



COMMUNIQUÉ

4th Ministerial meeting of the Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-used Languages work sector

10 March 2017

The British-Irish Council Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used (IML) Languages work sector held its fourth Ministerial meeting today, hosted by the Scottish Government in Edinburgh. Ministers were welcomed by John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, on behalf of the Scottish 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 IML Languages work sector is led by the Welsh Government and has proved a constructive and unique forum for facilitating evidence exchange and practical collaboration since it was established. The meeting in Edinburgh today focused on two principal topics: IML Languages and Technology, and the Economic Impact of IML Languages.

The meeting was chaired by Alun Davies AM, Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language in the Welsh Government. The UK Government was represented by Guto Bebb MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Wales Office. The Irish Government was represented by Seán Kyne TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs and Natural Resources. The Scottish Government was represented by John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

The Isle of Man Government was represented by Hon Graham Cregeen MHK, Minister for Education and Children.

Promoting Our Languages Through Technology

Ministers discussed the report arising from the conference 'Promoting Our Languages Through Technology' which took place on 9-10 November 2015 in Dublin. The conference provided an opportunity for those working in both the areas of language promotion and in the field of language technology, to demonstrate how technology can be used to promote preservation, engagement and the use of each of the IML Languages across BIC Member Administrations. Delegates and speakers highlighted current uses of technology for their respective languages.

Ministers noted the report of the conference and recognised that technology can be used to promote the use of IML Languages. They also reflected on future requirements for further developing and fostering use of language technology.

The report of the conference can be viewed on the British-Irish Council website: www.britishirishcouncil.org.

IML Languages and the Economy

Ministers discussed the paper prepared by the work sector which considers the close inter-relationship that exists between economic factors and the vitality of IML languages. They agreed that promoting the use of IML languages within the economy can play an important role in efforts to support those languages and noted the various ways in which IML languages are used by businesses across Member Administrations.

The paper discussed by Ministers can be viewed on the British-Irish Council website: www.britishirishcouncil.org.

Presentation from Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Ministers also received presentations Shona MacLennan, CEO and Allan MacDonald, Chair, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the body responsible for promoting the Gaelic language and culture in Scotland. They presented information on the main

developments in support of Gaelic in Scotland. These included Gaelic as a driver of economic growth, opportunities for linguistic links between the Gaelic languages of Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man and Gaelic in the digital world. They also provided information on the main mechanisms for implementing these developments through the National Gaelic Language Plan 2017-2022, recently published Statutory Guidance on Gaelic education and the growth of Gaelic language plans in public authorities.

Future work

Ministers agreed that the fifth Ministerial meeting will be hosted by the Isle of Man Government in the first quarter of 2019. In addition to the commitments outlined above, Ministers considered and approved proposals for the future work programme of the IML languages work sector. They agreed that this would focus on:-

- Workforce Planning (both within the education sector and in other sectors);
- Adult learners of IML languages; and
- Social use of languages, including through the arts and digital technology.

The work sector will report back on progress to the next meeting of IML Languages Ministers.

BIC Secretariat

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**BRITISH-IRISH COUNCIL
IML LANGUAGES WORK SECTOR**

Welsh Government

Alun Davies AM, Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language

UK Government

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Irish Government

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Hon Graham Cregeen MHK, Minister for Education and Children