



**NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
TWENTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING
DUBLIN CASTLE
13 SEPTEMBER 2024
JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The twenty-eighth Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was held in Dublin Castle, on 13 September 2024.
2. The Government of Ireland was led by the Taoiseach, Simon Harris TD, who chaired the meeting. The Northern Ireland Executive was led by the First Minister, Michelle O'Neill MLA, and the deputy First Minister, Emma Little-Pengelly MLA. A full list of the members of both delegations is attached as an Annex.

OPENING COMMENTS

3. The Council extended its congratulations to the athletes from both jurisdictions who had participated in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The skills, commitment and dedication of these athletes who are competing at the highest level was recognised.

BUSINESS AND TRADE MATTERS

4. The Council had a substantive discussion on business and trade related matters. Promoting economic growth in a sustainable and balanced way is a priority and both administrations are committed to supporting businesses and growing trade and Ministers discussed their plans on how to achieve this.
5. The Council noted that, where appropriate, the NSMC Sectors would continue to consider how agreed collaborative approaches could contribute to the promotion of economic growth.

JOINT SECRETARIES' PROGRESS REPORT

6. The NSMC Joint Secretaries provided a report on the activity that had taken place across the various NSMC sectors since the last NSMC Plenary meeting in April. It was noted that Ministers had met across all twelve NSMC work sectors and that an Institutional meeting had also taken place.
7. Ministers welcomed the engagement between both Administrations on a wide range of policy matters across all the NSMC areas of cooperation and noted that the NSMC will be updated on progress at future meetings.
8. The NSMC welcomed that updates have been made to work programmes to reflect emerging policy priorities and noted that Ministers had discussed climate change and loss of biodiversity at all meetings. The positive engagement on these shared challenges was welcomed.

NEW DECADE, NEW APPROACH COMMITMENTS

9. The NSMC considered an update on the various New Decade, New Approach commitments with a cross-border dimension.
10. The Council noted that the A5 Western Transport Corridor scheme had been discussed at the NSMC Transport Meeting held on 27 June 2024 and that the Minister for Infrastructure will be submitting a further paper shortly for Executive agreement on progression of the A5 project.
11. Ministers welcomed that site works for the Narrow Water Bridge project began in May 2024 and commencement of construction was marked in June 2024 at an event attended by Ministers from both jurisdictions.
12. Ministers welcomed that phase 2 (Clones to Clonfad) of the Ulster Canal restoration project had been completed and officially opened at an event attended by Ministers from both jurisdictions in June 2024. It was noted that a strategy for completion of Phase 3 as a whole will be finalised by end 2024.
13. The NSMC welcomed the final report and associated environmental assessments of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review which were published by Minister O'Dowd and Minister Ryan in Dundalk on 31 July 2024. Both jurisdictions will continue to work collaboratively to support implementation of the Review's recommendations.
14. In relation to Higher Education in the North West, it was noted that pre-application planning consultation has commenced regarding the construction of a new teaching and student services building at Ulster University's Magee campus. Funding commitments from the Department for the Economy for this financial year were also noted.

15. The Council also noted that two research partnerships have been supported under the Co-Centre Programme and successful recipients of the Shared Island Bioeconomy Demonstration Initiative funding call will be announced in autumn 2024.
16. The NSMC agreed that commitments under New Decade, New Approach should remain on the agenda of relevant NSMC sectoral meetings and that further updates will be provided to future NSMC plenary meetings

CLIMATE CHANGE AND LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY

17. Ministers had a wide-ranging discussion on Climate Change and loss of biodiversity. It was noted that these topics had been considered across all the NSMC sectors and the cooperation already under way across both jurisdictions to address these shared challenges was welcomed.
18. The NSMC agreed that relevant sectors should maintain a focus on these topics at future meetings.
19. The Council welcomed the focus of the *Climate + Biodiversity + Water Quality Co-Centre* on science to support fair transitions to Net Zero, reversing biodiversity loss, and restoring water quality for a sustainable economy. Ministers noted that this co-centre supports the co-ordinated science effort in the NI Executive's Lough Neagh Action Plan.

MOTHER AND BABY INSTITUTIONS, MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES AND WORKHOUSES

20. The NSMC noted the important progress being led by the Executive in relation to Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene laundries and Workhouses as well as the Government of Ireland's implementation of the Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. In light of the cross-border nature of these institutions, officials from both Administrations will work closely on common issues.

FUTURE NSMC MEETINGS

21. The NSMC approved a schedule of future NSMC sectoral meetings, a meeting in Institutional format and the next Plenary meeting in spring 2025.

**Joint Secretariat
13 September 2024**

www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org

**MEETING OF THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
13 September 2024**

Government of Ireland	Northern Ireland Executive
Simon Harris TD Taoiseach	Michelle O'Neill MLA First Minister
Micheál Martin TD Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs Minister for Defence	Emma Little-Pengelly MLA deputy First Minister
Roderic O'Gorman TD Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA Minister of Finance
Jack Chambers TD Minister for Finance	Paul Givan MLA Minister of Education
Heather Humphreys TD Minister for Social Protection and Minister for Rural and Community Development	Gordon Lyons MLA Minister for Communities
Stephen Donnelly TD Minister for Health	Andrew Muir MLA Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Catherine Martin TD Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Conor Murphy MLA Minister for the Economy
Charlie McConalogue TD Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine	John O'Dowd MLA Minister for Infrastructure
Darragh O'Brien TD Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Mike Nesbitt MLA Minister of Health
Eamon Ryan TD Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications Minister for Transport	Aisling Reilly MLA Junior Minister, The Executive Office
Peter Burke TD Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment	
Dara Calleary TD Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation	