



**British-Irish Council Marine Litter Symposium, Glasgow,  
Scotland  
22 February 2019**

**Communiqué**

The British-Irish Council (BIC) held a marine litter symposium today hosted by the Scottish Government. The environment Ministers from across the Member Administrations of the BIC were welcomed to the Strathclyde University Technology and Innovation Centre by Roseanna Cunningham MSP Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. A full list of Ministerial participants is attached.

**Marine Environment**

The Symposium built on the outcomes of the 30<sup>th</sup> 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 upmost 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 today 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 Nets**

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 recognise 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 territories.

### **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.

**BIC Secretariat**

**22 February 2019**

### **List of Ministerial Delegates**

<b>Scottish Government</b>	
<i>Cabinet Secretary for Environment Climate Change and Land Reform</i>	<i>Roseanna Cunningham MSP</i>
<b>UK Government</b>	
<i>Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment</i>	<i>Thérèse Coffey MP</i>
<b>Irish Government</b>	
<i>Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government</i>	<i>Eoghan Murphy TD</i>
<b>Isle of Man Government</b>	
<i>Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture</i>	<i>Hon Geoffrey Boot MHK</i>
<b>Government of Jersey</b>	
<i>Minister for the Environment</i>	<i>Deputy John Young</i>
<b>Government of Guernsey</b>	
<i>Environment Minister</i>	<i>Deputy Barry Brehaut</i>