

North/South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuisidh/Thras
An Chomhrúnaiocht

PAPER NSMC LAN 3 (09) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

NORTH SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY SECTORAL FORMAT

BELFAST

2 DECEMBER 2009

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The ninth North South Ministerial Council meeting in Language Body sectoral format was held in Belfast on 2 December 2009.
2. The meeting was attended by Nelson McCausland MLA, Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Conor Murphy MP, MLA, Minister for Regional Development and by Éamon Ó Cuív TD, Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Minister McCausland chaired the meeting.
3. The meeting dealt with issues relating to the Language Body and its two constituent agencies, Tha Boord o Ulstèr Scotch (The Ulster-Scots Agency) and Foras na Gaeilge (The Irish Language Agency).

Progress Reports

4. The Council received progress reports from the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge on developments in 2009 including a draft Internet Strategy for young people compiled by Foras na Gaeilge and FÓN (learning from new technology project) which won an European Award for Languages – The Language Label - on 26 September 2009. Ministers

welcomed the launch of the new Ulster-Scots Agency Website and the fact that 38 language based summer schools were supported in 2009 by the Ulster-Scots Agency.

The Council noted the ongoing collaboration between the Agencies including a series of lectures on "Aspects of our Shared Heritage" which have been agreed with Dungannon and South Tyrone Council and the completion of a film in Irish about the Ulster-Scots language and culture which will be broadcast on TG4. Ministers also noted that a joint policy on Child Protection is being prepared in conjunction with the NSPCC.

North/South Language Body Business Plans and Budget 2009

5. The Council noted the revised 2009 Business Plans and budget provision for the Language Body which will be brought to a future NSMC meeting for approval.

North/South Language Body Draft Business Plans 2010

6. The Council noted that the 2010 Business Plans will be finalised once the budgetary allocations have been established and agreed by the Sponsor and Finance Departments and that the finalised Plans and budget will be submitted for approval at a future meeting of the NSMC.

Ulster-Scots Agency

7. Ministers considered proposals in relation to the strategic focus, organisational structure and staffing of the Agency to reflect its emerging business priorities and discussed a range of measures to strengthen corporate governance in the Agency.
8. The Council welcomed progress following the introduction of the amended Financial Assistance Scheme for the Ulster-Scots Agency in July 2009. The Financial Assistance Scheme affords opportunities for a range of groups and individuals to draw financial support from the Agency for a range of Ulster-Scots activities.

Foras na Gaeilge

9. The Council discussed staffing issues in Foras na Gaeilge and noted that arrangements are in place to fill 5 posts in Gaoth Dobhair and 3 posts in Dublin. The Council noted that Sponsor Departments have received an application from Foras na Gaeilge for additional contract staff to complete the English-Irish Dictionary Project. Ministers asked that consideration of this request be completed as a priority and a recommendation presented to the next NSMC meeting in Language sectoral format.

10. The Council welcomed the Foras na Gaeilge review of its core-funded organisations. Ministers agreed that core-funding of the Irish language voluntary sector by Foras na Gaeilge be reconfigured on the basis that Foras na Gaeilge will set high level strategic priorities. Applications for funding will be invited from the voluntary sector, within these strategic priorities, for one or a limited number of organisations with a representational, information dissemination, resource and support provision and advocacy role for the sector as a whole; and at local area level, groups that take an integrated approach to promotion of the Irish language, including working in community, family, educational and youth settings. This reconfiguration is to ensure a more effective, streamlined and cost effective approach to funding of the sector.

North/South Language Body Annual Reports and Accounts

11. The Council noted the progress made in regard to the Annual Reports and Accounts for the North South Language Body, including the fact that the 2005 Accounts for the North/South Language Body have been cleared formally by both C&AGs and will be signed imminently and that progress is being made in regard to the Annual Reports and Accounts for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008
12. Both Agencies in conjunction with the Sponsor Departments are continuing to address the outstanding issues in relation to the Annual Reports and Accounts as a priority. The Council requested a further report on progress to the next NSMC meeting in Language sectoral format.

Date of Next Meeting

13. The Council agreed to hold its next meeting in Language sectoral format at a date to be agreed in the second quarter of 2010.

**Joint Secretariat
2 December 2009**