

# CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

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29/01/2016 - 05/02/2016



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Monday 1 February 2016

North/South Ministerial Council: Tourism

**Summary:** Mr Bell made a statement in compliance with section 52 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 regarding a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in tourism sectoral format.

**Mr Bell (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):** With your permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement in compliance with section 52 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 regarding a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in tourism sectoral format. The meeting was held in Armagh on 2 December 2015. Minister Carál Ní Chuilín and I represented the Northern Ireland Executive. The Irish Government were represented by Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. I chaired the meeting. The statement has been agreed with Minister Ní Chuilín, and I make it on behalf of us both.

Ministers noted the current position of the EU funding programmes that may be of assistance to the tourism sector and agreed that the relevant tourism stakeholders in both jurisdictions will continue to monitor closely developments at EU level to ensure that tourism may benefit from all suitable collaborative funding opportunities. The chairperson, Mr Brian Ambrose, informed Ministers of the work of the Tourism Ireland board since the previous meeting, including delivering the 2015 business plan and developing the 2016 business plan, as well as progress on implementing the corporate plan for 2014-16. Ministers also learned of the progress in delivering Tourism Ireland's performance goals for 2015 and the development of the 2016 goals.

Ministers received a presentation from the CEO, Mr Niall Gibbons, on Tourism Ireland's performance throughout 2015. It contained highlights of Tourism Ireland's marketing campaign throughout the year, with particular regard to the Wild Atlantic Way and Causeway coastal route; the global greening campaign; Game of Thrones; the Irish Open; the BritishIrish visa scheme; and overseas publicity.

Ministers received a performance overview of the 2015 season and were informed of emerging promotional themes for 2016, in particular, Ireland's Ancient East; Northern Ireland's Year of Food

and Drink 2016; the Wild Atlantic Way and Causeway coastal route; and Dublin — A Breath of Fresh Air.

The NSMC welcomed the strong growth in visitor numbers from all main markets to Ireland and Northern Ireland. Ministers noted the current position of the 2016 business plan and the intention to bring it to the next available NSMC meeting for approval. The plan has since been approved at the NSMC Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) meeting on 11 December 2015.

The joint work to develop a compendium report on tourism statistics was noted. The study is expected to be finalised shortly, and a detailed report will be made available to Ministers at their next meeting. Ministers noted that work is progressing on the preparation of an all-island cruise tourism strategy in consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders and that it should be completed in early 2016.

The NSMC noted the ongoing work by relevant Departments in Ireland and Northern Ireland to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023 and the preparations in hand in both jurisdictions to host the Women's Rugby World Cup in Belfast and Dublin in August 2017.

The NSMC noted Tourism Ireland's annual report and accounts for 2014. It consented to the grant of right of way over the Royal Canal towpath at Kilbrook, County Kildare, to Cathal Fitzsimmons and to the deed of transfer and grant of right of way between Waterways Ireland and Bord Na Móna Energy Ltd for lands at Begnagh, County Longford.

Ministers also consented to the transfer of lands to Waterways Ireland and a 20-year licence to Longford County Council. That is to facilitate the development of the shared pedestrian and cycle route along the Royal canal from the junction of the Longford branch at Cloonsheerin to the Westmeath county boundary at Cloonbrin for a distance of 28.2 kilometres.

The Council agreed to meet again in tourism format in spring 2016. I commend the statement to the Assembly.

**Source:** <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-01-02-2016.pdf>

**Monday 1 February 2016**

**North/South Ministerial Council: Trade and Business Development**

**Summary:** Mr Bell made a statement in compliance with section 52 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 regarding a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in trade and business development sectoral format.

**Mr Bell (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):** You are not giving me a break this afternoon, Mr Speaker.

