



British-Irish COUNCIL



Annual Report 2013

European Union
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Development Fund
Investing in your future

The Peace Bridge
Renamed in 2012
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European Commissioner for
Regional Policy

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DSD
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The British-Irish Council (BIC) presents its Annual Report for 2013, the second since the Secretariat was established in Edinburgh in January 2012.

2013 was another busy and productive year for the Council. During the year, two Summits and a Ministerial (Housing) meeting were held in addition to work sector meetings across the range of Council business. Public outreach was enhanced: through the publication of the 2012 Annual Report; an improved Council website; and a growing presence on social media.

In 2013, Summits were held in **Derry-Londonderry** (June) and **Jersey** (November). Since the Council was established in 1999, the Summits have provided a unique space and opportunity for Heads of the eight Member Administrations to come together to discuss and collaborate on matters of mutual interest.

The issue of youth employment continued to be of great concern to Ministers and Council work sectors are examining how they can contribute ideas and innovations to help create jobs and training opportunities for our young people. The June Summit heard an inspiring presentation from the Culture Company 2013, which was established to manage and assist in delivering the UK City of Culture 2013 programme in Derry-Londonderry and approved the establishment of a new Creative Industries work sector that will harness co-operation across all the Member Administrations in this critically important area of the economy. The new work sector is already up and running and the work programme for the

next two years was approved by Ministers at November's Jersey Summit.

Officials involved in all other Council work sector areas ranging from Environment and Energy to Indigenous Minority and Lesser-used Languages and Social Inclusion continue to work closely with the Secretariat and are making real progress in sharing best practice and developing practical collaboration. The kind of work being done at this level is detailed in the following pages.

The Secretariat thanks Ministers and Officials from all eight Member Administrations for their support and collaboration in 2013. We look forward to continuing to work closely with them in 2014 during which a number of Ministerial meetings are planned along with the biannual Summits and a full range of work sector activities.



Ciarán Byrne
(Irish Government)
Joint Head, Secretariat



Jeremy Martin
(UK Government)
Joint Head, Secretariat



The **British-Irish Council (BIC)** was established on 2nd December 1999 on the entry into force of the British-Irish Agreement signed by the UK and Irish Governments as part of the agreement reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations in Belfast on Friday, 10th April 1998, hereafter referred to as “The Agreement” (see page 29 for the text in the Agreement establishing the British-Irish Council).

The Council comprises the UK and Irish Governments, the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and the Isle of Man Government, Government of Jersey and Government of Guernsey.

The aim of the Council as set out in the Agreement is to “promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships amongst the people of these islands”. It is a forum for members to exchange information, discuss, consult and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant administrations. To date, the Council has undertaken cooperation on a wide

range of diverse issues covering social and environmental topics common to all Member Administrations.

The Council held its inaugural meeting in London on 17 December 1999, a fortnight after the establishment of the devolved government in Northern Ireland. The meeting was attended by the then Prime Minister, Taoiseach and Heads of the other Council Member Administrations.



La Corbière Lighthouse in St. Brelade, Jersey.



An evening sunset of the river Liffey, Dublin.



Big Ben & the Houses of Parliament on the river Thames, London.



The dramatic Sea Cliffs at Marwick Head, Orkney.



The Great Laxey waterwheel, Isle of Man.

The Council meets in different formats at Summit level normally twice per year, and in specific work sector formats on a regular basis with each Member Administration being represented by the appropriate Minister.

The biannual Council Summit is normally chaired by the Head of the host Member Administration, and attended by Heads of Member Administrations and Ministers. At the Summit, Ministers consider the work of the Council in its entirety, including recommendations arising from progress in the work sector groups. In addition Ministers focus on key topics of current relevance.

A Senior Co-ordinator from each of the eight Member Administrations provides a strategic oversight to the activities underway in the different work sectors and co-ordinates the Council activity within their own Administration.

They also play a key role in preparations for the Council's Summits. The Council is supported by the Secretariat based in Edinburgh (**Contact details are given on page 28**).

All Member Administrations participate in the twelve work sectors. Officials from all eight Member Administrations' relevant policy departments meet on a regular basis to progress the work of the sectors.



Cardiff Bay skyline showing the Pierhead Building, the National Assembly for Wales and the Wales Millennium Centre.

