

Paper NSMC WI 1(01) JC

NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

WATERWAYS SECTOR

**SCARRIFF, MONDAY
29 JANUARY 2001**

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

1. The second meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council in Inland Waterways Sectoral Format was held in Scarriff, County Clare on Monday 29 January 2001. The meeting dealt with issues relating to **Waterways Ireland**, which is one of the six North/South Implementation Bodies.
2. The Irish Government was represented by Síle de Valera, T.D., Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands, who chaired the meeting. The Northern Ireland Executive Committee Delegation comprised Michael McGimpsey, MLA, Minister of Culture, Arts & Leisure and Denis Haughey, MLA, Minister in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.
3. The Council welcomed the fact that the meeting was being held in Scarriff, County Clare, where a Regional Office of **Waterways Ireland** is being established. They agreed that this office along with the others in Carrick-on-Shannon, Dublin and the body's headquarters in Enniskillen would be well placed to fulfil **Waterway Ireland's** role of enhancing co-operation between North and South in managing, maintaining and developing the main inland waterways of Ireland principally for recreational purposes.

Report by Interim Chief Executive

4. The Interim Chief Executive of **Waterways Ireland**, Mr. John Mahony, made a progress report to the Council. He indicated the progress made in the areas of organisation and personnel, particularly in relation to the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer. He also outlined the progress being made on the many practical arrangements necessary for **Waterways Ireland** to operate successfully. These include meeting new information technology needs and undertaking promotion initiatives. He highlighted the substantial progress made on the Limerick Navigation scheme which will allow mooring in the heart of Limerick city for the first time and increase substantially the window for

navigation on any tidal cycle. He also informed the Council of progress on refurbishment of a number of Lough Erne Moorings. Mr. Mahony also reported on **Waterways Ireland's** preparations for hosting the 2001 World Canal Conference. This is being held in Ireland (Dublin and Belfast) in May of this year. He also reported on progress in relation to updating a study on the feasibility of re-opening the Ulster Canal.

5. The Council commended Mr. Mahony on the real and substantial progress on many different fronts to date. The Council gave a particular welcome in respect of the progress made on the consultancy study regarding the feasibility of re-opening the Ulster Canal. It was noted that a draft final report has now been received by **Waterways Ireland** and that its preliminary assessment of the report is to be submitted to the Departments for their consideration in the coming weeks.

Decisions Taken

6. The Council is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. John Martin as Chief Executive of Waterways Ireland. Mr. Martin was formerly a senior official in the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. The Council also expressed its warm appreciation to the outgoing Interim Chief Executive, Mr. John Mahony for the major contribution he has made to putting **Waterways Ireland** on such a secure footing in its first year of operation.
7. The Council agreed **Waterways Ireland's** draft Action Plan for 2001 and its proposal for securing both temporary and permanent accommodation for its headquarters in Enniskillen and permanent accommodation in its regional offices in Scarriff, Carrick-on-Shannon and Dublin.
8. The Council agreed that the draft Equality Scheme for **Waterways Ireland** be submitted to the Equality Commission for its acceptance.
9. The Council gave its approval to a two month public consultation period on **Waterways Ireland's** draft New Targeting Social Need Action Plan. While this plan covers only those waterways in Northern Ireland for which the Body has responsibility, **Waterways Ireland** is also committing itself to give due regard to the principles of addressing social need across its whole waterways remit.
10. The Council gave its consent to plans from **Waterways Ireland** for compulsory purchase of certain lands necessary for improvement of the Shannon navigation.
11. The Council approved proposed Sterling pay-scales for staff of Waterways Ireland which mirror the Punt pay-scales agreed by the Council at its previous meeting.

Next Meeting

12. The Council agreed to meet again in this sectoral format in the North before the Summer in 2001.