



NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL AQUACULTURE & MARINE MEETING NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

10 JUNE 2024

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The thirty first North South Ministerial Council Aquaculture & Marine meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh, on 10 June 2024. The meeting was attended by Andrew Muir MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Aisling Reilly MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office, Pam Cameron MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office, and Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications. Minister Muir chaired the meeting.

LOUGHS AGENCY PROGRESS REPORT

2. The NSMC welcomed the report on the activities of the Loughs Agency, including the ongoing conservation and protection efforts, and the investment in the Agency's scientific fisheries monitoring programme, including the introduction of new technologies such as AI.
3. Ministers noted in particular: the fisheries improvement projects that help address climate change and biodiversity loss; the successfully delivered CatchmentCARE and SWELL projects; the wide range of environmental education and outreach programmes; and the pioneering work undertaken in the SeaMonitor project to improve marine research and produce the first Atlantic Salmon Management Plan for the island of Ireland.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE MATTERS

4. The Council approved the Loughs Agency Business Plans and Budgets/Grants for 2022, 2023 and 2024 and the Loughs Agency 2023-25 Corporate Plan.
5. The NSMC noted that all Business Plans and the Corporate Plan have been completed in accordance with agreed guidance issued by the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform and have been agreed by Sponsor Departments and Finance Ministers.
6. The Council noted the Loughs Agency Annual Reports and Accounts for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, which have been laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and both Houses of the Oireachtas.

REVIEW OF FRAMEWORK FOR PROCESSING LOUGHS AGENCY EMERGENCY REGULATIONS

7. The NSMC noted the review of the Framework for Processing Loughs Agency Emergency Regulations and agreed that the Framework is not currently required for Loughs Agency to carry out emergency functions.
8. Ministers noted that Loughs Agency will regularly review the need for an emergency framework and any update will be reported to NSMC.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LOUGHS AGENCY SCIENCE STRATEGY

9. The Council welcomed the adoption of the Science Strategy framework, which is structured as a three-strand approach inclusive of salmonids (and other fish), native oysters and aquatic ecosystems for all scientific delivery at Loughs Agency.
10. The NSMC noted the multidisciplinary nature of Loughs Agency's scientific delivery and the importance of taking an ecosystem-based approach to management of the Foyle and Carlingford catchments.
11. Ministers agreed that Loughs Agency will provide an update on activity under its Science Strategy at the next meeting in this sector.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY WITHIN THE AQUACULTURE & MARINE SECTOR

12. Ministers launched the Loughs Agency's Climate Action Plan.
13. The Council noted the importance of the work of Loughs Agency in addressing the impacts of climate change on the aquatic systems, flora and fauna in the Foyle and Carlingford catchments.
14. The Council welcomed Loughs Agency's contribution to addressing climate change and loss of biodiversity, and its commitment to supporting obligations to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions in both jurisdictions, including through the use of nature-based solutions for catchment management.

PRESENTATION: LOUGHS AGENCY'S INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION

15. The NSMC commended Loughs Agency for the positive advances in data, knowledge and marine research following the successful completion of the SeaMonitor Project.
16. Ministers noted the presentation on Loughs Agency's participation in International Research Projects.
17. The Council welcomed the Agency's continued commitment to scientific excellence through research, including its work with international partners on key projects including the Strategic Infrastructure for Improved Animal Tracking in European Seas (STRAITS) Project, the Northeast Atlantic Tracking Network (NorTrack) Project, the Digital Twin of the Ocean Animal Tracking (DTO Track) Project and its work to establish a Cross Border Marine Observation Network utilising acoustic telemetry as vital for managing and safeguarding key species in its catchments.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18. The Council agreed to hold its next NSMC Aquaculture & Marine meeting in late 2024.

**Joint Secretariat
10 June 2024**

Website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org