

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

## **PAPER NSMC ENV 1 (15) JC**

### **NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

### **ENVIRONMENT MEETING**

### **NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH**

**13 MAY 2015**

## **JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The twenty first North South Ministerial Council Environment meeting was held in NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 13 May 2015. The meeting was attended by Mark H Durkan, MLA, Minister of the Environment and Danny Kennedy MLA, Minister for Regional Development and Ann Phelan TD, Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. Minister Durkan chaired the meeting.

#### **REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME**

2. Ministers had a discussion on the review of the agreed NSMC Work Programme for the Environment Sector and noted that an interim update will be provided to the June 2015 NSMC Plenary. They also agreed that an update paper on the matter will be brought to the next NSMC Environment meeting.
3. Ministers also agreed that collaboration on the drawdown of EU funding for environmental projects and research will continue to be a high priority.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, REPORTING AND RESEARCH**

4. The Council noted that the first phase of the air quality research study has been completed and that the key findings have been noted by Ministers. The interim

report will also be shared with a group of stakeholders and following this stage will inform the next phase of the study.

5. Ministers noted the establishment across both jurisdictions of a collaborative evidence programme known as 'ShARE' enabling stakeholders to deliver evidence to underpin their activities as regulators, which can be applied thus deriving maximum benefit from the funding and resources invested.
6. The Council noted that the all island research project into the Environmental Impacts of Unconventional Gas Exploration & Extraction (UGEE-fracking) is ongoing .

## **EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

7. Ministers noted that a joint €72m INTERREG VA bid has been adopted by the EU Commission covering the terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments.
8. The Council noted that the EU Commission is expected to announce opening of the LIFE 2015 Programme on 1 June 2015 and in preparation for its launch, potential applicants to the programme from both jurisdictions attended the LIFE application training course in Dublin.
9. They also noted that the official launch of the Northern Ireland (NI) Horizon 2020 Strategy took place on 31 March 2015 at the Commission Offices in Belfast and that it is proposed to hold cross-border roadshow events on Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 5 Programme at the end of May 2015.

## **WASTE MANAGEMENT**

10. The Council noted that the carrier bag levy, introduced by the Department of Environment (DOE) on 8 April 2013 on new single use carrier bags was extended on 19 January 2015 to low cost reusable carrier bags.
11. Ministers welcomed the introduction of the Food Waste (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2015 which were made on 22 January 2015 and which will restrict the amount of food waste being landfilled.
12. The Council noted that the DOE consultation on a Quality Action Plan for Recycling, which incorporates proposals for a Material Recovery Facility Code of Practice, closed on 6 March 2015.
13. Ministers noted the proposed reform of waste enforcement and the establishment of three lead authorities for waste enforcement in Ireland.
14. Ministers also noted the proposed regulatory changes to be introduced by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) to provide for regulatory controls on "Type 8" Plants and the successful co-existence of these and composting plants within the overall waste treatment infrastructure in Ireland.

15. The Council noted the intention of the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to introduce a full producer responsibility initiative for tyres and waste tyres. It also noted that DOE officials are working along with DECLG officials and that this will assist DOE in considering the desirability and feasibility of introducing similar proposals in Northern Ireland.

## **CROSS BORDER MOVEMENTS OF WASTE**

16. The Council noted that two illegal waste landfill sites will be addressed in the Repatriation Programme during 2015.
17. The Council also noted that both Environment Ministers and their Departments are continuing to target resources into joint enforcement action against illegal operators which includes the exchanging of intelligence and information on problem areas and carrying out co-ordinated inspections.
18. Ministers again expressed concern at the impact of fuel laundering and stressed the importance of closer co-operation between agencies to tackle the issue. Ministers also agreed that relevant officials provide an overview of the issues at the next Environment NSMC meeting.

## **WATER QUALITY**

19. Ministers welcomed the publication in Northern Ireland (NI) of the consultation documents on new draft River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) (2015 to 2021).
20. The Council noted that the consultation period in relation to the Timetable and Work Programme for the development of the Second Cycle RBMPs in Ireland closed on 31 January 2015 and that the responses received are currently being considered.
21. Ministers also welcomed the continued cross border collaborative work on development of the River Trusts, including the provision of funding by Ireland to the River Trusts organisation in Northern Ireland to assist with the development of River Trusts in Ireland, including the development of a new cross border River Trust in Inishowen, Co Donegal.
22. The Council noted that DECLG has given its support in principle to a DOE proposal to seek INTERREG funding for a cross border pilot initiative to provide electronic signs giving "real time" data on bathing water quality in certain designated bathing areas.
23. The Council also noted that there has been initial engagement between Department for Regional Development and DECLG to discuss areas within the water sector which offer opportunities for mutual cooperation.
24. Ministers welcomed the continued coordination on the Clean Coast and Coastcare Schemes and noted the success of the symposium which was held in November involving representatives from both jurisdictions.

25. The Council noted that the 2015 Awards for beaches in each jurisdiction will be announced in May 2015

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

26. It was agreed to hold the next Environment meeting in autumn 2015.

**Joint Secretariat**  
**13 May 2015**

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