



Summit Meeting – Dublin – 13th January 2012

The British-Irish Council established under the Agreement reached in Belfast on Good Friday, 1998, held its seventeenth summit meeting today, hosted by the Irish Government in Dublin Castle.

The heads of delegations were welcomed by An Taoiseach, Mr. Enda Kenny TD. The British Government was led by the UK Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP. The Scottish Government was led by First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MSP. The Welsh Government was led by the First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM. The Northern Ireland Executive delegation was led by the First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Peter Robinson MLA, and the deputy First Minister, Mr. Martin McGuinness MP MLA. The Government of Jersey was led by the Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Minister of the Home Department, Deputy Geoff Mahy and the Isle of Man Government delegation was led by Chief Minister, Hon. Allan Bell MHK.

A full list of delegation members is attached.

The British-Irish Council (BIC) provides valuable opportunities in creating forums for the purpose of cooperation on east-west issues by way of exchanging information, consulting on best practices and discussing matters of mutual interest between each of the Member Administrations.

Youth Unemployment

The Council discussed youth unemployment and outlined the related challenges in their respective administrations. Noting the common challenges and the factors which influence the rise of youth unemployment, the Council explored policy implications for each Member Administration in dealing with this problem. Heads of Administration shared details of the initiatives which they had introduced to reduce youth unemployment levels within respective administrations. The Council agreed to continue to focus on youth unemployment, to explore how best this might be advanced through the BIC, and that the impact of initiatives in respect of youth unemployment be reported on at the next meeting of the Council in Scotland.

Misuse of Drugs: Recovery from Problem Drug Use

The Council welcomed the discussion paper on Recovery from Problem Drug Use. Policy Ministers discussed drug treatment measures and strategies that have been put in place in each administration to facilitate the path of recovery. The Council noted that a more ambitious approach was needed involving individual care plans and inter-agency working to better address the holistic needs of clients. The Council also noted the Misuse of Drugs workstream's commitment to include a renewed focus on recovery from drug dependence in any future Drugs Strategies, with a view to maximising the potential for individuals to access the social, economic and cultural benefits of life. The Council agreed that Member Administrations will actively encourage the renewed focus on recovery and will work together to evaluate and share successful approaches.

BIC Standing Secretariat

The Council welcomed the establishment of the Standing Secretariat in Edinburgh, which became operational as of the 4th January 2012. The Council noted the forward workplan of the Standing Secretariat, including the completion of actions needed to reach full capability and a review of existing workstream activities with a view to producing a draft BIC Strategic Business Plan for approval at the Scotland Summit in June 2012.

Update on Work Sectors

The Council noted the good progress and work of each of the eleven sectoral groups of the BIC based upon the following reports:

Collaborative Spatial Planning

The Collaborative Spatial Planning sectoral workstream brings together officials responsible for regional development strategies, national planning strategies and frameworks in each Member Administration. To date the workstream has considered how Administrations could work together for mutual benefit through a more collaborative approach to strategic spatial planning on issues which cross over boundaries. The group has also considered changes to European Union spatial policy objectives and the work of European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON). The workstream will continue to work to support Scotland and Ireland in a bid to ESPON for research into spatial planning indicators and best practice in strategy implementation. The group also considers it important to continue sharing experience on the delivery of its respective strategic spatial plans or frameworks.

Demography

The Demography workstream have continued to focus on understanding the implications of wider student flows amongst the BIC Member Administrations. The group has collated available evidence on statistics and policies relating to student flows in each of the BIC Administrations and is currently preparing a paper which will be considered by Ministers.

Digital Inclusion

The Digital Inclusion workstream has continued to focus on developing a body of knowledge and best practice around programmes to support digital inclusion; understanding the links between digital inclusion and public sector cost savings; identifying and sharing cost effective ways to encourage and facilitate more widespread engagement of those who are digitally excluded; and sharing common statistics and other relevant information.

A recent meeting included Member Administrations sharing statistics from their respective administrations and identification of common themes. The importance of putting together a calendar of all nation 'digital inclusion' events was also recognised, to allow best practice to be shared and potentially reduce duplication of work.

Early Years Policy

The Early Years Policy officials' workgroup met in October 2011 to turn their focus to Evaluation, which was the fourth strand of work endorsed by Ministers in February 2009. The group consulted on best practice in assessing whether policy interventions were delivering effective outcomes and getting best value for money. The group was also provided a study visit of Gurnos Nursery School in Merthyr Tydfil and its provision of the Welsh Government's Flying Start scheme and delivery of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Energy

The Energy sectoral workstream focuses on two areas: Electricity Grid Infrastructure and Marine Renewables. The Electricity Grid aspect of the group is led by the UK whilst the Marine Renewables aspect is led by Scotland.

Electricity Grid Infrastructure

Following the successful endorsement of the All Islands Approach (AIA) from the Council at the sixteenth Summit in London, officials from the Department of Energy and Climate Change have been developing draft 'Workstream Delivery Plans' with milestones. These plans have been agreed with the Irish Government (who jointly lead each of the four AIA workstreams), and with other BIC members, following which roles and responsibilities will be agreed with BIC members. Progress in each of the AIA workstreams will be monitored by the BIC Electricity Grid workgroup.

Marine Renewables

The Energy Marine Renewables Sub-Group continues to share best practice around research and development, policy support and marine environment activities.

