



Third Summit Meeting – Jersey – 14th June 2002

The British-Irish Council, established under the Belfast Agreement reached on Good Friday 1998 held its third Summit meeting today in Jersey. The meeting was chaired by Senator Pierre Horsfall OBE, President of the States of Jersey Policy and Resources Committee. The British and Irish Governments were represented by the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair MP and the Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD respectively.

The devolved Administrations were represented by the Rt Hon Jack McConnell MSP, First Minister, Scottish Executive; Jenny Randerson AM, Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language, Welsh Assembly Government; the Rt Hon David Trimble MP, MLA First Minister and Mark Durkan MLA, Deputy First Minister, Northern Ireland Executive.

The Isle of Man was represented by the Hon Richard Corkill MHK, Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Government and Guernsey was represented by Deputy Laurie Morgan, President, States of Guernsey Advisory and Finance Committee.

A full list of delegation members is attached.

The British-Irish Council is a forum for its Members to exchange information, discuss, consult and endeavour to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within their respective competencies.

Knowledge Economy

Jersey is the lead administration on the Knowledge Economy. The main focus of today's meeting was the issue of the Knowledge Economy and plans for taking forward co-operation in this area within the British-Irish Council. The meeting highlighted that all BIC Administrations are actively working on a range of strategies for addressing knowledge economy issues and Members exchanged information and views on the wide variety of policies, methods of working and projects underway.

In order to address the challenges in this important area, the Council agreed that future work in the Knowledge Economy sector will include specific projects to address the issue of the 'digital divide', such as access by disabled people to ICT facilities and e-Government. A group of Knowledge Economy officials from all Administrations has been established to take this forward. Sub-groups will progress matters of mutual interest in particular areas, including research on issues arising in the areas of the 'digital divide' and 'e-democracy'. The meeting also confirmed the importance of the effective switchover to digital terrestrial television and the importance of competitive broadband markets, and agreed that the matters could be considered further.

Members also agreed to work together on the identification and development of pilot programmes for specific issues.

A BIC conference entitled 'Bridging the Digital Divide' was hosted by Jersey in April of this year and its outcomes formed part of the preparation for today's discussions.

The British-Irish Council website was launched following the Summit by Senator Horsfall. The website can be viewed at www.british-irishcouncil.org

Following the Knowledge Economy discussion, the Council was updated on work being undertaken in the other British-Irish Council sectoral areas by the relevant lead Administrations.

Drugs

Ireland is the lead Administration on Drugs. Since the last Summit in Dublin in November 2001, where the common challenge of the misuse of drugs was the main item on the agenda, Drugs officials have met to prepare recommendations for future co-operation in addressing this issue.

A meeting of Drugs Ministers hosted by the Irish Government in Dublin on 22 March 2002 focussed its initial discussions on the importance of targeting the proceeds of drug trafficking, involving the community in the development and implementation of drugs strategies and the need to divert young people at risk into healthier pursuits and to provide opportunities for training and employment to recovering drug misusers.

Further meetings on diversion programmes for young people at risk, and reintegration and training opportunities for recovering misusers, are scheduled to take place in the coming months.

A conference on targeting the proceeds of the drugs trade hosted by Guernsey took place in May 2002, and a further conference on community involvement in the development and implementation of drugs strategies will be hosted by the Northern Ireland Executive in November 2002. The next meeting of Ministers to review developments is scheduled to take place in Dublin in spring 2003.

Environment

The United Kingdom is the lead Administration on Environment. BIC Environment Ministers met for the second time in Edinburgh in February 2002. Waste management, Sellafield and radioactive waste, marine nature conservation and climate change issues were among items considered.

The Scottish Executive has continued to advance work with other members on the difficulties of finding more sustainable ways of managing generated waste which is a matter of increasing concern to BIC Members. The Scottish Executive gave a presentation to other Members on the issue at the Edinburgh meeting and work continues to address this challenge and identify scope for co-operation.

Ireland and the Isle of Man have taken the lead in examining the issue of radioactive waste from Sellafield. Ministers discussed this issue during their recent meeting and the matter will be considered further at the next meeting of Environment Ministers which will be hosted by Northern Ireland in autumn

2002, and there will be a further meeting of Ministers in the Isle of Man next year.

