



# **NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

## **TRANSPORT MEETING**

### **NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH, AND BY VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**7 OCTOBER 2020**

## **JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. A North South Ministerial Council Transport meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh and by videoconference on 7 October 2020. The meeting was attended by Nichola Mallon MLA, Minister for Infrastructure, Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for Transport and Gordon Lyons MLA, Junior Minister. Minister Mallon chaired the meeting.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF UK WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EU**

2. The Council noted the work being carried out to prepare for the end of the Transition period and the implications from a North/South perspective arising as a result of the UK withdrawal and agreed to continue to cooperate on transport issues in the coming months.

### **COVID 19 RESPONSE**

3. Ministers noted the ongoing liaison and communication in relation to transport services, operations and protocols in the responses to date to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.
4. The Council agreed that Ministers and their officials will continue to cooperate and communicate on the impact of the pandemic on transport operations, both between Northern Ireland and Ireland and also between the island of Ireland and overseas.

### **EU FUNDING UPDATE**

5. Ministers welcomed the continued co-operation between the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Transport on EU funding related matters. They also noted the potential loss of funding opportunities for Northern Ireland under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Transport Programme arising from the UK withdrawal from the EU.

6. The Council noted the joint position paper and project list prepared by both jurisdictions in the context of the development of the new PEACE PLUS Programme 2021-2027 and the position with regard to ongoing CEF and INTERREG projects.

### **NEW DECADE, NEW APPROACH COMMITMENTS**

7. The NSMC noted the various commitments outlined in the *New Decade, New Approach* document of January 2020 and associated annexes, in particular in the area of infrastructural investment.

#### **A5 Western Transport Corridor (A5WTC)**

8. Ministers noted that both Governments remain committed to the A5 scheme and as part of *New Decade, New Approach* the Irish Government re-affirmed its £75m commitment to the project.
9. The Council noted that following a Public Inquiry into the scheme in early 2020 the Department for Infrastructure received an Interim Report from the Commissioner on 2 September 2020. They further noted that officials are carefully considering all of the issues raised and recommendations made in the Report and taking legal advice and on conclusion the Minister for Infrastructure will decide on next steps for the scheme.

#### **High-Speed Rail Connectivity**

10. Ministers noted the Department of Transport and the Department for Infrastructure will further develop draft terms of reference for a proposed study of rail speeds, to ensure the finalised terms of reference take sufficient cognisance of the need for balanced regional development, particularly in relation to connectivity with the North-West. They also noted that this work and the study itself will be overseen by a High-Level Steering Group comprising representatives from both Departments, as well as transport authorities from both jurisdictions.

#### **Narrow Water Bridge**

11. The Council noted the commitments in *New Decade, New Approach* in relation to the Narrow Water Bridge and agreed that Departments will consider next steps to progress the scheme.

#### **Renewed Air Services**

12. Ministers noted that the review to explore potential Government support for renewed air services between Belfast/Cork and City of Derry Airport /Dublin will be progressed by the Department of Transport, working with the Department for the Economy and the UK Department for Transport.

#### **Cross-Border Greenway**

13. The Council noted the ongoing work in relation to cross-border greenways.

## **REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME**

14. Ministers noted that the current transport work programme dates back to 1999 and it would be useful to review it in order to ensure it takes account of many developments both globally and locally as well as the work already done and lessons learned from that work.
15. The Council noted the Department of Transport and the Department for Infrastructure, in consultation with the Joint Secretariat, will draft an updated work programme to be considered at the next NSMC Transport meeting.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

16. The Council agreed to hold its next NSMC Transport meeting in early 2021.

**Joint Secretariat**

**7 October 2020**

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