

PAPER NSMC TRAN 1 (09) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

TRANSPORT SECTORAL FORMAT

LARNE

3 APRIL 2009

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The sixth meeting of the North South Ministerial Council in Transport sectoral format was held in Larne on 3 April 2009.
2. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by Conor Murphy MP MLA, Minister for Regional Development and Sammy Wilson MP MLA, Minister of the Environment. The Irish Government was represented by Noel Dempsey TD, Minister for Transport.
3. The Council noted and welcomed progress made since the last meeting in May 2008 and the opportunity to meet to further discuss cross-border co-operation in relation to Strategic Transport Planning and Road Safety.

A5 AND A8 MAJOR ROADS PROJECT

4. Ministers discussed the A5 (North-West Gateway to Aughnacloy) and A8 (Belfast to Larne) road projects and noted that both projects had achieved the first significant milestone – preliminary route corridor assessment – ahead of schedule and are on target to meet the second significant milestone - preferred option - by mid 2009. Ministers also noted that the procurement process for the A5 project has commenced and the A8 project is expected to commence shortly with a view to having a contractor/designer appointed by Autumn 2009.

A4 AND N16 MAJOR ROADS PROJECT

5. Ministers noted the extensive works currently in progress to upgrade the A4 between Dungannon and Augher. They also noted that a route selection report has already been completed for the N16 Manorhamilton to Glencar Scheme (16km) and is with the National Roads Authority for approval; the proposals contained within the Department for Regional Development Investment Delivery Plan for Roads to provide bypasses of Enniskillen and Fivemiletown were also discussed and Ministers noted the recent publication of the report on the 'Analysis for need for Upgrading the N16/A4 Route', commissioned jointly by Fermanagh District Council and Sligo County Council.

ROAD SAFETY

6. The Council noted the progress achieved in reducing road deaths in 2008, that both Northern Ireland and Ireland still lag some way behind the best performing countries in Europe in terms of road deaths per million population, and agreed that efforts to maintain progress must continue.
7. Ministers noted the progress achieved to date towards achieving mutual recognition of driving disqualifications between the UK and Ireland by June 2009. A project plan will be developed to achieve mutual recognition of penalty points within an agreed timeframe.
8. The Council noted the continuing level of co-operation on advertising and publicity and agreed that the authorities should meet with a view to co-ordinating their efforts to utilise new technology for advertising and publicity purposes.
9. Ministers agreed that progress on developing and delivering a strategic approach to improving road safety on both sides of the border should continue and be monitored at Ministerial level. They also agreed that the results of current research projects should be shared and that consideration should be given to developing a co-ordinated approach to drink drive limits.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

10. The Council noted the publication by the Department of Transport of the Irish Government's **Smarter Travel** policy and that the Department for Regional Development is already progressing a number of initiatives on sustainable transport/travel. Ministers noted that officials are engaging proactively on the sustainable transport and travel agenda and are progressing initiatives that underline the all-island dimension. Ministers agreed to the ongoing work on a jointly supported car-sharing website for the North West region with a tentative commencement date in Autumn 2009 and looked forward to an update on the matter at a future NSMC meeting in Transport sectoral format.

IMPROVEMENTS TO DUBLIN/BELFAST RAIL LINK

11. Ministers reviewed progress on proposals for improving the Dublin-Belfast Rail Service. It noted the findings of the work carried out by Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways (NIR) since they last met. They agreed that identifying the capital and revenue funding required to improve the frequency of the Enterprise service remains an objective, but in the knowledge of a likely difficult financial position in the years ahead. They also agreed that the operating companies should, in the meantime, examine the case for reconfiguring the Enterprise trains to improve their reliability.

FREIGHT TRANSPORT

12. The Council agreed that the Department for Regional Development and the Department of Transport should co-operate in organising a freight forum, and that a report on progress will be presented at a future NSMC meeting in Transport sectoral format.

BRIDGES

Bridges on the Tyrone/Monaghan Border

13. Ministers noted that the formal planning process is complete in both jurisdictions and that it is planned to have a contractor appointed shortly and to have the bridges constructed by late Spring 2010.

Narrow Water Bridge

14. Ministers noted that Louth County Council has been asked to undertake further appraisal of the proposed project and that following this the project will be progressed through the statutory planning process in both jurisdiction. Ministers agreed that the question of funding the construction work can be addressed when the design and planning process is completed.

Ballynacarry Bridge

15. Ministers noted that the N53 Ballynacarry Bridge is not included in existing road investment plans and agreed that once the necessary studies are completed consideration will then be given to the priority to be attached to this project post 2010.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

16. The Council agreed to meet again in the Transport sectoral format in October 2009.

**Joint Secretariat
April 2009**