

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC LAN 2 (15) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY MEETING

TYRONE GUTHRIE CENTRE,

ANNAGHMAKERRIG, CO. MONAGHAN

6 NOVEMBER 2015

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twenty-fifth North South Ministerial Council Language Body meeting was held in the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annaghmakerrig Co. Monaghan on 6 November 2015. The meeting was attended by Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Joe McHugh TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and OFMDFM Junior Minister Emma Pengelly MLA. Minister McHugh chaired the meeting.

PROGRESS REPORT

2. Ministers noted progress reports from the Chairpersons and the Chief Executive Officers of Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency which include the following achievements relating to the period from June to October 2015:

Foras na Gaeilge:

- The app for the new English-Irish dictionary was launched at Oireachtas na Gaeilge and the Foclóir Beag (small dictionary) was added to the online Dictionary and Language Library (www.teanlann.ie);

- The Love Leabhair Ghaeilge (Love Irish Books) campaign under the auspices of the Marketing Support Scheme for the Irish language publishing sector is progressing well, with branded stalls in place in 15 shops;
- The Irish language scheme for primary schools (www.seideansi.ie) is being implemented and new digital facilities are available from junior infants level to second class; and
- Funding was provided for youth projects, including 92 summer camps to cater for 3,800 children (an increase of 200 on 2014), with 74 groups organising youth activities during the year, in addition to 428 Gaeltacht scholarships for young people in Northern Ireland.

Ulster-Scots Agency:

- Promotion of Ulster-Scots in education, including award of flagship status to 6 schools, enrolment of 12 schools on the Flagship Starter Programme, delivery of 5 after-school clubs and 10 workshops in addition to 2 further East/West primary school twinnings;
- Organisation of two key events, comprising a conference in Trinity College Dublin to mark the 700th anniversary of the arrival of the Bruces in Ireland with an attendance of 300 and an Ulster-Scots Heritage Day in Raphoe with an attendance of 450;
- Support provided to 21 summer schools, 12 community festivals and 12 community showcase events; and
- Increasing public awareness of Ulster-Scots through 19 group visits to the Discover Ulster-Scots Centre, publication of 2 editions of the Ulster-Scot newspaper and establishment of a further 3 blue plaques around Ulster celebrating pivotal figures from Ulster-Scots history.

Ministers also noted progress on collaboration between Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency, including:-

- Two joint events as part of a community relations and cultural awareness week, comprising a lecture on Irish and Ulster-Scots elements in placenames in Northern Ireland and a panel discussion in relation to language traditions in Belfast;
- Engagement in year two of a programme to raise awareness of Irish language and linguistic heritage and Ulster-Scots culture, heritage and language in post-primary schools; and
- Ongoing evaluation of the possibilities of participation in the United Youth Programme under OFMDFM's Strategy "Together Building a United Community" which seeks to provide an outlet for 10,000 young people who are not in training, education or employment.

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS

3. The Council noted that the field audits in regard to the 2014 accounts have been completed and, following work by the Comptrollers and Auditors General to finalise the accounts of each Agency, it is envisaged that the consolidated Language Body Annual Report and Accounts 2014 will be laid by Spring 2016.

EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

4. Ministers noted that the Agencies of the Language Body are continuing to engage in identification of possible opportunities to maximise the benefits of EU funding.

They also noted -

- (i) that the Ulster-Scots Agency is continuing to explore opportunities under the INTERREG Transnational Programmes: Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme, and the Atlantic Area Programme, including organisation of a workshop for the latter. In addition, the Agency has applied to join the European Routes in Industrial Heritage Network, with over 200 members in 43 countries, and is monitoring progress with the development of the LEADER/Rural Development Programme where there may be opportunities to promote Ulster-Scots heritage;
- (ii) developments arising from Foras na Gaeilge's success in securing EU funding for the literary project 'Other Words' under the Creative Europe programme and that two working groups – one internal and one with the six lead organisations – continue to assess other opportunities including:
 - Slí Cholmille | Colmille Heritage Trail: Advanced discussions have been held between Foras na Gaeilge, Argyll & Bute Council (Scotland) and Derry City & Strabane District Council with the aim of submitting a preliminary application under the Atlantic Area Programme. Work is ongoing to identify other eligible partners outside of Ireland and the UK in the meantime;
 - larger partnership projects are being explored by the Lead Organisations EU Funding Working Group and one Lead Organisation, Conradh na Gaeilge, has submitted an application under the recent round of the Erasmus+ Programme (Key Action 3 Youth Structured Dialogue); and
 - a larger project focussing on FAST (Families and Schools Together) for Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools is also being investigated.

FORAS NA GAEILGE – SCÉIM PHOBAIL GAEILGE/ IRISH LANGUAGE COMMUNITY SCHEME

5. The Council noted the key features of a revised Scéim Phobail Gaeilge/Irish Language Community Scheme which include:

- transition from a three year to a four year scheme;
 - consolidation of progress made to date and facilitating new communities to avail of the scheme by increasing the number of possible grantees from the current 19 groups to a maximum of 26 groups (37% increase);
 - maximum grant level of €37,000 in year 1 (rising to €40,000 in year 4), including 80% of the employment costs for the development officers; and
 - a new focus on sustainable development in the communities themselves which will empower groups to retain ownership and stewardship within their own target areas and ensure that permanent outcomes result from the funding.
6. The Council also noted that, as the lead organisation in the area of community and economic development and through its own network of development officers, Glór na nGael will have a role in fostering, sharing and encouraging good practice in funded projects and, in addition, will provide a mentoring, support and advice service to organisations whose applications do not meet the required standard for a grant offer.
7. Ministers approved the revised Scéim Phobail Gaeilge/Irish Language Community Scheme for implementation with effect from 1 July 2016.

ULSTER-SCOTS AGENCY – CROSS BORDER ACTIVITIES

8. Ministers received a presentation by the CEO of the Ulster-Scots Agency outlining the Agency's cross border activities which are consistent with its legislative remit in regard to promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and of Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both in Northern Ireland and Ireland.
9. Ministers noted the wide range of key activities which has been expanded on in both jurisdictions, including music and dance tuition, Ulster-Scots Flagship Scheme, North/South school twinnings, post-primary curriculum pilot project, annual community picnics, heritage research and development of heritage trails, continuing support for Monreagh Heritage Centre, Blue Plaques, touring exhibitions, and organisation of an Ulster-Scots Heritage Day and a conference on the Irish-Scottish World in the Middle Ages.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10. The Council agreed to meet again in Language Body sectoral format in spring 2016.

Joint Secretariat
6 November 2015

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