



8 Member Administrations



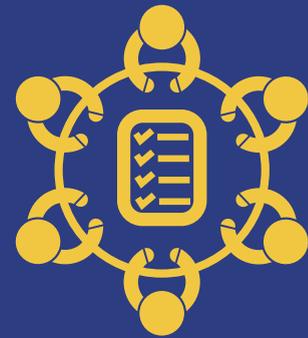
The British-Irish Council

The BIC is one of the three institutions established as part of the Multi-Party Agreement reached in Belfast in 1998 representing the east-west dimension of relations in these islands.

It is a unique forum for engagement on matters of mutual interest.

The permanent BIC Secretariat was established in Edinburgh in January 2012 staffed by officials from BIC member administrations.

45 Official Meetings
4 Ministerial Meetings



11 Work Sectors

Social Inclusion 01	Environment 02	Transport 03
Energy 04	Misuse of Substances 05	Creative Industries 06
Indigenous & Minority Languages 07	Digital Inclusion 08	Spatial Planning 09
Housing 10	Early Years Policy 11	

2 Heads of Administration Summits

Summits 2018

- Guernsey (June)
- Isle of Man (November)

30 Over 30 Summits

The Council held its inaugural meeting in December 1999, since then there have been over 30 Summits

On behalf of the British-Irish Council, the Secretariat is pleased to present our Annual Report for 2018/2019.

The period covered by this report (January 2018 – March 2019) has been a particularly active one for the Council, and the Secretariat has in turn been busy in our supportive role. The British-Irish Council met at Summit level twice in 2018: in June the Heads of Administration met in Guernsey, where the Summit theme was the marine environment, with a collective focus on ways to work together to improve the health of our shared seas. In November, the second Summit of 2018 was held on the Isle of Man, with a thematic focus on improving levels of digital inclusion on these islands. Additionally, BIC Ministers met four times in this period, to discuss a range of common issues, including our shared environment; energy cooperation; and on the issue of social inclusion, considering how to support unpaid carers in our communities. Further to this, the Secretariat also supported 45 official level meetings hosted at locations across the eight BIC administrations which took place between the eleven work sectors of the Council.

In addition to our usual engagement at Ministerial and official level, we have also this year employed new ways to engage on the work of the Council in some sectors. Following a focus on marine environment issues at the Guernsey Summit, in February 2019 a BIC Marine Litter Symposium was held in Glasgow which saw over 130 external stakeholders from all eight Member Administrations engage with BIC Environment Ministers on problems and potential solutions to the pressing issue of marine litter. These stakeholders also took part in workshops to identify next steps for collaboration which will be put before the Council for consideration.

We were also delighted to welcome Young Ambassadors from across the BIC administrations, ensuring they had an opportunity to lend their voices on this key issue and directly affect the work of the Council.

As we look forward to the year ahead, December 2019 will mark the 20th anniversary of the Council and it would be an understatement to say that much has changed on these islands since our inaugural meeting in 1999. Technological, societal and political developments during these years have impacted us all and the challenge of responding to these changes has underlined the importance of the British-Irish Council as a forum to allow its members to share views and strengthen relationships at official and Ministerial level. The Secretariat itself has seen considerable staff changes in the last 12 months but ends the financial year with a full staff complement and newly approved Secretariat Strategic Business Plan for 2018-20 which will allow the Secretariat to continue to explore how to enhance the work of the British-Irish Council in the coming years.

The next Summit will be hosted by the UK Government and we look forward to another busy and productive year ahead.



BIC Secretariat Joint Heads - Jerry O'Donovan (l) and Tereasa Bell (r)



Family photo of Ministers at the 30th British-Irish Council Summit in Guernsey

Guernsey, 22 June 2018

The 30th British-Irish Council Summit was hosted in Guernsey by the Chief Minister of Guernsey, Deputy Gavin St Pier. This was the fourth Summit hosted by the Government of Guernsey since the Council was established. On behalf of the Council the Chief Minister also welcomed Senator John Le Fondré, Chief Minister of Jersey, who was attending his first British-Irish Council Summit.