The British-Irish Council met twice at Summit level during **2013** in **Derry~Londonderry** and **Jersey**.



British-Irish Council Summit, Derry~Londonderry, 21st June 2013

The 20th British-Irish Council Summit was held in the Magee Campus of the University of Ulster, Derry~Londonderry on 21st June 2013 and was hosted by the First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA, and the deputy First Minister, Mr Martin McGuinness MLA on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive.

A summary of the discussions and conclusions is set out overleaf.

Main picture above - from left to right

1 Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst, Government of Jersey. **2** Chief Minister, Deputy Peter Harwood, Government of Guernsey **3** First Minister, the Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM, Welsh Government. **4** Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP, UK Government. **5** First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA, Northern Ireland Executive **6** Deputy First Minister, Mr Martin McGuinness MLA, Northern Ireland Executive. **7** An Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD, Irish Government. **8** First Minister the Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP, Scottish Government. **9** Chief Minister, Hon Allan Bell MHK, Isle of Man Government

The Council welcomed the hosting of the Summit in Derry~Londonderry, during the city's tenure as UK City of Culture 2013.

The Council received a presentation from Shona McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Culture Company 2013. The Council heard how the Culture Company was established in 2011 to deliver the city's Cultural Programme for 2013, comprising a complete year-long programme of cultural activities with a series of key events as the centrepiece.

The presentation highlighted the benefits to the North West arising from Derry-Londonderry's selection as the first UK City of Culture, as it aims to act as a catalyst for building the economy of the region and delivering a lasting legacy for the people of the city and surrounding area.

Recognising the significant social, economic and other benefits arising from the creative industries and, in line with a previous proposal from the Government of Jersey, the Council agreed to establish a new Creative Industries work sector to further share best practice and consider areas for collaboration. The new work sector will be led by the Government of Jersey. The Council requested that the new work sector and the Secretariat should prepare a work programme for approval at the next Summit to be held in Jersey.

The Economy

The Council discussed the current economic situation in the Member Administrations with a particular focus on energy costs. The Council recognised the common challenges of moving to low carbon energy sources to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions, whilst ensuring security of supply and at a pace which minimises the impact on low income families and does not hamper business competitiveness.

The Council considered the policies being implemented in the energy sector to enhance investment in energy generation diversity at large-central and small-local scales; encourage profitable investment in energy efficiency and in the process stimulate more energy security, job creation and supply chain development. These policies should be pursued in ways which lead to the maximum benefits and minimum costs to Member Administrations' consumers and taxpayers in the short, medium and long term. Policies include, but are not limited to, encouraging fair competition in electricity markets; supporting and working with our energy intensive businesses facing strong international competition where costs represent a significant proportion of their total costs; facilitating greater consumer mobility between suppliers; developing regulatory regimes which support necessary energy infrastructure investments and creating greater opportunities for energy trading. To help achieve this, the Council referenced the continuing importance of the All Islands Approach agreed by the Council in 2011 to enable opportunities for commercial generation and transmission, facilitate the cost-effective exploitation of renewable energy resources, and increase integration of Council partner markets.



Ministers on Peace Bridge, Derry-Londonderry

Youth Employment

The Council reviewed the latest figures on youth unemployment across the Member Administrations. In line with commitments at previous Summits, the Council recognised the need to consider the full range of instruments available at national, regional and European levels to generate employment opportunities for young people and to intervene at the earliest opportunity to ensure that young people do not become long-term unemployed.

Other Issues

The Council received an update of the work that had taken place across each work sector since the Cardiff Summit in November 2012. The Council noted the Secretariat's progress against its business plan and, recognising the economic constraints affecting all Member Administrations and the efficiencies made in the previous financial year, approved a 20% reduction in the budget of the Secretariat for 2013-2014.

Main picture above - from left to right

1 Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP, UK Government. **2** First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA, Northern Ireland Executive. **3** Chief Minister, Deputy Peter Harwood, Government of Guernsey. **4** Chief Minister, Hon Allan Bell MHK, Isle of Man Government. **5** Deputy First Minister, Mr Martin McGuinness MLA, Northern Ireland Executive. **6** An Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD, Irish Government. **7** Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Ms Fiona Hyslop MSP, Scottish Government. **8** Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst, Government of Jersey.

