

North/South Cooperation - Joint Paper by the British and Irish Governments

1. This paper is in response to the participants' request to the two Governments to produce a paper on the nature, form and extent of the current levels of cooperation between Departments, North and South and the scope for further cooperation.
2. The attached Annex 1 summarises the relevant areas in very broad terms. It lists the current level of contact and cooperation at official and Ministerial level between Departments and Agencies, North and South, some of which has been continuing for some years. Interaction operates both at the strategic policy level, involving Departments in Belfast and Dublin, including a range of matters under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and at a more local level in border areas where joint approaches are adopted to common problems. Some is formally structured, other contact is ad hoc and informal.
3. In addition, the paper contains at Annex 2 an illustrative list of matters which could be the subject of further cooperation, without prejudice to the form, content and extent of such cooperation.
4. The Governments hope that this paper will help facilitate further discussion among participants. We are willing to bring forward other papers, put together presentations or provide clarification on any particular topics or issues which participants wish.

British Government

Irish Government

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Annex 1

Current areas of cooperation

1. AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant health

Cooperation in relation to the eradication of bovine disease, including research and development.

Cooperation in relation to the combatting of illegal trade in bovine animals and their products.

General liaison and coordination on matters relating to BSE

Protection of Veterinary and Plant health status

Review of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

There are plans to establish closer ties in the run-up to the next review of the CAP as there is a common aim to protect beef and sheep sectors.

Cross-Border Rural Childcare Project

This project is only one of a number of similar projects which demonstrate the high level of cross-border co-operation which currently exists. Pre-School Playgroup Associations (NIPPA and IPPA) have been jointly funded through the EU INTERREG Programme to develop and deliver a cross-border rural childcare project aimed at improving the range, level and quality of day care opportunities for young children.

The project is funded and monitored by the Department of Agriculture in the North and the Department of Enterprise and Employment in the South.

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference Sub-Group on Education and Culture

The AIIGC Sub-Group on Education and Culture brings together officials from London, Dublin

and Belfast representing the Departments involved in education, culture and national heritage.

The group also has British Council representation, and is co-chaired by the British Foreign Office and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs.

3. THE ENVIRONMENT

Water Quality Management Strategies for the Foyle and Erne Catchments

Water Quality Management Strategy Reports, commissioned by the two Departments of the Environment in conjunction with Cavan and Donegal County Councils, on the Foyle and Erne catchments were published in late April 1997. Funding was provided by both Departments with assistance from the European Structural Funds INTERREG Programme.

Agreed strategies are expected to form the basis for future water quality management in the catchments.

Regional Development

Funds are available under INTERREG to promote interregional activity in relation to community economic development in urban areas on a North/South basis. A North/South working group of officials considers actions on applications.

Officials also meet on a regular basis under CRISP (Govt and IFI) to the Urban Development Programme (IFI). These Programme Team Meetings make recommendations on applications to the Fund's Board Members. There are separate Fund programmes for North/South.

Water Service - Cross-border Co-operation

The Department of the Environment in the North has made a formal agreement with Donegal County Council to permit discharge of domestic sewage from Muff, Co. Donegal, 500m from the border, into its Water Service's sewerage system, for treatment at Culmore sewage treatment works on the northern side of the border. The associated capital works on both sides of the border were funded entirely by Donegal County Council.

A second, more substantial, scheme of potential co-operation has come forward in the past year.

The water supply potential of the Lough Mourne catchment in Co. Donegal is being examined to the mutual benefit of North and South. This has been the subject of a number of meetings between representatives of Donegal County Council and the DOE (NI)'s Water Service.

4. EU PROGRAMMES

The NI Single Programme (1994-99), which has assisted some good infrastructure projects involving cross-border co-operation, particularly in areas such as roads, rail and energy;

The joint INTERREG II (1994-99) Programme, which has the twin objectives of promoting the creation and development of networks of cross-border co-operation and assisting the border areas to overcome its special development problems;

The EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in NI and the Border Counties of Ireland, which is also a joint Programme. The cross-border dimension is also a cross-cutting theme across the entire Programme and all of the implementing bodies involved are, therefore, able to finance cross-border projects.

5. HEALTH

Specialist Medical Training

Two pilot rotations in Neurosurgery and Paediatric Surgery have been agreed and the first doctor from Northern Ireland, a trainee Neurosurgeon, took up appointment in the Beaumont Hospital, Dublin on 1 July 1997. It is the intention to use these two specialties as pilots with a view to extending the scheme to other specialties as soon as practical.

Co-operation and Working Together

Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) is an umbrella founded in 1992 to enable two border health Boars in the Republic of Ireland and the Western and Southern Health and Social Services Boards in Northern Ireland to work together. It aims to improve health and social well-being of the CAWT area and to assist border areas in overcoming special development problems.

CAWT draws significant EU funding for specific projects of cross-border interest.

Clinical Waste

In 1995, a North/South Joint Waste Management Board was established to find a joint solution of the problem of clinical waste disposal. The Board sought tenders for the disposal of clinical waste on an all-Ireland basis. The proposal involves three plants covering the whole island, two in the Republic and one in Northern Ireland.

Institute of Public Health

The Institute of Public Health was established at the end of 1997 in Dublin and will receive core funding from DHSS in Northern Ireland and the Department of Health in the Irish Republic. The Institute will be multi-disciplinary and will deal with disease surveillance, education and training, research and the provision of advice on public health.

Other Areas

Strong informal links exist in other areas such as Nursing, Social Services and the Voluntary Sector. There has also been a history of co-operation on Food Safety over the years.

6. JUSTICE MATTERS

There is ongoing liaison between the authorities North and South in relation to such matters as research, the Probation and Forensic Services and emergency planning.