I wish to make a statement in compliance with section 52 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 regarding a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in trade and business development sectoral format. The meeting was held in the offices of the North/South Ministerial Council, Armagh, on Wednesday 2 December 2015. The Executive were represented by me, in my capacity as Minister of

Enterprise, Trade and Investment, and by Carál Ní Chuilín, Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure. The Irish Government were represented by Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. This statement has been agreed with Minister Ní Chuilín, and I am making it on behalf of us both.

Ministers received a joint presentation by the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association (NIIRTA) and Retail Excellence Ireland (REI) on their joint study of the retail sector across both jurisdictions. The Council noted the summary findings of the NIIRTA/REI joint 2014 survey of the retail sector, including that the two retail agencies intend to establish a retail forum comprising representatives from both jurisdictions.

The Council received a presentation from Martin Cronin, the Chairperson, and Thomas Hunter McGowan, the CEO, on InterTradelreland's performance and business activity against 2015 business plan targets. Ministers noted that, during the first 10 months of 2015, InterTradelreland had delivered the following: assistance to 65 first-time innovators; assistance to 44 first-time exporters; 4% efficiency savings; a total jobs impact of 916; and the delivery of a total business value of £67 million or €84 million.

Ministers were advised that there was strong demand for InterTradelreland programmes in 2015. Business and economic research activities carried out by InterTradelreland included continued production of the InterTradelreland quarterly business monitor; a report on 'SMEs, Credit Constraints and Growth', which is a cross-border study relating to access to finance; and, most recently, 'Mapping the Potential for All-Island Sectoral Ecosystems', which examines the opportunities for developing the potential of clusters across both jurisdictions. Ministers noted the current position of the 2016 business plan and that officials continued to engage in discussions on the plan. The Council noted InterTradelreland's annual report and accounts for 2014, which had been certified by the Comptrollers and Auditors General and laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Ministers received a presentation by officials from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, previewing the implementation of the research and innovation theme of the new INTERREG Va programme for the period 2015-2020.

Ministers noted a paper prepared by InterTradelreland providing an update on the Horizon 2020 programme and the early results for the period January 2014 to May 2015. Twenty-two collaborative projects, involving 64 applicants, have been successful to date. They have secured €29.67 million in funding, and, of that total, Northern Ireland partners have secured €14.24 million and partners from Ireland have secured €15.43 million. The average award per partner is €463,500.

Ministers welcomed the wide range of activities organised by InterTradelreland to encourage engagement to date. They included a total attendance of 486 participants at 'Focus on' events; the hosting of a range of conferences; the organisation of advisory service workshops; and the provision of financial assistance for scoping out partnerships and proposal opportunities.

Ministers also noted that InterTradelreland had identified and will undertake additional promotional and awareness-raising activities in conjunction with the Horizon 2020 all-island steering group. That

will utilise the contact point networks in each jurisdiction to drive delivery of the €175 million target. The work by InterTradeIreland with Horizon 2020 applicants to identify further resubmission opportunities was also noted.

The Council agreed that the next trade and business development meeting should be held in the spring of 2016. I commend the statement to the Assembly.

Source: <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-01-02-2016.pdf>



Tuesday, 02 February 2016

Health Services Provision

**Summary:** Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Health if a general practitioner can refer a patient to a consultant within the European Union and the European Economic Area, for inpatient care under the cross-border directive scheme; if not, the reason; and if he would make a statement on the matter.

**Leo Varadkar:** The Cross Border Directive (CBD) allows Irish residents to avail of healthcare in other EU or EEA (excluding Switzerland) Member States that they would be entitled to within the public health system in Ireland, which is not contrary to Irish legislation. Public patients may access the healthcare they require in either the public or private healthcare system of the country abroad under CBD. Access to healthcare abroad is based on patients following public patient pathways - i.e. patients must demonstrate they have followed the equivalent public patient pathways that a patient would follow if accessing public healthcare in Ireland. Referral for care under the CBD may be made by a GP, a hospital consultant and certain other HSE clinicians.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-02-02a.987&s=cross-border+2016-01-29..2016-02-05#g988.q>