Following the BIC Summit in Guernsey in June 2010, BIC Energy Ministers jointly wrote to the EU Energy Commissioner Oettinger in August 2010 to promote the work being taken forward by Member Administrations in the area of Marine Renewables. The letter included a request for Commission officials to engage with BIC officials to consider what support the EU could offer to the further development of this sector. The BIC Marine Energy group is working collaboratively with the EU Ocean Energy Association and Marine Energy Interest Group to achieve shared goals of increasing the profile of marine renewables with the European Commission and adoption within the Strategic Energy Technology Plan.

Environment

The Environment workstream continues to look at ways in which Governments; agencies and researchers across the BIC Member Administrations can work together to improve their collective understanding of our impacts on the environment and the environment's impact on us. Environment Ministers from all Member Administrations have agreed that these meetings give a synergy to cross-jurisdiction working, and provide an ideal opportunity for Ministerial colleagues to understand each others' agendas and priorities.

The Environment workstream are preparing for their next Ministerial meeting which will be taking place in Scotland in 2012. Ministers agreed that the theme of the meeting will be Biodiversity.

Housing

The Housing workstream held its second Ministerial meeting at St Mary's University College in Belfast on 16 February 2011. The meeting was chaired by Alex Attwood MLA, the then Minister for Social Development. Ministers discussed a paper which detailed progress made in each BIC Member Administration to deliver their housing obligations as agreed at the previous BIC Ministerial meeting held in December 2009. Ministers welcomed the work which had been undertaken by the workgroup and agreed that it was important to continue to share and exchange information and best practice as Administrations move forward their own work in this area.

Indigenous, Minority and Lesser Used Languages

The Indigenous, Minority and Lesser Used Languages workstream held their second Ministerial meeting on 11 November 2011 in Donegal, Ireland. Ministers reviewed the work achieved by the workstream since the previous Ministerial meeting and agreed on the group's future work programme. The group will continue its work in the areas of education, young people, broadcasting, and the economic context of indigenous, minority and lesser used languages. The group will also focus on two new areas: marketing and ICT (social networking in particular).

Misuse of Drugs

Since the sixteenth Summit, BIC Misuse of Drugs meetings have included a presentation on the Review of Ireland's Opioid Treatment Protocol. This presentation outlined the history of opiate substitution in Ireland, the development of the first set of national protocols, and how the opiate situation has changed in Ireland since those initial protocols were developed; as well as the key findings of the review and their ongoing implementation. A more recent meeting included two presentations from Northern Ireland: the first presented findings from a longitudinal research project of adolescents; and the second presented the impact measurement tool developed by Northern Ireland to measure the impact of their National Drugs Strategy. The workstream have also provided the discussion paper 'Recovery from Problem Drug Use' which has been discussed at today's BIC Summit meeting in Dublin.

Social Inclusion

The Social Inclusion workstream continues to make good progress on the objectives set by Ministers for Social Inclusion at their 26 March 2010 Ministerial meeting. Those objectives centered on: how the third sector working together can make communities more sustainable and socially cohesive; how can wider civil activity be enabled; and how can the third sector be enabled to become part of the mainstream in service delivery.

Recent meetings provided group members with the opportunities to discuss with key participants and stakeholders from the third sector, how Ministers' objectives were being developed in Guernsey and Scotland.

The group is in the process of preparing a report for their next Ministerial meeting in March 2012. Video footage to accompany the final report is being developed. This will show what kind of work and projects the third sector is involved in across the Member Administrations.

Transport

The Accessible Transport sub-group has considered improving accessible travel information by developing a common webpage which provides a range of information for disabled people travelling from one administration area to another. Member Administrations are currently producing and testing their webpage with people with disabilities. Two papers have been drafted by the Accessible Transport sub-group for the main transport committee: 1) Development of Web Based Travel information for People With Disabilities and 2) Mutual Recognition of Concessionary Fares. The main Transport Workgroup meeting is planned to be held early 2012 to discuss accessible and sustainable transport issues across the eight administrations.

Date and Location of the Next Summit Meeting

The Council noted that the next BIC Summit in June 2012 will be hosted by Scotland.

Minutes of the 16th Summit Meeting

The minutes of the sixteenth Summit meeting held in London on 20 June 2011 were approved by the Council.

AOB

The Council considered the issue of formal links with the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.

Communiqué

Agreed

BIC Secretariat
13 January 2012

List of Delegates

Irish Government	
An Taoiseach	Mr. Enda Kenny TD
Minister for Health	Dr. James Reilly TD
Minister of State at the Department of Health	Ms. Róisín Shortall TD
British Government	
Deputy Prime Minister	Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Rt. Hon. Owen Paterson MP
Scottish Government	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs	Ms. Fiona Hyslop MSP
Minister for Youth Employment	Ms. Angela Constance MSP
Welsh Government	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM
Minister for Local Government and Communities	Mr. Carl Sargeant AM
Northern Ireland Executive	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Peter D Robinson MLA
deputy First Minister	Mr. Martin McGuinness MP MLA
Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Mr. Edwin Poots MLA
Minister of the Environment	Mr. Alex Attwood MLA
States of Jersey	
Chief Minister	Senator Ian Gorst
Assistant Chief Minister	Senator Sir Philip Bailhache
States of Guernsey	
Minister, Home Department	Deputy Geoff Mahy
Minister, Commerce and Employment	Deputy Carla McNulty Bauer
Government of the Isle of Man	
Chief Minister	Hon. Allan Bell MHK
Minister for Home Affairs	Hon. Juan Watterson MHK