The 21st British-Irish Council Summit was held in **St Brelade's Bay, Jersey** and was hosted by the Chief Minister of Jersey, Senator Ian Gorst. A summary of the discussions and conclusions is outlined below.



The Economy

The Council discussed the economic situation in the Member Administrations with a particular focus on youth employment. The Council, building on its previous discussions on youth employment, exchanged views and examined progress on the various policy initiatives and programmes aimed at helping young people into employment in

each Member Administration and reviewed the latest relevant statistics. The Council, recalling its agreement at the nineteenth Summit held in Cardiff in November 2012, reviewed the activities which had been taken to generate employment opportunities.

Main picture above - from left to right

1 Chief Minister, Deputy Peter Harwood, Government of Guernsey. **2** Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, Mr John Swinney MSP, Scottish Government. **3** First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA, Northern Ireland Executive. **4** Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP. **5** Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst, Government of Jersey. **6** An Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD, Irish Government. **7** Deputy First Minister, Mr Martin McGuinness MLA, Northern Ireland Executive. **8** First Minister, the Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM, Welsh Government. **9** Chief Minister, Hon Allan Bell MHK, Isle of Man Government



Creative Industries

The Council considered and approved a work programme for the next two years. Ministers exchanged views on how the work sector might nurture and further support the environments from which a new generation of creative people, creative ideas and creative businesses can emerge and flourish.

Other Issues

The Council received an update of the work that had taken place across each of the work sectors since the last Summit in June 2013 and noted the Secretariat's mid-year progress against its business plan for the first six months of the calendar year.

Above: Jazz pianist Neil Cowley sharing his skills with the young people of Derry~Londonderry in a Nerve Centre Music Promise programme-part of the 2013 UK City of Culture. Courtesy of Nerve Centre

The British-Irish Council Housing work sector held its third Ministerial meeting at the Department of Communities and Local Government, Eland House, London, on 30th October 2013.

The work sector, established in 2009 and led by the Northern Ireland Executive, seeks to share information, knowledge and best practice between Member Administrations on a number of areas including, supply and allocation of social housing, housing benefit and affordable housing.

The meeting was chaired by Nelson McCausland, MLA, Minister for Social Development in the Northern Ireland Executive. Minister McCausland was accompanied by Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure.

As well as sharing information on the housing market conditions in their respective jurisdictions, Ministers had a detailed exchange of views on increasing housing supply, in particular on issues of access to funding and affordability. To inform their

discussions Ministers received a presentation from leading housing economist Professor Christine Whitehead of the London School of Economics. Ministers asked their work sector officials with the assistance of the Secretariat to continue exchanging information and examining current and evolving policy and practice from across the eight Administrations on these issues.

In the context of the Council's commitment to prioritise the issue of youth employment, Ministers also looked at the potential of the housing sector to generate jobs for young people and asked officials to share policy initiatives and innovations where appropriate.



Picture above - from left to right (front row 1-6, back row 7-8)

- 1 Deputy Andrew Green MBE, Minister for Housing, Government of Jersey.
- 2 Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Northern Ireland Executive.
- 3 Nelson McCausland, MLA, Minister for Social Development, Northern Ireland Executive.
- 4 Jan O'Sullivan TD, Minister for Housing and Planning, Irish Government.
- 5 Margaret Burgess MSP, Minister for Housing and Welfare, Scottish Government.
- 6 The Hon. Chris Robertshaw MHK, Minister for Social Care, Isle of Man Government.
- 7 Kris Hopkins MP, Minister for Housing, UK Government.
- 8 John Howells, Director of Housing and Regeneration, Welsh Government

Environment workshop on Invasive Non-Native Species held at Kew Gardens, May 2013



On 30 April and 1st May 2013, the UK Government hosted a British-Irish Council workshop at Kew Gardens, London on the threat posed to Council Member Administrations from Invasive Non-Native Species (Those animal and plant species not originally from these islands). The workshop was attended by approximately forty delegates representing all Council jurisdictions and followed a decision by Environment Ministers at their last meeting to consider further collaboration on this important issue.