Latest political developments

The Council received an update on engagements between the two governments and the parties in Northern Ireland. The Council looked forward to the restoration of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the Council and its role in promoting harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships across these islands as set out in the 1998 Agreement. Ministers recognised the importance of respecting these complex, long-established and formal relationships, which are of increasing importance at this time of significant change. The Council agreed that political developments across Member Administrations underlined

the importance of this unique forum to share views and strengthen relationships.

Ministers also updated the Council on their activity in relation to the UK's exit from the European Union (EU), particularly with reference to relations and engagement between Member Administrations. The Council reviewed themes identified in previous discussions, including specific topics such as: agriculture, agri-food and fisheries industries, economy and trade, free movement of goods and people, the Common Travel Area, relations with the EU and transition/implementation.

Marine Environment

Ministers with particular responsibility for the marine environment policy met in advance of the Summit meeting to consider a paper prepared by the Council's Environment work sector. Ministers discussed a series of issues linked to the marine environment such as tackling marine litter, marine biodiversity and Marine Protected Areas, and how to address ocean acidification. This discussion was taken forward by Heads of Administration in the Summit who reflected on how these issues collectively impact the marine environment of our islands. They directed the BIC Environment work sector and any other relevant officials working with the Council to prioritise areas for collaboration over the coming months. In addition, Ministers agreed to hold an event in early 2019 to ensure meaningful and swift action is taken to tackle marine litter

in the waters around these islands and signal the upmost importance of this issue. The impact of this event and the collaboration associated with it will be reported back to the Heads of Administration at a Summit in the near future.



Review of Work Sectors

Ministers and officials across the Council's Member Administrations have been engaged in a review of the Council, including its work sectors, following a mandate from the Council at the Dublin Summit in June 2015. They agreed that the measures adopted as part of this review have brought practical and positive change to the work sectors as evidenced in an increase in outputs and the strengthened ability of the Council to shape its activity to respond to shifting priorities.

The Council asked that Senior Coordinators and the Secretariat continue to consolidate feedback from the review and identify opportunities for developing the Council's work and processes further, reporting to Ministers as appropriate. It was agreed that a number of new working methods would be formally incorporated into the Secretariat's draft of a new multi-year Business Plan.





Family photo of Ministers at the 31st British-Irish Council Summit in the Isle of Man.

Isle of Man, 09 November 2018

The 31st BIC Summit was hosted on the Isle of Man where the Heads of Administration were welcomed to the Island by the Chief Minister, Howard Quayle MHK. In addition to welcoming first time attendees to the Council, the Chief Minister paid tribute to the First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones AM, who attended his eighteenth and final British-Irish Council Summit.

Latest political developments

Five months on from the Council's last meeting in Guernsey, Ministers took the opportunity to consider key political developments across their jurisdictions and provide an overview of domestic developments. Ministers underlined the importance of the Council and its role in promoting harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships across these islands as set out in the 1998 Agreement.

The Council agreed that political developments underlined the importance of this forum to exchange views and strengthen relationships across Member Administrations. The Council received an update on engagements in Northern

Ireland and looked forward to the restoration of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

The Council shared updates on activity in relation to the UK's exit from the European Union (EU), particularly with reference to engagement between Member Administrations. They discussed the importance of maintaining the constitutional and formal relationships across the United Kingdom and the Crown Dependencies. The Council engaged on topics including the economy and trade, free movement of goods and people, the Common Travel Area and ongoing relations with the EU.

Digital Inclusion

Ministers with particular responsibility for digital inclusion met in advance of the Summit meeting to consider a paper prepared by the Council's Digital Inclusion work sector. Ministers noted that, whilst recent evidence has shown that more people are getting online than ever before, there remained key barriers which prevent people from taking their first step online, including issues of accessibility, digital skills, and motivation. To address these, Ministers discussed future challenges and identified the new priority issue of online safety for the Digital Inclusion work sector in addition to existing issues including digital rights, digital skills & literacy and partnership working between the BIC administrations.

Secretariat Business Plan

Ministers acknowledged that new working methods had been incorporated into the Secretariat's draft of a new multi-year Strategic Business Plan for the period 2018-20 which was reviewed and approved by the Council. In approving the Business Plan, the Council asked the Secretariat to continue to explore how to enhance the work of the British-Irish Council moving forward.