7. INDUSTRIAL AND TRADE MATTERS

The North West has still to develop a dynamic small business sector. One of the factors in inhibiting this desired development is considered to be the low level of managerial knowledge and skills in existing small businesses. Through Norwesco, programmes have been put in place addressing the design, marketing and strategic skill needs of small business owners and their staff. The aim is to improve growth prospects of the business concerned.

The PLATO programme is aimed at small businesses in the Newry & Mourne and Co. Louth areas to assist their development.

The Step-Up programme is aimed at enhancing competitiveness and improving business co-operation in the border regions through IT and advanced communications.

A new promotional campaign, *Tourism Brand Ireland*, has been established to sell the whole of Ireland as a tourist destination.

Public Purchasing

Public bodies, public utilities and suppliers from North and South of the border have been coming together to do business since 1995. This annual joint venture, originally supported by the Electricity Supply Board in the South and the Government Purchasing Agency in the North, will be operated in 1998 by the Irish Trade Board and the Industrial Development Board.

8. MARINE, WATERWAYS AND FORESTRY

Shannon-Erne Waterway

The Shannon-Erne Waterway was opened in 1994 following restoration as a joint venture. It is one of the longest inland navigable waterways in Europe and operation and management are the joint responsibility of the Department of Agriculture Rivers Agency and the Department of the Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. The link greatly increased the tourism and economic development potential of the cross-border rural area - an estimated 40% of users are from abroad.

Ulster Canal

The success of the Shannon-Erne Waterway has stimulated interest in the restoration of the Ulster Canal which would link the Shannon-Erne Waterway to the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann navigations. A feasibility study was commissioned in 1997 with the agreement of both Governments.

Fishing Quotas

Officials have been meeting, under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Conference, to discuss the operation of an EU agreement on Fishing Quotas (The Hague Preference) and its effect on the fishing industry in both parts of the island.

Other Marine Issues

There are several long established bodies operating in the mutual interests of both parts of the island:

- The Commissioners of Irish Lights which provide and maintain lighthouses and other navigational aids around the whole coastline of Ireland;
- The Foyle Fisheries Commission;
- The Carlingford Lough Commission.

9. SOCIAL WELFARE

There are good relations between the Social Security Agency and the Department of Social Welfare in countering cross-border benefit fraud.

10. SPORT

The Sports Council for Northern Ireland and the Irish Sports Council have for several years held joint annual meetings, but meetings between the two bodies have become more frequent.

The two Councils have worked closely on preparing parallel strategies for the development of sport. This is complemented by information exchanges on matters of mutual interest, eg drugs testing, recognition of coaching qualifications and sports research.

The Chief Executive of the Sports Council for Northern Ireland is now an appointed member of the Irish Sports Council, thus ensuring a closer and more meaningful liaison between the two jurisdictions and maximising consistency of approach.

11. TRANSPORT

The Belfast-Dublin rail upgrade project was initiated 1993 and taken forward by Irish Rail and Northern Ireland Railways. The project was monitored by a Committee chaired jointly by DOE (NI) and the Department of Transport, Energy and Communications in Dublin. The NI section of the project received 75% European Grant under the ERDF NI Single Programme. The Irish Republic section received EU Grant at 75% and above under various Programmes.

A joint North/South study has been examining the most appropriate route for improving the road link between Newry and Dundalk.

12. ENERGY

The two Governments are involved in a number of North/South projects, some of which receive EU and/or IFI funding. The most significant of these are:

A North/South Interconnector which would provide security of supply to the gas industries on both sides of the border.

An Energy Challenge which is designed to promote projects in the fields of energy efficiency and renewable energy.

13. THE INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

The International Fund for Ireland was established by Agreement between the two Governments in 1986 with the objective (Article 2) "to promote economic and social advance and to encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland".

The Fund is administered by an independent Board appointed jointly by the two Governments. The Board develops its own policies for the deployment of the resources entrusted to it by donors ensuring that in doing so these complement the economic and social policies of the two

Governments.

Since its inception the Fund has assisted some 3,400 projects which it is estimated have helped to create around 28,000 jobs.

Annex 2

Potential Areas for further cooperation

Agriculture

- Common Agricultural Policy:
- Rural development
- Animal health
- Plant health
- Agricultural research, training and advisory services
- Development of the bloodstock industry

Culture, Heritage and the Arts

- Support and promotion of the Arts
- The Irish language
- Heritage protection and restoration

Education and Training

- Education for students with special needs
- Development of all-island Education for Mutual Understanding

- Support for the Irish language
- Teacher qualifications
- All-Ireland school competitions
- Exchanges of teaching staff
- Joint cultural promotions abroad

The Environment

- Environmental protection
- Waste management
- Transport matters including roads
- Pollution control
- Regional development strategies
- Mapping.
- Wildlife conservation

EU Programmes

- EU initiatives including the North/South INTERREG programme, the Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and LEADER II (or its successor)

Health

- General hospital services
- Disease registries
- Medical emergency/accident planning
- Medical teaching and training
- Public health and health promotion
- Clinical waste disposal
- Clinical trials
- Food safety.

Industrial and Trade Matters

- Development and support of indigenous industries and the small business sector
- North/South trade
- Management development services to industry
- Trading standards
- Promotion and marketing of exports of food, manufactured goods and services
- Promotion of industrially and commercially based research

- Inward investment
- Tourism promotion, marketing and research
- Establishment of university and industry-based centres of research excellence
- Public purchasing

Marine and Waterways

- Common Fisheries Policy:
- Aquaculture
- Fish health
- Fisheries education, research and training
- Marine matters
- Inland waterways

Social Welfare

- Action against welfare fraud

Sport

- Support and promotion of sport

Energy

- Energy projects