



Communiqué

The British-Irish Council established under the Agreement reached in Belfast on Good Friday, 1998, held its fourteenth summit meeting today at the Fermain Valley Hotel, St Peter Port, Guernsey.

The heads of delegations were welcomed by the Chief Minister of Guernsey, Deputy Lyndon Trott. The Irish Government delegation was led by An Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen TD, and the British Government delegation was led by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt. Hon. Owen Paterson MP. The Welsh Assembly Government was represented by the First Minister for Wales, the Rt. Hon Carwyn Jones AM. The Scottish Government was led by the First Minister for Scotland, the Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MSP. 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 represented by the Chief Minister, Senator Terence Le Sueur, and the Isle of Man Government was represented by the Chief Minister, the Hon. Tony Brown MHK. A full list of delegation members is attached.

The British-Irish Council (BIC) plays a unique and important role in furthering, promoting and developing links between its Member Administrations through positive, practical relationships and in providing a forum for consultation and co-operation on East-West issues. Member Administrations consult, discuss and exchange information with each other on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant Administrations.

Discussion of Economic Issues

The Council reviewed the current global economic climate and discussed the impact of the downturn in economic activity across their respective Administrations. Ministers updated on actions being taken in their Administrations to endeavour to stabilise public finances, repair banking systems, cut costs and boost employment, including a discussion on the impact of the recent UK budget. The Council acknowledged that Member Administrations continue to face serious challenges and agreed that the sharing of information and knowledge on best practice was invaluable as Member Administrators seek to reposition their economies and take advantage of the economic upturn when it comes.

Marine Energy

The main theme of the summit was Marine Renewable Energy. The Council welcomed the summit discussion paper prepared by the Marine Renewables sub-group of the BIC Energy workstream. BIC Energy Ministers updated the Council on the activity currently underway in the area of marine renewables in their Administrations and discussed areas for future cooperation and growth in this sector among Member Administrations and with the European Commission.

The Council noted the significant wave and tidal resources of BIC Member Administrations and the opportunities for the growth and competitiveness of this sector. The Council noted the benefits of Member Administrations working together to share best practice and to collectively accelerate the marine renewable energy sector.

The Council welcomed and endorsed the progress and future work plan of the Marine Renewables sub-group including the continued exchange of best practice on marine environment and research issues and the identification of key opportunities for ongoing collaboration across Administrations. The Council also approved ongoing and constructive engagement between BIC Member Administrations and the European Commission in the development of European funding and policy initiatives in the area of marine energy.

The Council noted and welcomed the programme of work being taken forward by the Electricity Grid Infrastructure sub-group of the Energy workstream.

Working with the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)

The Council considered the report prepared by the BIC Secretariat on the relationship between the British-Irish Council (BIC) and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA), as mandated by the Council at its 13th summit meeting in Jersey in November 2009. The Council noted that there is scope for further engagement between both bodies and approved a number of recommendations to enhance the relationship between the two bodies. The Council tasked the Secretariat with taking forward work on these recommendations in conjunction with the BIPA Secretariat.

BIC Standing Secretariat

The Council discussed the progress on arrangements for a BIC Standing Secretariat, which had been commissioned by the Council at the Belfast summit in July 2007. At the last BIC summit in November 2009, the Council asked the Chief Minister of Guernsey, as host of the following summit, to take further informal soundings from Council Members on a location for the Secretariat with a view to reaching consensus on a location and to report back to the Council at the Guernsey summit.

The Chief Minister of Guernsey reported to the Council that during his consultations with Member Administrations a consensus had emerged around Scotland as the location for the Secretariat. The Council endorsed this consensus and thanked the Guernsey Chief Minister for his efforts. The Council tasked the BIC Co-ordinators Group with taking forward work on the

arrangements for establishing the Secretariat in Scotland and agreeing a model for sharing the costs associated with establishment and operation of the Secretariat. Co-ordinators were asked to provide a paper for the Council to approve at the next summit meeting in the Isle of Man setting out these arrangements with a view to it being operational as soon as possible thereafter. The Council requested Co-ordinators to ensure that the costs associated with the Standing Secretariat are kept to a minimum.

