



NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH, AND BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

27 NOVEMBER 2020

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-seventh North South Ministerial Council Language Body meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh, and by videoconference on 27 November 2020. The meeting was attended Jack Chambers TD, Minister of State for the Gaeltacht and Sport, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister for Communities, and Gordon Lyons MLA, Junior Minister. Minister Chambers chaired the meeting.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19

2. The Council welcomed the continued commitment of all staff and organisations in both jurisdictions who work to promote and provide support to the Irish Language and Ulster-Scots sectors during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ministers noted the impact of the pandemic on the sector, and the measures put in place by both Administrations to prevent the closure of key organisations, stabilise the sector and support longer term recovery, renewal and change.
3. Ministers noted the productive ongoing cooperation between both Administrations and the North South Language Body in relation to supports for Irish Language and Ulster-Scots communities facing challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

IMPLICATIONS OF UK WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EU

4. The Council noted that the Agencies that comprise the North South Language Body (Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency) will continue to work together with both Sponsor Departments to consider the impact of the UK withdrawal from the EU. Ministers noted that the Body does not anticipate significant impacts on the sector arising from the UK withdrawal from the EU, and that this matter will be kept under review at future NSMC meetings in this sector.

LANGUAGE BODY PROGRESS REPORT

5. The Council noted the progress reports for the period 2017-2020 received from the Chief Executive Officers of the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge and key achievements of the North South Language Body since the last sectoral meeting. These achievements include:
 - the distribution of more than £4 million in grant aid to support Ulster Scots cultural activities across Ulster;
 - the development of the Discover Ulster-Scots Centre, East Donegal and refurbishment of the Monreagh Ulster-Scots Heritage Centre, Carrigans;
 - the publication by Foras na Gaeilge of the online English-Irish dictionary, and subsequent launch of the print version, which is now being distributed to bookshops;
 - the supports provided by Foras na Gaeilge to some 400 organisations annually through 23 separate schemes and funding provided to approximately 170 groups under the schemes for young people, some 50 groups supporting festivals and 18 drama companies.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

6. The Council approved the appointment of Daithí Mac Cárthaigh. Dr Neasa Ní Chiaráin and Ola Majekodunmi as Board Members of the North South Language Body.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7. The Council agreed to hold its next Language Body meeting in early 2021.

Joint Secretariat
27 November 2020

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