Environment

led by the UK Government, Dublin, 23 March 2018

The British-Irish Council Environment work sector held its 15th Ministerial meeting in March 2018, hosted by the Irish Government at Farmleigh House. Ministers were welcomed by Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten TD, on behalf of the Irish Government. The Environment work sector is led by the UK Government and has proved a constructive and unique forum for facilitating evidence exchange and practical collaboration since the Council was first established. The meeting, chaired by Lord Gardiner from the UK Government, focused on how the administrations can work together on climate adaptation, address Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and approach the issues of food waste and recycling.

The Welsh Government was represented by Hannah Blythyn AM, Minister for Environment. The Isle of Man Government was represented by Geoffrey Boot MHK, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture. The Government of Jersey was represented by Deputy Steve Luce, Minister for the Department of the Environment. Senior officials observed on behalf of the Scottish Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Government of Guernsey.

Climate Change Adaptation

Ministers discussed the observed and projected impacts of climate change including increases in average temperature, changes in precipitation patterns, sea level rise and changes in the frequency and character of weather extremes such as storms. Ministers noted that the sectors amongst the most likely to be impacted by climate change include Critical Infrastructure, Agriculture and Forestry, Water Services, Marine and Fisheries, Biodiversity, and Habitats and Health. Ministers recognised that given our shared geographic location and climatic influences, some impacts such as extreme weather events, are likely to affect Member Administrations simultaneously.

Ministers emphasised that all Member Administrations must take appropriate adaptation measures to deal with unavoidable climate impacts and their economic, environmental and social costs, noting that addressing immediate and long term climate risks and related impacts is an ongoing priority for all administrations as reflected in their continued commitment to the Paris Agreement and to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

It was agreed by Ministers that these shared challenges offer significant potential for cooperation in terms of sharing information and best practice across the administrations

and that the possibilities for better coordinated and co-funded research should be examined. There was agreement that the private sector, local government, communities and civil society all have a key role to play in increasing climate resilience and all administrations are committed to sharing their experiences on supporting and engaging these sectors. The paper prepared by the work sector on the topic of adaptation to climate change can be viewed on the British-Irish Council website: www.britishirishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/communiqu%C3%A9s/15th%20BIC%20Environmental%20Ministerial%20Climate%20Adaptation%20paper.pdf



Invasive Non-Native Species

Following on from the 14th BIC Environment Ministerial, held in Guernsey in 2016, Ministers reaffirmed the threats posed to their respective ecosystems from Invasive Non-Native Species. They welcomed the continued collaboration between all BIC Member Administrations including the workshop in Edinburgh in 2017 for those working on this issue.

Acknowledging the importance of raising awareness, Ministers launched Invasive Species Week - coordinated for the first time across all the BIC Administrations. They noted the vital importance of prevention, particularly for aquatic species, agreeing to promote the *Check Clean Dry* aquatic biosecurity campaign including at key ports and

airports. To further enhance co-operation Ministers from Ireland and the UK have agreed to pursue the listing of Ponto-Caspian species on the EU Regional list and to strive to bring in countries on the near Continent to reduce the risk of invasion of these highly invasive species. Ministers also agreed to enhanced cooperation on some key invasive species including muntjac deer and the carpet sea-squirt – *Didemnum vexillum*.

Ministers accepted an offer from Jersey to host a technical workshop for BIC officials on the issue of Asian hornets in September 2018.

Food Waste and Recycling

Ministers noted the collaboration by the work sector since the Guernsey Ministerial meeting in sharing best practice in tackling food waste and promoting recycling. This included a workshop on tackling food waste at the Welsh Government Offices in London where officials shared expertise and policy developments on national targets,

consumer food waste in the home and redistribution of surplus food. The workshop also proposed challenges and solutions surrounding secondary materials markets for recycling. The group have identified next steps and further collaboration of recycling is envisaged going forward.

Future work

Ministers agreed that the 16th Ministerial meeting will be hosted in 2020 and that the key focus of the BIC Environment work sector going forward would be marine environment.



