



Inaugural Summit – London – 17th December 1999

The British-Irish Council established under the Good Friday Agreement held its inaugural summit meeting today in London. The British and Irish Governments were represented by the Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair MP, who also chaired the meeting and by the Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD.

The devolved administrations were represented by The Rt Hon Donald Dewar MP, MSP, First Minister, Scottish Executive; The Rt Hon Alun Michael, JP, MP, AM, First Secretary of the National Assembly for Wales; The Rt Hon David Trimble MP, MLA First Minister, and Mr Seamus Mallon, MP, MLA, Deputy First Minister, Northern Ireland Executive Committee.

The Isle of Man was represented by Hon. Donald Gelling MHK, Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Government; Jersey was represented by Senator Pierre Horsfall, President of the States of Jersey Policy and Resources Committee; and Guernsey was represented by Conseiller Laurie Morgan, President of the States of Guernsey Advisory and Finance Committee.

A full list of delegation members is attached.

The British-Irish Council will be a forum for its members to exchange information, discuss, consult and endeavour to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within their respective competencies.

The members of the Council were agreed that its establishment was an important step in the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, and would serve to promote the further development of the network of relationships between the peoples they represent. The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister expressed their confidence that the Council would build on the excellent working relationship which the two Governments have long enjoyed. The establishment of the British-Irish Council was particularly appropriate now, in view of the opportunities presented both by the new environment created by the Good Friday Agreement, and the advent of extensive devolution in the UK.

At its first meeting the Council agreed a Memorandum on its working procedures. It adopted an initial list of issues for early discussion in the BIC and also decided which administrations would take the lead in each sectoral area:

Topic	Lead Administration
Drugs	Irish Government
Social Inclusion	Scottish Executive and Cabinet of National Assembly for Wales
Environment	British Government
Transport	Northern Ireland Executive Committee
Knowledge Economy	Jersey

In addition, the Council agreed an indicative list of other issues suitable for the Council's work, including areas which members are already taking forward bilaterally:

- agricultural issues such as plant quarantine; rural development and rural depopulation; the

development of renewable raw materials and energy crops; salmon fisheries; sea fisheries and aquaculture;

- health issues;
- regional issues: including links between cities, towns and local districts;
- consideration of interparliamentary links (noting paragraph 11 of the Memorandum on Procedural Guidance);
- energy issues;
- cultural issues;
- tourism;
- sporting activity;
- education issues;
- approaches to EU issues;
- minority and lesser-used languages;
- prison and probation issues.

The Council agreed to hold its next summit in Dublin in June 2000 and further agreed that that meeting would focus on the issue of drugs.

British Irish Council

17 December 1999

List of Delegates

British Government Delegation	
Prime Minister	The Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	The Rt Hon Peter Mandelson MP
Minister, Northern Ireland Office	George Howarth MP
Irish Government Delegation	
Taoiseach	Bertie Ahern TD
Tánaiste	Mary Harney TD
Minister for Foreign Affairs	David Andrews TD
Minister for Justice	John O'Donoghue TD
Northern Ireland	
First Minister	The Rt Hon David Trimble MP MLA
Deputy First Minister	Seamus Mallon MP MLA
Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Sir Reg Empey MLA
Minister for Finance and Personnel	Mark Durkan MLA
Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Bairbre de Brún MLA
Scotland	
First Minister	The Rt Hon Donald Dewar MP MSP
Deputy First Minister	Jim Wallace MP MSP
Permanent Secretary	Muir Russell
Wales	
First Secretary	The Rt Hon Alun Michael JP MP AM
Assembly Business Secretary	Andrew Davies AM
Finance Secretary	Edwina Hart MBE AM
Isle of Man	
Chief Minister	Hon Donald Gelling MHK
Chief Secretary	Fred Kissack
Jersey	
President, Policy and Resources Committee	Senator Pierre Horsfall
Chief Executive, Policy and Resources Committee	John Mills
Guernsey	
President, Advisory and Finance Committee	Conseiller Laurie Morgan
Chief Executive, Advisory and Finance Committee	Mike Brown