

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

# **NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

## **TRANSPORT MEETING**

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

**27 JUNE 2024**

## **JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The twenty-third North South Ministerial Council Transport meeting was held at the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh, on 27 June 2024. The meeting was attended by John O'Dowd MLA, Minister for Infrastructure, Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for Transport, and Minister Mike Nesbitt MLA, Minister for Health. Minister O'Dowd chaired the meeting.

### **A5 WESTERN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR**

2. The NSMC agreed that the A5 dualling and cross-border linked road projects including the N2 Clontibret to Border Road Scheme and Donegal TEN-T upgrades are critical to the development of the region, improving road safety and stimulating economic growth.
3. Ministers welcomed the announcement in February 2024 of a €600m contribution from the Government of Ireland towards the A5 project, and its support in advancing the N2 Clontibret to the border and Donegal TEN-T upgrades.
4. The Council noted that the A5, Donegal TEN-T and N2 road infrastructure projects continue to progress, with both Administrations working collaboratively, including in relation to the mitigation of impacts on the River Foyle floodplain.
5. Ministers noted the establishment of a cross-border working group that would reinforce this collaboration, specifically in the continued development of the N2

Clontibret to Border Road Scheme and Phase 3 of the A5, from Ballygawley to the border, including the proposal for a seamless cross-border link road (of approximately 3 kms in length), to ensure successful outcomes through the planning processes.

## **NEW DECADE, NEW APPROACH COMMITMENTS**

6. The Council welcomed the progress on the implementation of commitments outlined in the New Decade, New Approach agreement of January 2020, in particular in relation to infrastructural investment.
7. Ministers welcomed the progress being made on various cross-border greenways including the Sligo-Enniskillen Greenway, the Northwest Greenway network, the Ulster Canal Greenway and the Carlingford Lough Greenway. They welcomed the announcement by the Government of Ireland in February 2024 of a €1.5 million contribution to enable the completion of an outstanding element of the cross-border Carlingford Greenway – a 1.6km boardwalk structure outside Newry - as well as the funding provided by the Department of Infrastructure (DfI).
8. Ministers noted that the Government of Ireland has commissioned an expert-led review on potential cross-border greenway opportunities, in line with the commitment to create an island-wide greenway network.
9. The Council welcomed the allocation of funding by the Government of Ireland (€12.5 million from the Shared Island Fund, with match funding from the Department of Transport) to meet the total cost of introducing an hourly-frequency rail service between Belfast and Dublin over an initial three-year period.
10. The NSMC noted the presentation provided on cross-border intercity rail services between Belfast and Dublin, and on the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, and welcomed the progress in relation to the Review and the intention to present the final review to the NI Executive and the Government of Ireland in July 2024.
11. The Council noted the ongoing review of the potential for Government Support to renewed viable air routes from Cork to Belfast and from Dublin to City of Derry Airport.

## **PEACE AND INTERREG FUNDED TRANSPORT PROJECTS**

12. The NSMC welcomed the continued cooperation between the DfI and DoT on matters relating to EU funding, and welcomed the decision in April 2024 to award €165m funding from the PEACEPLUS programme towards the Enterprise Fleet Replacement Project.
13. The Council welcomed progress with EU-funded Connecting Europe Facility and INTERREG projects including A1 Belfast to Dublin road safety improvements; removal of a major bottleneck on the North Sea Mediterranean Corridor at Newry/Warrenpoint; planning and design phases of TEN-T priority route improvement in the North West; the North West Multimodal Transport Hub; Cross Border Greenways; and Electric Vehicle Chargers.

## **SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT**

14. The Council noted the updates provided by Department of Transport in respect of actions under the Sustainable Mobility Policy and related actions under the Climate Action Plans; and by Department of Infrastructure in respect of transport decarbonisation policy development, including increasing sustainable and active travel.
15. Ministers noted that officials from both Administrations will progress agreed cross-border Sustainable Travel and Transport projects; continue to liaise on policy development; and seek opportunities for further collaboration, and agreed that a further update will be provided at a future NSMC meeting.

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

16. The Council noted current ambitions, mechanisms and governance arrangements in relation to biodiversity loss and climate action (mitigation and adaptation) in the transport sector across the island of Ireland.
17. The NSMC welcomed the operational practices across the transport sector in support of addressing the loss of biodiversity, and noted the presentation provided on addressing loss of biodiversity in the sector.
18. Ministers noted that officials will be engaging in a number of cross-border initiatives, including an environmental themed workshop, to show-case and share information on biodiversity best practice across the transport sector.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Council agreed to hold its next Transport meeting in autumn 2024.

**Joint Secretariat**

**27 June 2024**

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