Social Inclusion

led by the Governments of Wales & Scotland, Edinburgh, 20 April 2018

The BIC Social Inclusion work sector held its 7th Ministerial meeting in April 2018, hosted by the Scottish Government at New Register House, Edinburgh. Ministers adopted an important report entitled *Caring for our Carers: Supporting unpaid carers in the British-Irish Council Administrations*.

The meeting was jointly chaired by Aileen Campbell MSP, Minister for Public Health and Sport in the Scottish Government and Huw Irranca-Davies AM, Minister for Children & Social Care in the Welsh Government. The UK Government was represented by Caroline Dinenage MP, Minister of State for Health & Social Care. The Irish

Government was represented by Minister Jim Daly TD, Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People. The Isle of Man Government was represented by Minister David Ashford MHK, Minister for Health & Social Care. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Jane Stephens, Member of the Policy & Resources Committee, and the Government of Jersey was represented by Senator Paul Routier MBE, Assistant Chief Minister. An official observer attended on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive.

Caring for our Carers

In March 2015, Social Inclusion Ministers confirmed their interest in the issue of carers and tasked the work sector officials, working closely with the Secretariat, to consider how best to support carers by looking at best practice, new and creative policy responses and community actions across the BIC administrations. Ministers discussed and reviewed the report entitled *Caring for our Carers: Supporting unpaid carers in the British-Irish Council Administrations*, prepared by the BIC Social Inclusion work sector who visited Member Administrations to research the different approaches to tackling this area of mutual interest. In reviewing the report and as part of wider discussions, Ministers considered policy areas related to carers such as identifying carers; supporting young carers; supporting older carers; supporting bereaved carers; and supporting carers through the promotion of caring skills, self-care and technology-enabled care (TEC).

Ministers thanked the many voluntary and community organisations in each of the BIC administrations for their active engagement in the preparation of the report and for providing site visits and presentations to officials throughout the duration of the carers topic of this work sector. Ministers commended the report as a demonstrable output of the new task and finish approach agreed at the

Glasgow Summit in 2016, and as a further rich contribution to the shared learning that is at the heart of the work of the British-Irish Council.

Link to the report: www.britishirishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/communiq%C3%A9s/Caring%20for%20our%20carers%20pdf%20version.pdf



Energy

led by the Governments of Scotland & the UK, Edinburgh, 15 June 2018

The BIC Energy work sector held a Ministerial meeting hosted by the Scottish Government at St Andrews House, Edinburgh.

The meeting was jointly chaired by Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy in the Scottish Government and Lord Duncan of Springbank, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Irish Government was represented by Seán Kyne TD, Minister of State, Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.

The Welsh Government was represented by Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs. The Isle of Man Government was represented by Geoffrey Boot MHK, Minister of Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Mark Dorey, Deputy Minister for the Environment. Official observers attended on behalf of the Government of Jersey and the Northern Ireland Executive.

Energy: Towards a Clean, Green Economy

BIC Ministers discussed and reviewed the briefing prepared by BIC Energy officials. Ministers welcomed the briefing, which highlighted energy policy developments in each of the eight Member Administrations. Ministers noted that all eight administrations share the ambition to decarbonise the economy; to maximise the benefits offered by low carbon technologies; and to ensure secure, clean and affordable energy supplies for consumers.

Ministers also noted that all Member Administrations face common challenges including the threat of climate change, the desire to make greater progress in energy efficiency, and the need to ensure energy security. Ministers recognised that the path each administration is taking towards a low carbon future varied according to regional strengths, availability of natural resources and political priorities but noted that by sharing information and experiences the BIC Energy work sector continued to bring important benefits and opportunities for all of its members.

Ministers thanked the work sector officials in each of the administrations for their active engagement in the preparation of the briefing and endorsed the Forward Work Plan for the BIC Energy work sector.



