



Communiqué

Summit Meeting – Cardiff – 26th November 2012

The British-Irish Council established under the 1998 Multi-Party Agreement held its nineteenth summit meeting today, hosted by the Welsh Government in Cardiff Castle.

The heads of delegations were welcomed by the First Minister Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM. The Irish Government delegation was led by An Taoiseach, Mr. Enda Kenny TD. The UK Government delegation was led by the Secretary of State for Wales, the Rt. Hon David Jones MP. The Scottish Government delegation was led by the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities Ms. Nicola Sturgeon 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 delegation was led by the Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst. The Government of Guernsey delegation was led by Chief Minister, Deputy Peter Harwood 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 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 exchange of information on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant administrations.

The Economy

The Council discussed the current economic situation in the different Member Administrations with a particular focus on the important role of investment in capital infrastructure to support and promote economic growth. The Council also noted the latest figures on youth unemployment and requested all BIC work sectors to consider the issue of generating employment opportunities for young people in their work programmes where appropriate.

Early Years Policy

The Council reviewed in detail a report on the work undertaken by the Early Years Policy work sector. The Council acknowledged the critical importance of the Early Years in creating strong foundations for children and families to thrive and recognised the importance of investment in the Early Years in terms of generating better value for money in the public sector by moving from curative to preventative models of service delivery.

The Council endorsed the principles that should underpin a BIC approach to Early Years, namely improved educational attainment, health and later life chances, while respecting that each Administration will approach implementation in their own way and at their own pace. The Council noted the significant benefits gained by officials from all Member Administrations participating in the British-Irish Council working group and from sharing knowledge, challenges, best practice and research outcomes relating to the Early Years. The Council welcomed the continuation of the Early Years work sector and supported the focus on improving quality, including the critical role of the workforce.

Update on Work Sectors

The Council noted the continuing 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 work sector officials met most recently in Jersey in September 2012, to exchange information and perspectives on current planning challenges. At this meeting, and bearing in mind the cross-cutting nature of spatial planning policy, the group also decided to explore the development of linkages with other work sectors. The next meeting is planned for Spring 2013.

Demography

Earlier this year, the Demography work sector completed work on a report on the Implications of Student Migration between BIC Member Administrations.

Digital Inclusion

The work sector is developing case studies from different BIC Member Administrations looking at ways to promote digital inclusion and considering metrics that can be used to capture the economics (costs and benefit) of moving public services online.

Early Years Policy

See above.

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

The sub-group has been focused on the potential for renewable energy trading between BIC members and the barriers that need to be overcome to enable this. There are four workstreams within the subgroup examining: the costs, benefits and risks of making use of the Flexibility Mechanisms within the Renewable Energy Directive to trade renewable energy, the potential barriers to making use of the Flexibility Mechanisms, the fit of Joint Projects (one of the Flexibility Mechanisms) with the current regimes for interconnection of electricity between members, and opportunities for market integration and alignment through the EU Commission's initiative on Market Coupling

Marine Renewables

The sub-group has been working with the EU's Ocean Energy Association (EU-OEA) and the EU Marine Energy Interest Group to raise the profile of marine renewables with the European Commission. Going forward, the group will continue to share best practice and knowledge around Marine Renewables. It will continue to work with partners and industry to tackle, jointly, the issues and challenges facing the marine renewables industry to ensure that it is able to meet the demands and expectations placed upon it.

Environment

The Scottish Government hosted the 12th Ministerial Meeting of the Environment Workstream in early September. The meeting concentrated on Biodiversity with particular attention paid to Non-Native Invasive Species. Officials are currently planning a workshop for experts to discuss joining up approaches to identification and management of Non Native Invasive Species, as requested by Ministers at the last meeting, this will be held in early 2013.

Officials are also working towards the next Ministerial which will be held in the Isle of Man in 2014 focusing on Sustainable Production and Consumption.

Housing

The work sector has agreed to hold a Ministerial meeting in London in early 2013 and are considering a number of agenda items for discussion there.

