



COMMUNIQUÉ

14th Ministerial meeting of the Environment work sector

4 November 2016

The British-Irish Council Environment work sector held its fourteenth Ministerial meeting today, hosted by the Government of Guernsey at St Pierre Park Hotel. Ministers were welcomed by Deputy Barry Brehaut, President of the Committee for the Environment and Infrastructure, on behalf of the Government of Guernsey.

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 Guernsey today focused on addressing the problem of food waste and on improving the quality and quantity of recycling.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Life Opportunities. The Irish Government was represented by Seán Kyne TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs and Natural Resources. The Scottish Government was represented by Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. The Welsh Government was represented by Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by Alastair Ross MLA, Junior Minister in the Executive Office and Megan Fearon MLA,

Junior Minister in the Executive Office. 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. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Barry Brehaut, President of the Committee for the Environment and Infrastructure.

Addressing the problem of Food Waste

Ministers discussed the issue of food waste and responses across their administrations. Tim Smith, Group Quality Director at Tesco, attended for the first part of this item to set out how they are addressing the global issue of food waste and working to meet an ambition of sending no surplus food which could be safely eaten to waste from their UK stores by the end of next year. This approach includes partnering with producers and growers to tackle food waste across the supply chain and helping customers reduce waste in their homes.

Ministers endorsed the need to tackle food waste for a variety of financial, environmental and moral reasons. They noted that all members of the Council share the goal of reducing food waste wherever possible.

Ministers agreed that all members of the Council will wish to see concrete steps taken towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal target to: *By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.*¹ Finally Ministers committed to working together to develop and share ideas and experiences of policy interventions to support each administration's ambitions on food waste.

The paper prepared by the work sector can be viewed on the British-Irish Council website: www.britishirishcouncil.org.

¹ UN Sustainable Development Goal 12, Target 12.3: *By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.* Further information at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>.

Recycling – Improving Quality and Quantity

Following the discussion on food waste, Ministers discussed the matter of recycling and how to improve both quality and quantity. They noted that the materials that flow through our economy represent a valuable resource and that recycling those materials can create economic opportunities for business and local authorities, while playing an important part in minimising our call on dwindling global resources.

Ministers noted that the diverse experiences across administrations presented opportunities for collaboration and learning to enable the citizens of these islands to view everyday materials as a resource and to recycle them effectively.

In conclusion, Ministers agreed that all Member Administrations should continue to share information and experiences in relation to challenges, particularly with reference to increasing the quantity and quality of recycling and improving material prices. They agreed that where opportunities arise to work together to tackle common challenges on recycling, then Member Administrations should do so. They also agreed to identify and share research in relation to recycling within cities.

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

Invasive Non-Native Species

Following on from the 13th BIC Environment Ministerial held in the Isle of Man in 2014, Ministers reaffirmed the threats posed to their respective ecosystems from Invasive Non-Native Species. They noted that this continued to be a matter of concern across these islands and agreed to continue collaboration and cooperation between all BIC Member Administrations, including holding a workshop in 2017 for those working on this issue.

Protecting Our Natural Capital And Resources

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to agreements on Natural Capital and Resources made at the Council's London Summit in November 2015. They discussed and noted the progress made on those agreements in the intervening

period, including a series of workshops earlier in 2016 which explored matters relating to pollinators and to natural capital accounting. Ministers agreed to continue collaboration and cooperation on Natural Capital and Resources.

Future work

Ministers agreed that the fifteenth Ministerial meeting will be hosted by the Irish Government in the first quarter of 2018. In addition to the commitments outlined above, Ministers asked that the work sector collaborate on a programme of work looking at ways to collaborate on the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals with a particular focus on:

- Goal 6: *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;*
- Goal 13: *Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts* (with a British-Irish Council focus on climate adaptation).²

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

BIC Secretariat

4 November 2016

www.britishirishcouncil.org

² Further information about the UN Sustainable Development Goals can be found at:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

**BRITISH-IRISH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT WORK SECTOR**

Government of Guernsey

Deputy Barry Brehaut, President of the Committee for the Environment and Infrastructure

UK Government

Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Life Opportunities

Irish Government

Seán Kyne TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs and Natural Resources

Scottish Government

Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

Welsh Government

Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs

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Alastair Ross MLA, Junior Minister in the Executive Office

Megan Fearon MLA, Junior Minister in the Executive Office

Isle of Man Government

Geoffrey Boot MHK, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture

Government of Jersey

Deputy Steve Luce, Minister for the Department of the Environment