Marine Litter Symposium - Glasgow, 22 February 2019

The British-Irish Council held a Marine Litter Symposium on 22 February hosted by the Scottish Government. The heads of delegation were welcomed to the Strathclyde University Technology and Innovation Centre by Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. The UK Government was represented by Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment. The Isle of Man Government was represented by Geoffrey Boot MHK, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture and

Martyn Perkins MHK, Delegated Member for the reduction of single-use plastics. The Irish Government was represented by Eoghan Murphy TD, Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government. The Government of Jersey was represented by Deputy John Young, Minister for the Environment. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Barry Brehaut, Environment Minister. Senior officials observed on behalf of the Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive.

Marine Environment

The Symposium built on the outcomes of the 30th British-Irish Council Summit, held in Guernsey, on the 22 June 2018. That Summit highlighted a number of marine environment issues that were of concern to all administrations including: tackling marine litter; marine biodiversity and Marine Protected Areas; and how to address ocean acidification. In addition, Ministers agreed to ensure meaningful and swift action is taken to tackle marine litter around these islands and signal the utmost importance of this issue.

Marine Litter

The Ministers stressed that marine litter was an issue that needed urgent, concerted and collaborative action at all scales, from local to global. They reaffirmed their commitment to “prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution” by 2025 as required by UN Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water. The Symposium considered common issues faced by the BIC administrations in relation to marine litter, receiving input from the International Marine Conference 2019 that was hosted by the Scottish Government which focused on actions to tackle marine litter.

Informed by the issues discussed at the Conference, Ministers identified three different areas where they could collaborate further to ensure progress on this issue: establishing a system to facilitate the recycling of end of life fishing gear; co-operative working to further reduce the loss of pre-production plastics across the supply chain; and improving educational materials and modules on marine litter for young people and the fishing industry. Ministers also agreed to register these actions as a joint voluntary pledge in the UN Communities of Ocean Action registry of voluntary commitments for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Recycling Routes for End of Life Fishing Gear

Ministers discussed the current lack of recycling facilities for end of life fishing gear. The Member Administrations' fishing fleets have very limited options for gear disposal and improving this situation would encourage better waste management. The BIC administrations committed to working together, with industry, to develop solutions for the collection and recycling of end of life fishing gear from its main fishing ports.

Reducing Pre-production Plastic Loss across the supply chain, (nurdles)

Ministers recognised that pre-production plastic pellets are a source of microplastic pollution which needs to be addressed. They discussed their support of the plastic industry's *Operation Clean Sweep* which aims to reduce pellet loss, and the need to further reduce loss with a transparent and auditable full supply chain approach. Ministers encouraged more organisations to join this initiative. Administrations have committed to learn from the trial of a supply-chain approach and apply the lessons learnt in their own administrations.

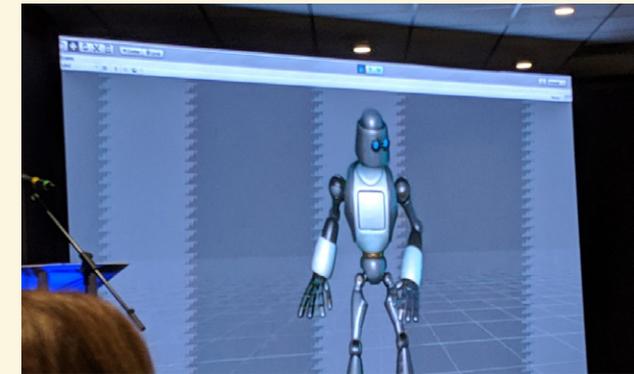
Promoting marine litter education within schools and the fishing industry

Ministers discussed the importance of education in schools to promote behaviour change which is key to tackling the problem of marine litter. They committed to sharing and improving educational materials for young people and the provision of environmental modules during professional fisheries training to highlight the environmental, economic and social cost of marine litter.

Collaborative Spatial Planning Led by Northern Ireland Executive

The Collaborative Spatial Planning (CSP) work sector held a joint seminar with the Housing work sector in Dublin in April 2018 to engage on areas of policy that are covered by the officials of both work sectors. The work sector also held an officials level meeting in Cardiff in October 2018. The Cardiff meeting incorporated a study visit to the Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone and engagement with key stakeholders, including Aston Martin. The visit to the Enterprise Zone was arranged, so that the officials from the BIC Administrations could understand how the Welsh Government had worked

with the local authority and industry to develop an extensive site within current planning legislation. The group focused on finalising a number of outputs by the end of 2018, including a paper on the spatial planning aspects of housing supply. The group will look to hold a further joint seminar with the housing work sector by summer 2019, with both work sectors aiming to hold their Ministerial meetings during the first half of 2020, subject to the formation of a Northern Ireland Executive.