The workshop heard how the impact of Non-Native Species costs the EU around €12 billion per year and that new threats were arising all the time. Delegates shared best practice and considered how to

enhance collaboration around the topics of biosecurity, communications, early warning systems, rapid response and current and future research opportunities. The Administrations also discussed how to coordinate consideration of expected proposals for a European Union legislative instrument. A single point of contact was agreed in each Member Administration to help facilitate an informal joined-up early warning and response system. Discussion is now continuing on further collaboration particularly in relation to research.



The **Scottish Government** hosted the work sector's seminar in **Edinburgh** on 7th & 8th November 2013. Policy makers and key language experts and practitioners attended from each Council Member Administration.

The seminar focussed on policy and legislative issues around indigenous, minority and lesser-used languages, drawing on experiences in Wales, Ireland and Scotland in particular.

Dr Alasdair Allan MSP, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages opened the seminar with a keynote address and welcomed delegates in English, Scots, Gaelic, Irish and Welsh. As Dr Allan MSP stated:

Presentations from the 2012 and 2013 Seminars are available on the BIC website.

www.britishirishcouncil.org/areas-work/indigenous-minority-and-lesser-used-languages

www.britishirishcouncil.org/news/indigenous-minority-and-lesser-used-languages-legislation-seminar-7-8th-november-2013

The findings from this and the 2012 Cardiff seminar which looked at promoting indigenous, minority, and lesser-used languages though early years education will be considered at a Ministerial meeting to be held in Autumn 2014.

“When we were considering the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act during its progress through the Scottish Parliament we looked to learn from other Administrations including Wales and Ireland. I hope that we will continue to learn from each other.” Dr Alasdair Allan MSP

Our languages are:
Guernesiais, Irish,
Welsh, Gaelic, Scots,
Ulster Scots, Manx,
Jèrriais, and Cornish.



S4/C

TG4

BBC
ALBA



Petit Port Bay on Guernsey's south east tip



Creative Industries - Led by the Government of Jersey



The British-Irish Council Creative Industries work sector was established at the twentieth Summit meeting held in Derry-Londonderry on 21st June 2013.

The Creative Industries work sector reflects increasing global recognition of the economic and social potential of the creative industries. This relates to the commercial and cultural reach of key sub-sectors, such as film, television and other digital media, and the wider impact of the creative industries in other business sectors through innovative approaches to policy involving industry, government and education.

The work sector is therefore focusing on nurturing and further supporting environments from which more creative people, creative ideas and creative businesses emerge and flourish.

The work sector concentrates on three main themes:

1. Developing the skills capacity for creative industries;
2. Creative collaboration; and
3. Impact of the creative sector on the wider economy.

Running through each theme is the impact of creative industries on youth employment; how best to measure the impact of creative industries; and how best to increase the GDP growth from creative industries.

Official meetings will continue during 2014 leading to a Ministerial meeting planned for autumn 2015

Above: Critically acclaimed RTÉ drama "Amber" has been sold to more than a dozen countries worldwide. Courtesy of RTÉ.

2012 UK GVA for creative industries was £71.4 billion (5.4% of UK economy) and in 2011 Ireland's GVA was €4.6 billion (2.8% of Ireland's economy).

Collaborative Spatial Planning - *Led by the Northern Ireland Executive*



Collaborative Spatial Planning explores how Member Administrations can work together across borders to plan for and implement key infrastructure. This work sector brings together officials from each of the Member Administrations who are responsible for national, island and regional development strategies.

The group meets biannually, most recently in Dublin in November 2013, to exchange information and perspectives on current planning challenges. Given the cross-cutting nature of spatial planning policy, those Administrations attending the Dublin

meeting decided to explore the development of linkages with other work sectors and agreed to produce a high level scoping paper which would look at the interrelationships and interdependencies between Member Administrations and reflect on those areas where co-operation might be mutually beneficial.



