, senior officials from relevant departments in both jurisdictions will meet with Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council as part of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership in December.
22. The Council was advised that officials are working to identify a suitable date for a meeting of relevant Ministers in the North West.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

23. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat which includes the next NSMC Plenary meeting in the first quarter of 2017.

**Joint Secretariat
18 November 2016**

ANNEX A

MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ARMAGH – 18 NOVEMBER 2016

Northern Ireland Executive	Irish Government
The Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA First Minister	Enda Kenny TD Taoiseach and Minister of Defence
Martin McGuinness MLA deputy First Minister	Frances Fitzgerald TD Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality
Paul Givan MLA Minister for Communities	Richard Bruton TD Minister for Education and Skills
Simon Hamilton MLA Minister for the Economy	Simon Coveney Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government
Chris Hazzard MLA Minister for Infrastructure	Leo Varadkar TD Minister for Social Protection
Michelle McIlveen MLA Minister for Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs	Charles Flanagan TD Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
Mairtín Ó Muilleoir MLA Minister for Finance	Paschal Donohoe TD Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform
Claire Sugden MLA Minister for Justice	Heather Humphreys TD Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Peter Weir MLA Minister for Education	Simon Harris TD Minister for Health
Megan Fearon MLA Junior Minister, The Executive Office	Michael Creed TD Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Alastair Ross MLA Junior Minister, The Executive Office	Denis Naughten TD Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment
	Shane Ross TD Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport
	Katherine Zappone TD Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
	Paul Kehoe TD Minister of State with special responsibility for Defence