



PAPER NSMC P2 (15) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

TWENTY-FIRST PLenary MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

11 DECEMBER 2015

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-first Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 11 December 2015.
2. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by the First Minister, Rt. Hon. Peter Robinson MLA and the deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MLA. The Irish Government was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD. The meeting was chaired by the First Minister and deputy First Minister. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.
3. The Council congratulated William Campbell on receiving the Nobel Prize for Medicine yesterday.
4. Ministers discussed the recent Fresh Start Agreement and the work to be undertaken by officials to review North South infrastructure projects. In addition, the Council welcomed the commitment in Fresh Start to tackle paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime and to bring to justice those involved in it.

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC MATTERS

5. Ministers discussed the financial and economic challenges being faced within each jurisdiction and spoke about the work being taken forward within each jurisdiction to promote economic growth and employment. The importance of tourism, trade, investment and of supporting companies in accessing overseas markets was recognised.

EU MATTERS/FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

6. Ministers noted that discussions are continuing to take place at NSMC Sectoral meetings on collaboration to drawdown EU funding. The Council was encouraged by the work that has been undertaken to identify funding opportunities across various EU Funding Programmes. In particular, Ministers welcomed the focus on Horizon 2020, EU LIFE, Connecting Europe Facility, ERAMUS+ and Creative Europe. These discussions will continue throughout the next round of NSMC meetings.
7. The Council noted that under the EU's Horizon 2020 programme, €29.67m has been secured in the first year for 22 joint projects involving both jurisdictions.
8. The Council welcomed that the INTERREG VA funding programme has now opened for funding calls and noted that the PEACE IV Programme was recently adopted by the European Commission.
9. The Council will consider a further update on EU Matters/ Funding Opportunities at a future meeting.

BOARDS OF NORTH SOUTH BODIES AND TOURISM IRELAND LTD

10. The Council approved the appointment of Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons and members to the Boards of the North South Implementation Bodies and Directors of Tourism Ireland Limited.
11. Ministers also expressed their appreciation for the work of outgoing Board members.

JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT

12. The Council received an update on the work that is currently ongoing across the various NSMC Sectors.
13. Ministers noted that meetings had taken place in the Language, Inland Waterways, Aquaculture and Marine, Tourism, Trade and Business and the Special EU Programmes sectors since they had last met.

14. The Council was advised that the process of finalising 2016 Business Plans and Budgets for the North South Bodies is underway and that these final Business Plans will be presented to NSMC at the earliest opportunity.

SECTORAL PRIORITIES/REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMMES

15. Ministers noted the position on Sectoral Priorities and the ongoing review of Work Programmes at Sectoral meetings.

NORTH WEST GATEWAY INITIATIVE

16. The Council noted the continued engagement between officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) with regional stakeholders regarding the direction and priorities for the North West region.
17. Ministers also noted the work by Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council to produce a collaborative framework aimed at placing cross-border co-operation on a more formal basis within local government structures. The Council was advised that this framework allows for the development of priorities for the North West region in cooperation with central government, consistent with the aims of the North West Gateway Initiative.
18. The Council welcomed the commitment of the Irish Government to provide funding of €2.5m to a North West Development Fund to support the NW Gateway Initiative, which will be complemented by matching funding from the Northern Ireland Executive.
19. The Council was also advised that, despite the recent postponement, both Governments are committed to a meeting of Ministers from both jurisdictions to take place in the North West.

NORTH SOUTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

20. Ministers noted the current position on a North South Consultative Forum.

FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

21. The Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings proposed by the Joint Secretariat which includes the next NSMC Plenary meeting in June 2016.

**Joint Secretariat
11 December 2015**

ANNEX A

MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ARMAGH – 11 DECEMBER 2015

Northern Ireland Executive	Irish Government
Rt. Hon. Peter Robinson MLA First Minister	Enda Kenny TD Taoiseach
Martin McGuinness MLA deputy First Minister	Joan Burton TD Tánaiste & Minister for Social Protection
Jonathan Bell MLA Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Richard Bruton TD Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation
Stephen Farry MLA Minister for Employment and Learning	Frances Fitzgerald TD Minister for Justice & Equality
David Ford MLA Minister of Justice	James Reilly TD Minister for Children & Youth Affairs
Arlene Foster MLA Minister for Finance and Personnel	Charles Flanagan TD Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade
Simon Hamilton MLA Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Paschal Donohoe TD Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport
Michelle McIlveen MLA Minister for Regional Development	Heather Humphreys TD Minister for Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht
Carál Ní Chuilín MLA Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure	Tom Hayes TD Minister of State with special responsibility for Food, Forestry, Horticulture and Food Safety
John O'Dowd MLA Minister of Education	Joe McHugh TD Minister of State with special responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs and Natural Resources
Michelle O'Neill MLA Minister for Agriculture	
Jennifer McCann MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	