Demography - *Led by the Scottish Government*

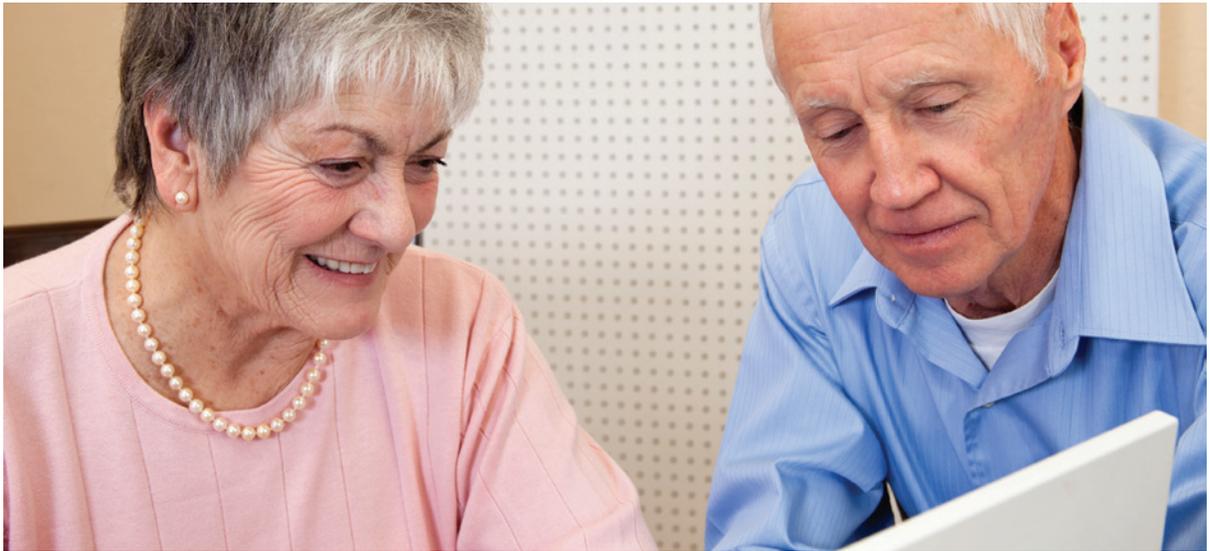


Demographic changes are being faced by all Member Administrations. Ministers have supported in principle, the work plan of understanding migration and its impact; healthy independent ageing, investigating policy interventions, fertility and student flows.

The work sector's most recent area of focus was on understanding the implications of wider student flows amongst the Member Administrations and the full report was

published on the Council's website in March 2013. Discussions are continuing about how the Demography work sector might assist other sectors with research and statistical issues.

Digital Inclusion - Led by the Isle of Man Government



Developments in digital technology have generated a period of massive social and cultural change, affecting all aspects of society. However, there is an overwhelming correlation between digital and social exclusion – three quarters of socially excluded people are also digitally excluded.

The work sector is looking at the different ways Member Administrations are tackling digital inclusion, and the group share best practice and statistical information.

The role of digital inclusion in supporting the public service efficiency agenda is a key topic for the group. The work sector has identified clear areas of overlap and common interest with the Social Inclusion work sector and has recently held a joint meeting to better understand these areas. The group’s meeting in October 2013 in Dublin coincided with the ‘Silver Surfer’ awards, which celebrated the achievements of older people in Ireland using technology and was hosted by Google at its European HQ.



Silver Surfer Awards Ceremony, Dublin 2013

“Three quarters of socially excluded people are also digitally excluded, meaning they are more likely to be denied easy access to information and services and may even lose out financially.”

Early Years Policy - Led by the Welsh Government



Main Picture: Deputy Mark Dorey, Health Minister, Government of Guernsey. Top right: Aileen Campbell, MSP, Minister for Children and Young People, Scottish Government and Deputy Robert Sillars, Education Minister, Government of Guernsey. Photographs courtesy of the Guernsey Press.

The work sector provides a platform for sharing best practice on early years childcare, education and health, all of which are critical to improving children’s life chances, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to support families in these challenging economic times.

Following the 2012 Cardiff summit which had a focus on early years, the Scottish Government loaned a “PlayTalkRead” bus to the Government of Guernsey in July 2013. The bus provides a range of activities from play sessions, advice session from the speech and language therapist to baby massage

and shows parents, grandparents and others involved with children, fun ways of helping children learn through play.

At its meeting held in Dublin in October 2013 the Irish Government gave a presentation on data sharing and each Member Administration provided updates on their policy developments. Officials visited “youngballymun” an early intervention project on Dublin’s Northside. The work sector is looking at developing common messages promoting early years learning.

“There is a clear link between the provision of early years services (early education, childcare & play) and economic growth.”