Update on Work Sectors

The Council noted the progress of each of the eleven work sectors of the BIC based upon the following reports:

Collaborative Spatial Planning

The Collaborative Spatial Planning group, which brings together officials responsible for regional development strategies, national planning strategies and frameworks in each Member Administration, most recently met in Cardiff in March 2010 when it had the opportunity to hear from the Welsh Department of Public Services and Local Government on changes to European Union spatial policy objectives. The group will next meet in Edinburgh in autumn 2010 when it will focus its work on the practical issues for Member Administrations arising from the mandatory Strategic Environmental Assessment of spatial frameworks.

Demography

The Demography workgroup continues to be committed to the work plan endorsed by its Ministerial meeting in March 2008. The main focus of the group's work has been on understanding migration and its impact. The workstream's next area of focus will be on understanding the implications of wider student flows amongst the BIC Member Administrations.

Digital Inclusion

The Digital Inclusion workstream held its inaugural meeting in the Isle of Man in September 2009 where it identified common themes and shared understandings on digital inclusion. The group decided to focus its work on the five main areas: content; outcomes; trust; engagement; and skills and training. The group has since met on three occasions to take forward work in these areas, including most recently in Dublin in May 2010. The theme of the next BIC summit meeting will be digital inclusion.

Early Years Policy

In February 2009, BIC Early Years Ministers endorsed four strands of work for the workstream: collaboration between all agencies concerned with health, education and social services to provide a "joined-up" service for children and their parents/carers and to make better use of resources; transition arrangements (between home and child care settings and then to school) to improve outcomes; the early years work force, and evaluation and obtaining better value for money. The work of the group had initially focused on the third strand. Officials from the Early Years Policy most recently met in Jersey in May 2010 and the group will now begin to focus on the fourth area of value for money.

Energy

At the Council's 12th summit in Cardiff on 20 February 2009, the Council agreed to the introduction of a new Energy workstream focused on two areas – Electricity Grid Infrastructure and Marine Renewables. The Electricity Grid aspect of the workstream is led by the UK whilst the Marine Renewables aspect of the workstream is led by Scotland.

- *Electricity Grid*

The BIC Electricity Grid sub-group has met three times in the last 12 months. Grid Infrastructure was also the main focus of discussion at the meeting of Energy Ministers in London on 22 March. At that meeting, BIC Ministers agreed that the Electricity Grid sub-group would focus its work on exchanging information and experience of research and development and other studies to promote greater understanding and cooperation in electricity grid infrastructure; sharing experience of and approaches to the regulation, environmental impact assessment and planning consenting of electricity grid infrastructure; and working together to exert greater influence on the direction of emerging EU policy on and funding for grid infrastructure funding (where applicable to relevant members).

- *Marine Renewables*

The first meeting of the Marine Renewables workstream was held on 6 June 2009. The workstream subsequently met in November 2009 and in January 2010. The group continues to share best practice around research and development, policy support and marine environment activities. Marine Renewable Energy is the theme of the BIC Summit.

Environment

The Environment workstream continues to look at ways in which governments, agencies and researchers across BIC Member Administrations can work together to improve collective understanding of impacts on the environment. The workstream includes two sub-groups on Extreme Weather Events and on Integrated Coastal Zone Management. The workstream met in February and in April 2010 and will next meet again in June. BIC Environment Ministers will also meet in Newcastle, UK, in July. The main theme of this Ministerial meeting will be Marine. Discussion will focus on potential areas for future cooperation, for example in terms of how Member Administrations can support each other on work to implement European Directives such as the Marine Framework Strategy.

Housing

An initial meeting of BIC officials took place in Belfast in June 2009. The following issues were agreed as being pertinent across the jurisdictions: changing demographics; greening the housing stock; affordable housing; and investment in housing. A meeting of BIC Housing Ministers took place in Newcastle, Co. Down, on 4 December 2009. The meeting focused on four main areas: changing demographics; the need for more energy efficient housing/greening the stock; affordable housing products; and increasing private investment in housing. The European Investment Bank (EIB) and The Housing Finance Corporation (THFC) presented at the Ministerial meeting.