Digital Inclusion Led by Isle of Man Government

The work sector met in Glasgow in June 2018 and in London in September 2018. These discussions included the preparation and drafting of a Ministerial discussion paper which was presented to Digital Ministers at the Isle of Man Summit in November 2018. Discussions also focussed on collaboration around digital skills partnerships and across the administrations on the 5Rights of the Child in relation to digital safety. These meetings culminated in the work sector meeting in Edinburgh in October 2018 to attend a 5Rights Conference with key stakeholders where young people from each administration were represented. Following the Conference, and the Summit in November, the work sector then met again in Belfast in February 2019 to discuss digital citizenship and working in partnership. The trip to Belfast also provided the group with the opportunity to meet with the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance in the Northern Ireland Executive to share best practice across all of the BIC administrations.

Creative Industries Led by Government of Jersey

The Creative Industries work sector held official level meetings in Dublin during January 2018, in Guernsey in May 2018 and Jersey in September 2018 to coincide with the 'Jersey Festival of Words'. The work sector continues to deliver on its current work programme, focusing on the role of education in encouraging the acquisition of skills relevant to the creative industries: equality, diversity and inclusion; and programmes to engage new audiences in the creative (cultural) industries. The group have ensured that the focus of site visits links directly with their work plan, which has a year left until completion. Since the group's publication 'Capturing and Sustaining Impacts' report at the BIC Summit in Jersey in November 2017, the group has discussed forging tangible links with one or more of the other work sectors including the Indigenous, Minority and Lesser Used Languages (IML) work sector. The group will update Ministers on its work this summer, and will plan to hold a sectoral Ministerial meeting in 2020.



Early Years Policy Led by the Welsh Government

The Early Years work sector met in Derry~Londonderry in April 2018; London (Welsh Government offices) June 2018; Cardiff in October 2018 and the London office of the Jersey Government in January 2019. The April 2018 meeting had a focus on barriers faced by young children in an area of social deprivation and how they could be overcome. The June 2018 meeting focused on the preparations for a Ministerial meeting whilst at the October 2018 meeting officials received a presentation on the collaborative efforts within the sector in Wales to combat adverse childhood experiences.

Building upon the experiences of administrations officials have been developing a new work plan which took shape at the January 2019 meeting. Four theme areas have been identified where administrations can collaborate and share policy ideas. The four themes are Workforce; Narrowing the Gap; Language and Quality.



Energy Led by Scottish and UK Governments

The work sector met twice in London, in January and April 2018, to discuss potential future topics for the group and to prepare papers for the Ministerial meeting held in Edinburgh in June 2018. The group agreed to a refreshed forward work plan which widened the focus from marine energy and offshore grid and interconnection to include local and community energy; energy storage; smart grids; and new and emerging technologies. The forward work plan was approved by Energy Ministers in June 2018 and subsequently by the Heads of Administration at the Isle of Man Summit in November 2018. The work sector met in Dublin in October 2018 and this meeting focused on interconnection, ocean energy and included a site visit to the East-West Interconnector outside of Dublin. The work sector also met in January 2019 in London to discuss and prepare a discussion paper to be presented at the next UK Summit focusing on smart energy systems.

