



TENTH MEETING OF THE BRITISH-IRISH COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT SECTORAL GROUP

Communiqué

The British-Irish Council Environment Sectoral Group held its tenth Ministerial meeting at the Dove Marine Laboratory, Newcastle on 15 July 2010.

The British-Irish Council Environment Sectoral Group held its tenth Ministerial meeting at the Dove Marine Laboratory, Newcastle today. The meeting was part of an ongoing series of meetings within the British-Irish Council (BIC) since the first summit of 17 December 1999, which identified the environment as one of the issues for discussion.

The British-Irish Council was established under Strand Three of the Agreement reached in Belfast on Good Friday 1998 as a forum for its members to exchange information, discuss, consult, and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant Member Administrations.

The British Government was represented by Richard Benyon MP, Minister for the Marine Environment who chaired the meeting; The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by Robin Newton MBE, MLA, Junior Minister in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and Michelle Gildernew, MP, MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. The Irish Government was represented by Michael Finneran, TD, Minister for Housing and Local Services. Jersey was represented by Senator Freddie Cohen, Minister for Planning and Environment. Guernsey was represented by Deputy Peter Sirrett, Minister for the Environment Department. The Welsh Assembly Government was represented by Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing. The Scottish Government was represented by Richard Lochhead MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment and the Isle of Man by John Shimmin MHK, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture

A full list of delegation members can be found at the foot of this page.

Marine

The main focus of the meeting was on marine issues and was hosted by the Dove Marine Laboratory in Cullercoats, Newcastle. Ministers were given the opportunity to view the work of the laboratory and also to be informed about the work of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP), as part of a 'market place' event. Ministers were also presented with update papers on Fishing for Litter and Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

The MMO, based in Newcastle, was vested on 1 April 2010. Chris Parry gave a presentation outlining the role of the organisation and how they will be working. This was followed by a presentation from Dr Craig Wallace and Professor Dan Laffoley of MCCIP, which outlined how the partnership worked, the value derived from the partnership and this year's annual report card, launched at the meeting. The 2010 MCCIP annual report card includes updated climate impacts down to regional level using the most recent UK Climate Projections, with confidence levels for current and projected impacts and opportunities clearly explained.

MCCIP also announced their next phase, which includes a programme of 'climate smart working' that will draw together and share adaptation experience from key marine sectors. An update on potential future areas of work was then given, and Ministers were able to discuss these ideas with the MCCIP presenters and asked for an update at the next Ministerial in Wales. Ireland is presently investigating the feasibility of becoming a member of the MCCIP Partnership.

Ministers also gave a brief update on the ongoing work in their Member Administrations and committed to continuing to work closely together on marine issues going forward. In particular, a commitment was made to work together toward Good Environmental Status in the seas around BIC member's coasts in the context of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and to explore further the sharing of research vessel resources and training opportunities.

Climate Change

The UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) were launched last year, reflecting the fifth generation of climate scenarios. Roger Street, who gave a presentation to Ministers at the Belfast Ministerial in 2008, came back to give the group an update, focusing on the reception and take up of the projections. The remainder of the discussion focused on what group members had been doing to develop and support adaptation programmes in their respective administrations.

Sellafield and Radioactive Waste

Ireland indicated that officials from the Irish and Manx Governments are working closely on a revised joint paper on Sellafield and radioactive waste. The paper will address current operations at Sellafield, the safety of those operations, the final disposal of radioactive waste and the control of environmental discharges.

Waste

Waste has been agreed as the theme for the next Ministerial Meeting in Wales. Ministers were provided with a paper that updated them on what the different member administrations were doing to address waste issues. Officials had provided Ministers with a list of potential areas for future cooperation and sharing of best practice. Ministers briefly discussed the most promising areas for joint working and tasked officials with putting these ideas into a workplan, which could be taken forward and reviewed at the next Ministerial meeting.

Future Work Areas

Ministers discussed the dates and themes for the next two meetings. They confirmed that the next meeting will be held in Wales in 2011, and that the theme will be waste. Ministers then discussed the meeting that will follow Wales. Whilst there was support for the theme to be biodiversity, it was felt that some work should be done prior to the meeting in Wales to determine whether this is an appropriate work area. The timing of the meeting after Wales will be dependent on this decision, and will be confirmed at the meeting in Wales.

Conclusions

Ministers welcomed the continued close co-operation between Member Administrations on environmental issues. An update on marine issues, in particular on co-operation on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and improved work together in marine research would be provided to Ministers at the next meeting. Officials will also work together on the development and delivery of a workplan on waste issues for review at the next meeting in Wales.

BRITISH-IRISH COUNCIL (ENVIRONMENT SECTORAL GROUP)

LIST OF DELEGATES: THURSDAY 15 JULY 2010

British Government

Richard Benyon MP, Minister for the Marine Environment

Irish Government

Michael Finneran, TD, Minister for Housing and Local Services;

Northern Ireland Executive

Robin Newton MBE, MLA, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Michelle Gildernew MP, MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

Welsh Assembly Government

Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Scottish Government

Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment

Government of the Isle of Man

John Shimmin MHK, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture

States of Jersey

Senator Freddie Cohen, Minister for Planning and Environment.

States of Guernsey

Deputy Peter Sirrett, Minister for the Environment Department