Energy: Marine Energy Led by the Scottish Government / Electricity Grids led by the UK Government



Marine Energy Officials, Orkney

The work sector is split into two subgroups. Both groups are committed to sharing best practice, overcoming barriers and exploring areas for collaboration between Member Administrations to make the most of the substantial renewable energy opportunities and resources that widely exist in British-Irish Council jurisdictions.

The Marine Energy subgroup are working together in order to progress the marine renewables industry towards commercialisation and to overcome common issues that are impeding the industry. The group's meeting in October 2013 was held at the European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC) based in Orkney and provided the opportunity to see and learn first-hand about marine renewable technologies currently being piloted in UK waters. The group was accompanied by a number of industry stakeholders and also met representatives from marine energy firms based in Orkney and learnt about the work of the Orkney Island's Council in supporting this growing sector. The visit provided invaluable opportunities for networking and sharing of

ideas and received very positive feedback from attendees. The group continues to take a strong interest in the EU's Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan and reforms to the electricity market underway in the United Kingdom. In 2014, the subgroup will continue to focus on how Member Administrations can work together to maximise the opportunities which exist with this exciting new technology including a visit to Ireland to see new technologies being tested there.

The Council's Energy Grids subgroup met twice in 2013 and discussions were held on a number of related on-going initiatives, including the North Seas Countries' Offshore Grid Initiative, proposals for further grid interconnectors, the Memorandum of Understanding between the United Kingdom and Irish Governments on Energy Trading and reforms to the Great Britain electricity market. The group has particular interest in the Great Britain Electricity Market Reform (EMR) Delivery Plan.



Environment - Led by the UK Government



The Environment work sector is one of the longest standing work sectors having been established at the first Council Summit held in 1999 and in recognition of the trans-boundary nature of many environmental issues. The work sector continues to consider a wide range of issues from biodiversity to sustainable development.

In 2013, the work sector held a workshop on Non Native Species (see page 13 for further information) and continues to collaborate in this area.

A new focus for 2013 was on policy and approaches towards Sustainable Production and Consumption, which will form the bulk of the agenda of the next Ministerial to be held in the Isle of Man in late 2014. Officials have been active in sharing latest ideas, policies and best practice around this issue such as how to move towards a “Circular Economy” where economic growth is decoupled from natural resources constraints and the role of consumers in greener consumption.

“The work sector is looking at the barriers preventing a shift to a greener consumption.”

Housing - *Led by the Northern Ireland Executive*



The Housing work sector seeks to focus on sharing information, knowledge and best practice between Member Administrations in a number of areas including supply, funding and allocation of social housing and funding and delivery of affordable housing.

Please see the main feature on page 12 for information on the Ministerial meeting in this area held in October 2013.

Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages - Led by the Welsh Government



The work sector helps to identify and share best practice across the Member Administrations and amongst the nine IML communities within BIC Member Administrations.

Officials met in Edinburgh, Guernsey, and Jersey in 2013 to prepare for the November 2013 seminar (see page 12 for details), exchange information on recent development in all Administrations and begin practical preparations for the Autumn 2014 Ministerial meeting. The IML pages on the BIC website are now available in the languages used by the worksector.

Meetings for 2014 have been scheduled for Dublin and Cardiff to continue preparations for the ministerial including the early years and IML (developed in collaboration with the early years worksector) and a report from the Policy and Legislation seminar held in November 2013.

Above: The cast of critically acclaimed and commercially successful Welsh language/bilingual drama “Y Gwyll / Hinterland” The series, which has been sold internationally is a Friction Factory production for S4C and BBC Cymru Wales in partnership with Tinopolis, All3Media International and the Welsh Government. Picture used with permission.

“Introducing an IML in education is an opportunity to also teach heritage and culture to our young people.”

Misuse of Substances (Drugs & Alcohol) - Led by the Irish Government

Following the proposal submitted to the Misuse of Drugs Ministerial Meeting in June 2012, and the subsequent endorsement by the Council's Summit in Cardiff on 26th November 2012, the scope of the Misuse of Drugs work sector was expanded to cover misuse of alcohol. At that Summit, it was also agreed to change the name of the work sector to Misuse of Substances (Drugs and Alcohol) to reflect its new work remit.