Environment Led by UK Government

The work sector has had a busy period during the 2018/19, including a Ministerial meeting held in Dublin in March 2018, to discuss climate change adaptation and launch the 2018 Non-native Invasive Species Week across the eight BIC Member Administrations. In September 2018 an Asian Hornet Seminar took place, which was hosted by the Government of Jersey and attracted a good deal of media attention. This seminar was attended by all eight BIC Member Administrations and included guest speakers from the Invasive Non-Native Species arena, such as academics and local bee keepers. The seminar programme also included site visits to understand how the Island dealt with the hornet infestation. In November 2018 an officials level meeting took place in Cardiff, and included a site visit to an initiative called 'Greener Grangetown' where the officials saw first-hand how a community living space can be transformed as a result of effective engagement. Following the Guernsey Summit in June 2018, Ministers committed to holding a marine litter event in early 2019. As a result of this commitment a Marine Litter Symposium was hosted by the Scottish Government in Glasgow in February 2019. This included a plenary session involving Ministers and a range of stakeholders from the BIC Member Administrations. The stakeholders also took part in workshops discussing fishing gear recycling, pre-production plastic pellets (nurdles) and marine litter education.

Housing Led by Northern Ireland Executive

The work plan adopted by Housing Ministers in 2015 has continued to be the focus for this work sector especially collaborative relationships and housing policy's role in delivering wider regeneration and social value goals. A joint seminar was held with the Collaborative Spatial Planning work sector in Dublin in April 2018 to engage on areas of policy that are covered by the officials of both work sectors and to this end a joint Ministerial meeting is envisaged. A new Housing work plan is under development following an officials meeting held in Belfast in December 2018 and a teleconference in January 2019.

Misuse of Substances - Led by Irish Government

In line with the approved work plan, officials met in London (June 2018) and in Edinburgh (November 2018). At the June meeting Public Health England presented on the first year of the pilot 'Report Illicit Drug Reactions' (RIDR) programme which focuses on patterns of illicit drug use, including new psychoactive substances (NPS). At the November meeting officials received presentations surrounding the 'Dundee Drugs Commission' and 'Minimum Unit Pricing for Alcohol'. A site visit to view the work of an Edinburgh Access Point and a multi sector approach to homelessness and engagement with drug users also informed the officials in relation to initiatives surrounding 'the effectiveness of Addiction Services and Harm Reduction'. This latter topic along with that of 'Financial mechanisms to reduce the consumption of alcohol' were identified as the two main areas for sectoral work across all the administrations going forward.

IML Languages Led by the Welsh Government

The current work plan of the group has a focus on (a) work force planning (b) adult learning of IML languages and (c) social use of languages, including through the arts and digital technology. The work sector held official level meetings in Dublin in January 2018, during September 2018 in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, hosted by the Scottish Government and the Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), in Cornwall during December 2018 and in the Isle of Man during March 2019. In addition to the official level meetings, the work sector held a stakeholder conference in Belfast during March 2018 on the theme of adult learning of IML languages and links with community, workplace and society. The group is due to host a sectoral Ministerial meeting in the Isle of Man during 2019, and is currently considering new work plan topics for approval.



Social Inclusion Led by the Scottish and Welsh Governments

The work sector held a Ministerial meeting in April 2018 which focused on the topic of carers and endorsed the work sector's report *Caring for our Carers: Supporting unpaid carers in the British-Irish Council Administrations*. Ministers from across the BIC administrations reflected on policy collaboration to date and agreed to continue to engage on this issue beyond the working timeframe of the current work sector topic. A proposal paper on the new theme of social enterprises was presented and approved at the Guernsey Summit in June 2018, and subsequently the work sector met in September 2018 in Edinburgh for the first meeting of the new work topic. This meeting focused on the forward work plan and coincided with the Social Enterprise World Forum which the work sector had the opportunity to attend as part of the visit. The work sector also met in Wales in January 2019 and had the opportunity to meet with a number of social enterprises during this visit.



Transport Led by Northern Ireland Executive

The work sector met in the Isle of Man in September 2018 having previously met in Guernsey in April 2018. Work sector officials in conjunction with the BIC Co-ordinators have been engaged in a re-focus exercise to determine a future work programme which will be presented for consideration to a forthcoming Ministerial meeting.