Indigenous, Minority and Lesser Used Languages

Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used languages was the theme of the last BIC summit meeting held in Jersey in November 2009. At the summit, the Council endorsed the work of the group and added the economic benefits of bilingualism to the group's remit. An officials meeting was held in Dublin in December 2009, where it was agreed that the UK would lead the work on economic benefits of bilingualism. It was also agreed to establish a sub-group to discuss the European Charter for Minority and Lesser Used Languages that would look at Member Administration's experiences of the monitoring process, and share best practice on how to monitor progress and report to the Council of Europe. An inaugural meeting of this sub-group was held in Guernsey in June 2010. In February 2010 a seminar was held in Edinburgh by the legislation sub-group to discuss linguistic legislation. This was organised by the Scottish Government, who have chaired the legislation sub-group since it was established.

Misuse of Drugs

The Misuse of Drugs workstream met in Dublin in January 2010 and officials discussed the policies of Administrations in tackling Alcohol Misuse. A Ministerial meeting of the work sector was hosted by the Isle of Man on 24 February 2010. Ministers discussed Substance Misuse in the Prison Setting and the responses necessary to address this issue. Ministers also discussed the issue of 'headshops' and the use of psychoactive substances ("legal highs"), exchanging information on the various measures planned and implemented across jurisdictions, and the outcomes of these interventions. Workstream officials last met in London in June where they discussed "New directions for drug and alcohol policy - meeting new challenges". The group will next meet in Jersey in September and will focus their discussion on Community Action in Dealing with Drugs, Alcohol and Anti-Social Disorder.

Social Inclusion

At a Ministerial meeting on Social Inclusion in Edinburgh on the 25/26 March 2010, BIC Ministers reviewed the report on the work carried out by the BIC Social Inclusion workstream on the area of "the Contribution of the Third Sector to Social Inclusion". Ministers noted that the third sector across all Member Administrations is complex and diverse, with a significant social and economic potential. They also acknowledged that the third sector has a reach to people and communities that statutory agencies sometimes find more difficult to engage. Ministers commended the excellent examples of investment and good practice across all Member Administrations. Ministers agreed that the theme has led to a dynamic process of learning and cooperation, reflecting the original intention of the BIC. The work sector will next meet at official level in June 2010 in Northern Ireland.

Transport

Work in the Transport workstream has focused on the mutual recognition of driving disqualifications; the mutual recognition of driving offences that attract a penalty less than disqualification, and research into drugs and driving. The main work of the group has been in relation to the mutual recognition of driving disqualifications. Member Administrations are also working together in

the area of Accessible Transport. This work has included examining how to improve the information provision for disabled people who wish to travel from one Administration area to another through the development of common webpages, sharing standards of disability training schemes, scoping the current level of concessionary travel across administrations while also examining the potential for their mutual recognition. The next meeting of the Accessible Transport sub-group will be held in London in December 2010.

Next Summit

The Council agreed that the next BIC Summit will be held in December 2010 and will be hosted by the Isle of Man.

BIC Secretariat

25 June 2010

List of Delegates

<u>Irish Government</u>	
An Taoiseach	Mr. Brian Cowen TD
Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources	Mr. Eamon Ryan TD
<u>British Government</u>	
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Rt. Hon. Owen Paterson MP
Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change	Mr. Charles Hendry MP
<u>Scottish Government</u>	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MSP
Minister for Culture and External Affairs	Ms. Fiona Hyslop MSP
<u>Welsh Assembly Government</u>	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM
Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport	Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones AM
Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing	Ms. Jane Davidson AM
<u>Northern Ireland Executive</u>	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Peter D Robinson MLA
Deputy First Minister	Mr. Martin McGuinness MP MLA
Minister of the Environment	Mr. Edwin Poots MLA
Minister for Social Development	Mr. Alex Attwood MLA
Junior Minister in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Mr. Robin Newton MLA
<u>States of Jersey</u>	
Chief Minister	Senator Terence Le Sueur
Assistant Minister for Planning and Environment	Deputy Robert Duhamel
<u>States of Guernsey</u>	
Chief Minister	Deputy Lyndon Trott
Minister of Treasury and Resources	Deputy Charles Parkinson
Minister of Commerce and Employment	Deputy Carla McNulty Bauer
<u>Government of the Isle of Man</u>	
Chief Minister	Hon. James Anthony Brown MHK
Minister for the Environment, Food and Agriculture	Hon. John Shimmin MHK