

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

# **NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

## **NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY MEETING**

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,  
ARMAGH,**

**29 MAY 2024**

### **JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The twenty-eighth North South Ministerial Council Language Body meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 29 May 2024. The meeting was attended by Minister for Communities Gordon Lyons MLA, Junior Minister Aisling Reilly MLA and Minister of State with special responsibility for the Gaeltacht, Sport and Physical Education, Thomas Byrne TD. Minister Lyons chaired the meeting.

#### **LANGUAGE BODY PROGRESS REPORT**

2. The Council noted the progress reports for the period 2020-2023 received from the Chief Executive Officers of the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge.
3. Ministers welcomed key achievements of the North/South Language Body since the last sectoral meeting including:

- i. The forging of Ulster-Scots links with the international diaspora through the Ulster-Scots Agency welcoming over 3,000 people to view the Declaration of Independence Exhibition at Public Records Office Northern Ireland featuring an original Dunlap Broadside;
- ii. The distribution by the Ulster Scots Agency of more than 900 funding grants to help with COVID safety and to mitigate the financial impact of the pandemic;
- iii. The continuing work of Foras na Gaeilge, in partnership with its Lead Organisations, to deliver language planning initiatives in both jurisdictions, including in Gaeltacht Service Towns, Irish Language Networks and in Cultúrlanna; and
- iv. The considerable progress in dictionary and terminology work, including the launch of Foras na Gaeilge's new dictionary project in 2022 with the ambitious target of publishing both a single-language Irish dictionary and a new Irish-English dictionary online by 2027.

## **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

4. The Council approved the North/South Language Body Business Plans and Budgets/Grants for 2022, 2023 and 2024 which have been completed in accordance with agreed guidance issued by the Department of Finance (DoF) and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDPR), and have been agreed by Sponsor Departments and Finance Ministers.
5. Ministers approved the North/South Language Body 2023-2025 Corporate Plans, which have been completed in accordance with agreed guidance issued by DoF and DPENDPR, and have been agreed by Sponsor Departments and Finance Ministers.
6. The Council noted the Consolidated Annual Report and Accounts for 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021, which have been certified by the Comptrollers and Auditors General and laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The NSMC noted that the audit of the 2022 accounts is near completion.

## **ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY IN THE LANGUAGE SECTOR**

7. The NSMC noted that both Agencies of the North/South Language Body (Foras na Gaeilge and Ulster-Scots Agency) have a statutory compliance to climate change and biodiversity obligations as public service bodies.

8. Ministers welcomed that the Agencies are in the process of drafting a Climate Action Roadmap to meet targets in both jurisdictions and noted that both Agencies will continue to engage with relevant Departments to identify opportunities to address climate change and loss of biodiversity from an operational perspective.

### **PRESENTATION BY GROUPS FUNDED BY THE LANGUAGE BODY**

9. The NSMC received presentations by Gael Linn and the Ulster-Scots Community Network which illustrated key achievements of the organisations as a result of working in partnership with the Agencies of the North/South Language Body.
10. The Council welcomed the successful engagement with schools in both jurisdictions to deliver the Gaelbhratach and Scoil Spreagtha schemes to improve Irish language skills and create natural opportunities to speak Irish outside of the formal classroom setting.
11. The Council welcomed the raising of awareness of Ulster-Scots identity among individuals and over 100 voluntary and community groups, including the provision of policy support and assistance with adherence to safeguarding standards and the encouragement of wider involvement in Ulster-Scots activity by groups and individuals through the delivery of over 30 cultural events in 2023.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

12. The Council agreed to hold its next Language Body meeting in autumn 2024.

**Joint Secretariat**  
**29 May 2024**

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