Engagement with BIC Young Ambassadors

Young Ambassadors were invited to take part in the Digital Inclusion work sector visit to Edinburgh which engaged on the 5Rights of the Child Conference. Subsequently, the representative for the Isle of Man spoke directly to Digital Inclusion Ministers in the November Summit about their experience at the conference, highlighting concerns around the lack of transparency of how data is collected, the lack of understanding of how data is used, and the need for legislation to regulate explicit and damaging content. The Digital Inclusion work sector produced a short video together highlighting their engagement on the digital rights agenda which can be viewed on the British-Irish Council website: www.britishirishcouncil.org/areas-work/digital-inclusion



Young Ambassadors from across these islands were also invited to take part in the Marine Litter Symposium in February 2019 and the Scottish Young Ambassador, Kathleen McMillan, spoke directly to Ministers and stakeholders as part of this symposium. She has kindly given an overview of her experience in this event...

"I was asked to give a talk to all present at the Symposium, giving the viewpoint of a young person on marine litter. In 2013 I started volunteering with Clyde Murishiel Regional Parks Ranger Service, I was shocked by the volume of litter washing up on beaches and the public view on marine litter which was often 'It's not my job to clean it up so, not my issue'; it was disappointing to hear time and time again. I have lost count the volume of litter I have removed from beaches and road sides over the years both as a volunteer and as my job role as a Countryside Ranger.

It was amazing to see people from all ages and backgrounds sharing their experiences, good and bad, on how they are tackling the marine litter issue that we are facing on this planet. Everyone at the conference wanted to help each other come up with new ideas and bring together groups. The best experience of the whole event was meeting the other young people from around the UK and Ireland at the BIC dinner. All of us have the same passion and all just want to be heard more by the people in power.

I was very nervous about giving my talk, as was worried about how people would view getting talked to by a young person. But once I started speaking the nerves vanished as I knew everyone in the room wanted the same goal; to save our seas and marine life. Afterwards, the positive messages I received gave me hope that the sector and people in power will start to listen to the young people.

I felt going to the conference would give me a chance to meet like-minded people and create ground for new ideas to be developed and allow me to build up a support network of groups and organisations that are united in the same goal. Being a young person a lot of people overlook your experiences and knowledge, so I was delighted to be given a chance to put young people views forward and make people in this sector understand that young people should be heard as our voices are just as important.

It was a great experience and I would do it again in a heartbeat. I have all fingers crossed that the brilliant ideas that were created at the BIC workshops will be carried out and that young people will be given a chance to be heard again at other events.

Turning the tide on marine litter will take everyone working together as one team, united."



Communications developments

As part of the BIC Communications Strategy agreed in 2015, the Secretariat undertook to implement a series of actions designed to:

- Raise awareness of the Council and its activity
- Demonstrate the value of the Council
- Identify learning and opportunities for collaboration and information sharing

Considerable work has been undertaken into growing the social media presence of the Secretariat and to launch a new website that would facilitate these goals.

Social Media presence

Through coordinated efforts with Member Administrations, third-party stakeholders and direct public engagement, 2018/19 saw a consistent growth in the Secretariat's social media presence. The number of

followers of the Secretariat Twitter account increased by 400 in this period. The account was visited 18,913 times and there were a total of 499,756 tweet impressions arising from Secretariat activity on the platform, double that of 2017. The Secretariat will continue to work with administrations to ensure coordinated messaging in advance of all major BIC Summits and events.



As part of the 2006 St Andrew's Agreement, the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Ireland agreed that 'Following consultation with its other members, and with a view to giving further impetus to its work, the two Governments would facilitate the establishment of a standing secretariat for the British-Irish Council, if members agree'. Subsequently, the Council made a decision to create a standing Secretariat in Edinburgh which was formally established in January 2012.

The Secretariat currently comprises six full-time staff on assignment from the Council's Member Administrations.

The Secretariat running costs for the financial year April 2018 to March 2019 were £129,429.68. These costs are shared between the eight Member Administrations using an agreed set formula. With the exception of the Secretariat office manager, costs for individual staff are met by their parent administration as they are on loan to the Secretariat. Funding for Summits and Ministerial meetings is met by the host Member Administration.

British-Irish Council website

In 2018/19, the BIC website www.britishirishcouncil.org was visited by 1,323 unique visitors in total. Analysis shows that the main usage of the website revolved around the Summits in June and November 2018. The Secretariat will continue to drive traffic to the website via social media and press engagement.

www.britishirishcouncil.org



Contact

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