Social Inclusion

Scotland and Wales are the lead Administrations on Social Inclusion. Recognising the commonalities shared by communities across the British-Irish Council, the Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly Government are continuing to develop proposals for the Council's priority area of work on Social Inclusion which will be the central focus of the next Summit. Current proposals for future co-operation include practical processes for sharing information and best practice on promoting social inclusion at a community level. Future work will also build on existing experiences of networking between communities. Communities will also be involved in the development of the Council's future programme of co-operation.

In addition to the Summit meeting in Scotland, a community inclusion conference is scheduled to take place in Glasgow in September 2002 where there will be a particular focus on the theme of financial inclusion.

Plans to develop an electronic community inclusion network are also being considered.

Transport

Northern Ireland is the lead Administration on Transport. BIC officials have met to take forward work on a number of areas within the transport sector which were identified at the first Summit and at the Ministerial meeting which took place in Belfast in December 2000.

As part of this work, the Irish Government has agreed to take the lead on work on integrated transport issues within the sector.

The group of Transport officials, led by the Northern Ireland Executive, also agreed to explore the possibility of an exchange of views and experience of Public Private Partnerships in relation to transport infrastructure. It was also recognised that there is considerable scope for cooperation on road safety issues and specific areas are being identified for co-operation in this area.

Other issues being actively considered include the matter of regional air links which are of particular concern to a number of Members. The Northern Ireland Executive will host a Ministerial meeting to discuss these issues further in the near future.

Health: The Application of Telemedicine

The Isle of Man is the lead administration on Health: The Application of Telemedicine. At the Summit in November 2001, the Isle of Man agreed to take forward work on telemedicine. Initial meetings of officials have taken place to plan future co-operation and proposals currently include the monitoring and exchange of information on the use of telemedicine and evaluation of the benefits to be derived by implementing telemedicine and e-health clinically, educationally and organisationally. Further meetings, including a number of study visits to Telemedicine projects across BIC Administrations, are scheduled to take place before the end of the year.

Tourism

Guernsey is the lead administration on Tourism. Officials continue to discuss how best to advance work in this area. Future plans include proposals to identify common visitor data, an examination of tourism satellite accounting. The challenges of transport access, industry contacts, disabled access, and links between the environment and tourism as well as training and the support of small businesses in the sector will also be considered. Further meetings to develop this work are planned over the coming months.

Other areas of work

At today's Summit the Council agreed that the Welsh Assembly Government will take forward work in the area of minority and lesser-used languages which was an area agreed by the first Summit.

The next Summit level meeting of the Council is scheduled to take place in Scotland in November 2002 and the Council agreed that the meeting would focus on the issue of Social Inclusion. Northern Ireland and Wales will host Summit meetings in 2003.

The Chairman on behalf of the Council thanked the Administrations for their commitment and work to date.

British-Irish Council

14 June 2002

www.britishirishcouncil.org

List of Delegates

Jersey	
President of the Policy and Resources Committee	Senator Pierre Horsfall OBE
Vice President, Policy and Resources Committee	Senator Frank Walker
Chief Executive, Policy and Resources Department	John Mills
British Government	
Prime Minister	Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Deputy Prime Minister	Rt Hon John Prescott MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Rt Hon Dr John Reid MP
Minister of State for e-Commerce	Stephen Timms MP
Irish Government	
Taoiseach	Bertie Ahern TD
Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Mary Harney TD
Minister for Foreign Affairs	Brian Cowen TD
Government Chief Whip and Minister of State to the Taoiseach (with special responsibility for Information Society)	Mary Hanafin TD
Northern Ireland Executive	
First Minister	Rt Hon David Trimble MP MLA
Deputy First Minister	Mark Durkan, MLA
Minister of Enterprise, Trade & Investment	Sir Reg Empey MLA
Minister for Employment & Learning	Carmel Hanna MLA
Minister of Education	Martin McGuinness MP MLA
Scottish Executive	
First Minister	Rt Hon Jack McConnell MSP
Deputy First Minister	Rt Hon Jim Wallace QC MSP
Minister for Enterprise, Transport & Lifelong Learning	Iain Gray MSP
Welsh Assembly Government	
Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language	Jenny Randerson AM
Minister for Economic Development	Andrew Davies AM
Isle of Man	
Chief Minister	Hon Richard Corkill MHK
Chief Secretary	Fred Kissack
Guernsey	
President, Advisory and Finance Committee	Deputy Laurie Morgan
Member, Advisory and Finance Committee	Deputy Roger Berry OBE