



British - Irish COUNCIL

COMMUNIQUÉ

Ministerial Meeting of the Sectoral Group on Environment 7 September 2012

The British-Irish Council Environment Sectoral Group held its twelfth Ministerial meeting, hosted by the Scottish Government, at the Vogrie Country Park, Midlothian today. The meeting focused on Biodiversity and covered strategies, awareness campaigns, managing invasive species, ecosystems approach, public engagement and strategies used to monitor and survey habitats and species. Prior to the meeting Ministers took part in a 'BioBlitz' with local school children to gather information and boost records of species in Vogrie Country Park.

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 Irish Government was represented by Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; The Scottish Government was represented by Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change; The Welsh Government was represented by John Griffiths AM, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development; The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by Alex Attwood MLA, Minister for the Environment and Junior Minister Jonathan Bell, MLA; The States of Jersey was represented by Deputy Robert Duhamel, Minister for Planning and Environment; The States of Guernsey was represented by Roger Domaille Minister for the Environment Department; The Isle of Man Government was represented by Phil Gawne MHK, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture; The UK Government was represented by Jeremy Eppel, Deputy Director for International Biodiversity and Evidence, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Biodiversity Strategies and Monitoring

Ministers discussed the development of biodiversity policy and delivery mechanisms for dealing with invasive species across Member Administrations. Ministers also noted the opportunity to share the outcome of current pilots which are looking at practical tools and resources for the delivery of ecosystem services based on the findings of the UK National Ecosystem Assessment.

Ministers welcomed the news that as a result of the British-Irish Council, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) would be enhancing the existing network to allow the Channel Islands to share their monitoring and surveillance data with the wider society through the National Biodiversity Network Gateway (NBN) and that this work had been brought forward and would be in place by October 2012.

Mechanisms for Managing Non-Native Species and Awareness Campaigns

Ministers recognised the threat that invasive species pose to the island ecosystems which make up the British-Irish Council membership. Following the presentation by Great Britain's Non-Native Species Secretariat, Ministers discussed existing awareness campaigns, how to improve monitoring, warning systems and risk assessment across British-Irish Council Member Administrations and the potential for an expert meeting in the run-up to the anticipated EU Directive.

Sellafield

Ministers received a verbal update from the UK Government on Sellafield and agreed that this would be discussed at a future meeting of the Council.

Future Hosts and Themes

Ministers agreed that the next Ministerial meeting will be hosted by the Isle of Man Government and the theme for this meeting will be Sustainable Consumption and Production, for example marine spatial planning.

Conclusions

Ministers welcomed the continued close co-operation between Member Administrations on environmental issues and asked officials to keep the Council updated on biodiversity issues and ecosystem approaches .

**BIC Secretariat
7 September 2012**

BRITISH-IRISH COUNCIL (ENVIRONMENT GROUP)

List of Delegates

Scottish Government

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Irish Government

Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Welsh Government

John Griffiths AM, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development

Northern Ireland Executive

Alex Attwood MLA, Minister for the Environment

Junior Minister Jonathan Bell, MLA

States of Jersey

Deputy Robert Duhamel, Minister for Planning and Environment

States of Guernsey

Roger Domaille Minister for the Environment Department

Government of the Isle of Man

Phil Gawne MHK, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture

UK Government

Jeremy Eppel, Deputy Director for International Biodiversity and Evidence