



# British-Irish COUNCIL

## COMMUNIQUÉ

### **13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial meeting of the Environment work sector 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

The British-Irish Council Environment work sector held its thirteenth Ministerial meeting, hosted by the Government of the Isle of Man, at the Sefton Hotel, Douglas today. The meeting focussed on sustainable consumption and production, in particular the development of the circular economy and tackling barriers to green consumption.

The British-Irish Council, established under the Agreement reached in the Multi-Party Negotiation in Belfast in 1998, is a forum for its 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 relevant Member Administrations.

The Government of the Isle of Man was represented by Hon Richard Ronan MHK Minister for Environment, Food & Agriculture; the Irish Government was represented by Mr David Walsh, Assistant Secretary, Department for the Environment, Community and Local Government; the Scottish Government was represented by Callum Blackburn, Policy Manager- Circular Economy, Rural Affairs and the Environment; the Welsh Government was represented by Dr Andy Rees; the Northern Ireland Executive was represented by Mark H Durkan MLA, Minister for the Environment and Jonathan Bell MLA Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister; the Government of Jersey was represented by Willie Pegge, Director for Environment / Deputy Chief Officer – Department of the Environment; the Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Yvonne Burford, Minister for the Environment Department; the UK Government was represented by Dan Rogerson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Water, Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

## **Circular Economy**

Ministers discussed the development of the circular economy taking place in each BIC jurisdiction and by the European Union. Jamie Butterworth from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation provided a presentation to the Ministers including their research which indicated transitioning to a more 'circular' economic model could bring significant benefits, help to buffer future materials price increases and volatility, reduce material costs and restore natural capital. Such an approach could also make economies less dependent on raw materials, and thus less dependent on price volatility and supply chain risks.

Ministers noted the definition of the circular economy used by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation:

“The circular economy is a generic term for an economy that is regenerative by design. Materials flows are of two types, biological materials, designed to re-enter the biosphere, and technical materials, designed to circulate with minimal loss of quality, in turn entraining the shift towards an economy ultimately powered by renewable energy.”

Ministers agreed to work together to explore the potential of extending coverage of voluntary agreements both across different industries and across different BIC jurisdictions. Ministers agreed it would be useful for Member Administrations to continue sharing best practice and to work together on the potential to develop tools and data sets to measure progress in moving towards a circular economy.

## **Tackling Barriers to Green Consumption**

Ministers shared best practice and challenges on promoting green consumption faced in their jurisdiction. They also considered international evidence such as the Rio Earth Summit +20 conference held in June 2012 when Heads of State and Government adopted a 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns and work by the European Union to improve the availability of reliable and comparable information on the environmental performance of products.

They acknowledged the challenges faced by consumers over the quality of information given, availability of green products and “greenwashing” claims, and noted behavioural barriers to increasing uptake of “green” products, as well as information failures. They considered the need for better information for consumers as well as encouraging business to recognise the opportunities from reducing the lifestyle impacts of their products and assisting consumer choice. Ministers appreciated that retailers were in a powerful position to influence more sustainable consumption throughout their operations and supply chains and noted the work done to date by retailers and other stakeholders.

Ministers agreed to further share information and data on consumer behaviour and explore the possibility of adopting green guidance schemes as already in place in some BIC jurisdictions.

### **Invasive Non-Native Species**

Following on from the 12<sup>th</sup> BIC Environment Ministerial held in Scotland in 2012, Ministers reaffirmed the threats posed to BIC jurisdiction ecosystems from Invasive Non-Native Species. They noted that new EU regulations on Alien and Invasive Non-Native Species were due to come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 and agreed to continue collaboration and cooperation between all BIC Member Administrations, including a holding second workshop in early 2015.

### **Sellafield**

Ministers noted that Sellafield had been raised at every ministerial meeting since the establishment of the work sector in 2000 and further noted the paper produced jointly by Ireland and the Isle of Man on their concerns on the Sellafield site, This brings this long standing action point to a conclusion.

Ministers welcomed the improvement in British – Irish relationships over the years which had led to greater information sharing on Sellafield between the governments of UK, Ireland and Isle of Man. As a result of these on-going productive working relationships which have also been facilitated by the British-Irish Council, Ministers agreed that further information sharing surrounding Sellafield could be left to the three relevant Member Administrations to pursue at a trilateral level outside of BIC.

### **Future hosts and Themes**

Ministers agreed that the 14th ministerial meeting will be hosted by the Government of Guernsey in 2016 focused on Waste and include an update on biosecurity.

### **BIC Secretariat**

**BRITISH-IRISH COUNCIL  
ENVIRONMENT WORK SECTOR**

**Isle of Man Government**

Hon Richard Ronan MHK, Minister for Environment, Food & Agriculture

**Irish Government**

David Walsh, Assistant Secretary, Department for the Environment, Community and Local Government

**UK Government**

Dan Rogerson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Water, Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

**Welsh Government**

Dr Andy Rees, Head of Waste Strategy, Welsh Government

**Northern Ireland Executive**

Mark H Durkan MLA, Minister for the Environment  
Jonathan Bell MLA, Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister;

**Scottish Government**

**Callum Blackburn** Policy Manager Circular Economy, Department for Rural Affairs and the Environment

**Government of Guernsey**

Deputy Yvonne Burford, Minister for the Environment Department

**Government of Jersey**

Willie Peggie, Director for Environment / Deputy Chief Officer – Department of the Environment