



COMMUNIQUÉ

Ministerial meeting of the Digital Inclusion work sector

23 June 2017

The British-Irish Council Digital Inclusion work sector held its first Ministerial meeting hosted by the Isle of Man Government at the Villa Marina in Douglas. Ministers received a report entitled 'Digital Inclusion: Developing Digital Skills', which focuses on ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from getting online.

The meeting was chaired by Hon Chris Thomas MHK, Minister for Policy and Reform in the Isle of Man Government. The UK Government was represented by Chris Skidmore MP, Minister for the Constitution. The Irish Government was represented by John Halligan TD, Minister of State for Training, Skills and Innovation. The Scottish Government was represented by Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs. The Welsh Government was represented by Alun Davies AM, Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Andrea Dudley-Owen, Member of the Committee for Economic Development and Member of the Committee for Education, Sport and Culture, and the Government of Jersey was represented by Deputy Scott Wickenden, Assistant Minister for e-Government. A full list of delegation members is attached.

In November 2014, Ministers agreed that the Council's Digital Inclusion work sector should continue to focus on the themes of 'People, Partnerships and Policies'. Today, Ministers discussed and reviewed a paper, 'Digital Inclusion: Developing Digital Skills', prepared by the work sector.

Ministers agreed the importance of everybody having the opportunity to share in the benefits of technology, and of its potential contribution towards wider government policies in areas such as community cohesion, economic participation and health and wellbeing.

They noted the many different, creative and community-based approaches to encouraging basic digital skills and that, in the future, skills would need to further evolve to keep pace with developments in technology.

They also noted the ongoing development of those skills through the digital inclusion strategies and policies which are becoming more embedded in each Administration, and the partnerships which are a key part of delivering these activities.

Delegates were updated on examples of work under way in the different Council jurisdictions to promote digital inclusion. The Ministers discussed the benefits and increasing importance of digital participation in everyday life.

Ministers recognised the scale of the challenge posed by the pace of technological change and that governments alone cannot meet this challenge. They acknowledged the vital role played by voluntary, community, public sector and private sector organisations in each of the administrations in delivering projects and schemes in their communities.

Future Work Programme

Ministers agreed that officials in the Digital Inclusion work sector should continue to collaborate on the theme of digital skills, and progress the agreements made in the meeting to consider how best to make better use of

cross jurisdictional partnerships with large organisations and to share best practice.

They tasked officials, working closely with the Secretariat, to begin consideration of how best we can support this work across the eight administrations.

Ministers also agreed that they would next meet to discuss digital inclusion in 2019.

BIC Secretariat
23 June 2017

List of Delegates

<u>Isle of Man Government</u>	
Minister for Policy and Reform	Hon Chris Thomas MHK
<u>Irish Government</u>	
Minister of State for Training, Skills and Innovation	John Halligan TD
<u>UK Government</u>	
Minister for the Constitution	Chris Skidmore MP
<u>Scottish Government</u>	
Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs	Fiona Hyslop MSP
<u>Welsh Government</u>	
Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language	Alun Davies AM
<u>Government of Jersey</u>	
Assistant Minister for e-Government	Deputy Scott Wickenden
<u>Government of Guernsey</u>	
Member of the Committee for Economic Development and Member of the Committee for Education, Sport and Culture	Deputy Andrea Dudley-Owen