This has been a positive development as a number of the Member Administrations have combined Drug and Alcohol Strategies. In addition, the extended remit of the group now allows for enhanced discussions around the issues of poly-substance use which is of major concern to all Member Administrations.

The Misuse of Substances work sector endeavours to cover a wide range of issues concerned with substance misuse in its annual work programme. Meetings are regularly attended by professionals and academics in the relevant field which greatly adds to the discussion. The ongoing regular contact between BIC Member Administrations on a range of drug related issues continues to contribute to broader co-operation and exchange of information across the Council's area.

There were two meetings of the Misuse of Substances Sectoral Group in 2013.

The first of these meetings was hosted by the Secretariat in Edinburgh in January 2013. Discussions focused largely on recovery from addiction and included presentations from the Scottish Recovery Consortium who looked at the issue from a practical on-the-ground perspective and the Scottish Government who shared their practices around developing policies to measure recovery.

A further meeting of the Group took place in London during October 2013. The Alcohol Policy meeting, focussed on developments in relation to the alcohol misuse policies and strategies of Member Administrations. The main theme of the Misuse of Drugs meeting, was New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). This is an issue that continues to be a significant problem for all jurisdictions.

The work sector will deliver a full Work Programme in 2014 which will also include a Ministerial meeting in Dublin.



Effects of Cannabis: Chest pain, irregular heartbeat, nausea, paranoia, confusion and agitation.

Our Member Administrations working together are given valuable early warning on emerging drugs trends.

Social Inclusion - *Led by the Scottish and Welsh Governments*

Social inclusion is about reducing barriers which may exist for people when accessing services or participating in the community.

The Ministerial meeting held in Cardiff in March 2012, recognised the very effective working relationship between Council Administrations on the social inclusion theme. Ministers asked for work to begin on a report about the issue of preventative spend, in particular in the context of an ageing population. Officials from Council Administrations have met five times since, most recently in London in November 2013.

Their focus is on the following key objectives:

- how to support independence and prevention of social exclusion amongst the population;
- how to identify effective care journeys as we age – focusing on those in need, at risk and in future need and their carers;

- looking at how effective care approaches can be mobilised to improve individual life journeys in the older population; and
- how we look at transitions to care and trigger points for entering social exclusion so the cycle of these triggers can be broken.

The meetings so far have focused on studying best practice in older peoples' policy in the various Administrations. These lessons learned will help inform the final report. As part of the recent Dublin meeting, a joint session was held with the Digital Inclusion work sector to examine how access to online services and activities can help reduce social isolation among older people as well as improve service delivery.

The report on preventative spend issues will be presented to the next Ministerial meeting in early 2015.



Transport - Led by the Northern Ireland Executive



Sustainable Transport Officials meeting in Dublin

The Transport work sector has two sub-groups which deal with accessible transport and sustainable transport issues.

The Transport work sector continues to consider the role of Smartcard Technology and journey planners to assist citizens to move more freely and easily between Member Administrations; the use and mutual recognition of Blue Badge Schemes; and promoting more sustainable modes of transport including strategies for ultra-low emission vehicles.

Officials from this work sector have met in Llandudno in February, in the Isle of Man in May and in Dublin in September. Administrations have agreed to develop papers on:

- opportunities to develop an integrated journey planning facility enabling passengers to plan travel by public

transport across two or more Member Administrations;

- opportunities to co-ordinate use of smart card technology for travel and identifying barriers that need to be overcome; and
- transport assistance for youth employment.

Officials also agreed to continue to share best practice and a range of reports and website information on issues of interest to the work sector, both at meetings and via the British-Irish Council extranet. Officials have also discussed each Member Administration’s approach to Bike Week, the possibility of tackling abuse of disabled parking bays and co-ordination of promotional events.



Funding - The running costs for January to December 2013 totalling £98,000 were shared between the eight Member Administrations using an agreed set formula. Costs for individual Secretariat staff are met by their parent administration as they are on loan to the Secretariat with the exception of the general office manager.



