



COMMUNIQUÉ

15th Ministerial meeting of the Environment work sector

23 March 2018

The British-Irish Council Environment work sector held its fifteenth Ministerial meeting today, hosted by the Government of Ireland at Farmleigh House. Ministers were welcomed by Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Mr. Denis Naughten TD, on behalf of the Irish Government.

The British-Irish Council, established in 1999, is a forum for its members to discuss, consult and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of its Member Administrations. 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 in Ireland today 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 meeting was chaired by Lord Gardiner from the UK Government. The Irish Government was represented by Mr. Denis Naughten TD, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. 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 Governments of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Guernsey.

Addressing 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.

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 today 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 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 sixteenth Ministerial meeting will be hosted in 2020 and that the future work topic of the BIC Environment group would be marine environment.

BIC Secretariat

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