Indigenous, Minority and Lesser Used Languages (IMLs)

Officials have met three times during 2012. Amongst other items, they have submitted a paper to Ministers evaluating the work sector's activities since 2006, and discussed the development of Government led strategies to promote IMLs within BIC Administrations. These have responded to action points arising from the Ministerial Meeting held in Donegal, Ireland in November 2011.

Earlier this month, the work sector held its annual seminar in Cardiff. This focused on promoting indigenous, minority, and lesser used languages

though early years education. Policy makers and practitioners attended from each BIC Administration.

Misuse of Drugs

The Misuse of Drugs work sector successfully completed its Work Programme in 2012 which included discussions around the provision of Naloxone to problem drug users; the misuse of prescription drugs; and the misuse of new psychoactive substances.

The Work Sector held a Ministerial meeting on 29th June 2012, hosted by the States of Jersey where the main thematic discussion was focused on “Young People and Drugs – Breaking the Cycle”. At the Ministerial meeting it was agreed to expand the scope of the work sector to cover misuse of alcohol. Cooperation and sharing best practices around approaches to tackling the misuse of alcohol has the potential to bring further health, economic and social benefits to Member Administrations.

At this Summit, the Council endorsed the decision by Ministers at the June meeting to expand the scope of the work sector to include ‘use and misuse of alcohol’ and agreed to the renaming of the work sector to ‘Misuse of Substances’.

Social Inclusion

At the Ministerial meeting in March 2012, Ministers endorsed the Report entitled “The Contribution of the Third Sector to Social Inclusion” produced by the work sector. In developing the report, officials engaged with the third sector and sought to address the objectives set by Ministers through a series of study visits. The Report was published on the British-Irish Council website, alongside videos which show examples of the kind of work and projects the third sector is involved in across Member Administrations.

At that March meeting, Ministers agreed a new theme for the work sector on preventative spend, particularly in the context of an ageing population. A work sector meeting was held in Edinburgh on 14th November to set out the programme for this work.

Transport

At the last BIC Summit in June 2012, the Council welcomed the work of the group on developing a common online approach towards accessible journey planning, which is continuing to evolve. Among other things, the BIC Transport group will be looking at the detail of this during 2013. Looking ahead, the group is now considering the role of Smartcard Technology to assist citizens to move more freely and easily between Member Administrations; the use and mutual recognition of Blue Badge schemes; and promoting more sustainable modes of transport.

Possible New Work Sector (Creative Industries)

The Council noted the work done to date, including the broad agreement that Creative Industries is an appropriate area for co-operation. The Council requested a final report at the next Summit on the priority areas that would be

of most interest and value to all Administrations with a view to being able to adopt the Creative Industries as a new BIC work sector at that Summit.

BIC Standing Secretariat

The Council noted the Secretariat's progress report.

Date and Location of the Next Summit Meeting

The Council noted that the next BIC Summit in June 2013 will be hosted by the Northern Ireland Executive.

**BIC Secretariat
26 November 2012**

List of Delegates

<u>Irish Government</u>	
An Taoiseach	Mr. Enda Kenny TD
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	Ms Frances Fitzgerald TD
<u>UK Government</u>	
Secretary of State for Wales	Rt. Hon David Jones MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Rt. Hon. Theresa Villiers MP
<u>Scottish Government</u>	
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities	Ms. Nicola Sturgeon MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs	Ms. Fiona Hyslop MSP
Minister for Children and Young People	Ms. Aileen Campbell MSP
<u>Welsh Government</u>	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM
Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science	Ms. Edwina Hart MBE OStJ AM
Minister for Education and Skills	Mr. Leighton Andrews 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. Alex Attwood MLA
Minister of Education	Mr. John O'Dowd MLA
Minister for Regional Development	Mr. Danny Kennedy MLA
<u>States of Jersey</u>	
Chief Minister	Senator Ian Gorst
Minister for Education, Sport and Culture	Deputy Patrick Ryan
<u>States of Guernsey</u>	
Chief Minister,	Deputy Peter Harwood
Education Minister	Deputy Robert Sillars
<u>Government of the Isle of Man</u>	
Chief Minister	Hon. Allan Bell MHK
Minister for Education & Children	Hon. Tim Crookall MHK