Secretariat greeting the Irish Ambassador and Consul General

For further information please see the website of the British-Irish Council at: www.britishirishcouncil.org

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You can also follow BIC on Twitter & Flickr:

twitter.com/BICSecretariat

www.flickr.com/photos/82474374@N03/

Main picture above - back row from left to right

1 Gill Waugh, Secretariat General Office Manager. **2** Jeremy Martin, Joint Head Secretariat, (UK Government). **3** H.E.Dan Mulhall Ambassador of Ireland to Britain. **4** Ciarán Byrne, Joint Head Secretariat, (Irish Government). **5** Pat Bourne, Consul General of Ireland. **6** Patrick Allan, Policy Officer, Scottish Government, leads on Misuse of Substances (Drugs & Alcohol), Energy (Electric Grids & Marine), Digital Inclusion and Demography. **Front row from left to right** **7** Gerard Bradley, Policy Officer, Northern Ireland Executive, leads on Social Inclusion, Spatial Planning, Transport (Accessible and Sustainable) and Housing. **8** Andrew Jones, Policy Officer, Welsh Government, leads on Environment, Early Years Policy, Creative Industries and Indigenous, minority and lesser-used languages.

The Secretariat has a cross-cutting function, which includes:

Supporting individual work sectors through preparing or commissioning relevant papers, taking minutes, advising on procedures, communications activities and providing logistical support where needed.

Supporting host Member Administrations in preparations for the biannual Summits through commissioning or preparing relevant papers, taking minutes, advising on procedures, communications activities, drafting communiqués and providing logistical support.

Supporting the Administrations' Senior Coordinators' Group through convening and chairing the meetings, preparing relevant papers and taking minutes.

Leading and facilitating internal and external communications, including amongst other issues, liaising with officials in each Member Administration, production of an annual report, production of a quarterly newsletter for officials and appropriate use of social media to publicise the work of the British-Irish Council.

Managing and enhancing relationships with key stakeholders including but not limited to officials in all Member Administrations, the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly and interested NGOs.

Advising on, and co-ordinating the scheduling of, all British-Irish Council meetings.

Communicating decisions of the British-Irish Council and monitoring their implementation.

Responding to media and general public queries related to the work of the British-Irish Council.

Ensuring proper accountability to the British-Irish Council and Administrations through the production of mid-year and annual reports which are presented to the BIC Summit meetings held biannually.

Carrying out such other tasks as the British-Irish Council may direct.

1. A British-Irish Council (BIC) will be established under a new British-Irish Agreement to promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands.
2. Membership of the British-Irish Council will comprise representatives of the British and Irish Governments, devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, when established, and, if appropriate, elsewhere in the United Kingdom, together with representatives of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.
3. The British-Irish Council will meet in different formats: at summit level, twice per year; in specific work sectors on a regular basis, with each side represented by the appropriate Minister; in an appropriate format to consider cross-work sector matters.
4. Representatives of members will operate in accordance with whatever procedures for democratic authority and accountability are in force in their respective elected institutions.
5. The British-Irish Council will exchange information, discuss, consult and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant Administrations. Suitable issues for early discussion in the British-Irish Council could include transport links, agricultural issues, environmental issues, cultural issues, health issues, education issues and approaches to EU issues. Suitable arrangements to be made for practical co-operation on agreed policies.
6. It will be open to the British-Irish Council to agree common policies or common actions. Individual members may opt not to participate in such common policies and common action.
7. The British-Irish Council normally will operate by consensus. In relation to decisions on common policies or common actions, including their means of implementation, it will operate by agreement of all members participating in such policies or actions.
8. The members of the British-Irish Council, on a basis to be agreed between them, will provide such financial support as it may require.
9. A Secretariat for the British-Irish Council will be provided by the British and Irish Governments in co-ordination with officials of each of the other members.
10. In addition to the structures provided for under this agreement, it will be open to two or more members to develop bilateral or multilateral arrangements between them. Such arrangements could include, subject to the agreement of the members concerned, mechanisms to enable consultation, co-operation and joint decision-making on matters of mutual interest; and mechanisms to implement any joint decisions they may reach. These arrangements will not require the prior approval of the British-Irish Council as a whole and will operate independently of it.
11. The elected institutions of the members will be encouraged to develop inter-parliamentary links, perhaps building on the British-Irish Inter-parliamentary Body.
12. The full membership of the British-Irish Council will keep under review the workings after the Agreement comes into effect, and will contribute as appropriate to any review of the overall political agreement arising from the multiparty negotiations.



Ring of Brodgar, Orkney Islands, Scotland



The Peace Bridge, Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland

