



British - Irish COUNCIL

COMMUNIQUÉ

Ministerial Meeting of the Sectoral Group on Environment 25 February 2011

The British-Irish Council Environment Sectoral Group held its eleventh Ministerial meeting at the Sims Recycling Solutions, Newport, 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 and co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant Member Administrations.

The British Government was represented by Lord Henley, Minister for Waste and Recycling, who also chaired the meeting. The Welsh Assembly Government was represented by Jane Davidson, AM, Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing. The Irish Government was represented by Michael Finneran, TD, Minister for Housing and Local Services. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by Edwin Poots, MLA, Minister of the Environment and Michelle Gildernew, MP, MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Jersey was represented by Deputy Robert Duhamel, Assistant Minister for Planning and Environment. Guernsey was represented by Deputy Peter Sirett, Minister for the Environment Department. 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

Waste

The meeting focussed mainly on waste issues. Ministers visited Newport Wastesavers, a small community not-for-profit recycling group, and Sims Recycling Solutions in Newport, which is part of the world's largest electronics metals recycling business.

Ministers discussed a wide range of waste related topics, including the definition of Zero Waste; the use of carbon metrics to calculate waste streams; the use of voluntary initiatives versus regulatory approaches; how to effect individual behavioural change, recognising that the financial drivers that motivate business do not apply to individuals; and what approaches have worked for reducing and managing food waste.

Ministers welcomed the opportunity to exchange ideas and case studies, and gave a commitment to work closely together as Administrations developed their strategies for reducing and managing waste.

Marine

Ministers welcomed the news that the Isle of Man had recently joined the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership. They hailed the shared Research Vessel activity between Ireland and the UK that resulted from the last meeting, as an exemplar of co-operative working and shared procurement. Ministers also recognised the contribution that the Integrated-Coastal Zone Management sub-group had made to the work of the British-Irish Council, but concluded that their work had come to a natural end and that the group should be formally wound-up.

Climate Change

Ministers welcomed a written report from UK Climate Impact Programme (UKCIP), which provided an update of their activities since the last meeting in July 2010. It outlined the work they had been doing with four of the Administrations (Wales, Isle of Man, Scotland and Northern Ireland, together with some pre-emptive work with Jersey) on piloting a set of key messages, tailored for use in their Administrations, which would help to express the main concepts and issues relating to climate change. Ministers asked for an update at a future meeting.

Sellafield and Radioactive Waste

Ministers noted that Ireland and the Isle of Man have prepared a joint discussion paper on Sellafield. The UK, which has Governmental responsibility for Sellafield, has been invited to prepare a response. Ministers agreed to discuss the paper and review progress at a future meeting of the Council.

Future Hosts and Themes

Ministers agreed that the next Ministerial meeting will be held in Scotland, and that the theme for this meeting will be biodiversity.

Conclusions

Ministers welcomed the continued close co-operation between Member Administrations on environmental issues. They asked for an update on waste issues and climate change adaptation messages to be provided to Ministers at a future meeting, and tasked officials to work together on the development and delivery of a workplan on Biodiversity issues.

BIC Secretariat
25 February 2011

BRITISH-IRISH COUNCIL (ENVIRONMENT SECTORAL GROUP)

List of Delegates

UK Government

Lord Henley, Minister for Recycling and Waste

Irish Government

Mr. Michael Finneran, T.D., Minister for Housing and Local Services;

Northern Ireland Executive

Edwin Poots, MLA, Minister of the Environment

Michelle Gildernew, MP, MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

Welsh Assembly Government

Ms. Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Scottish Government

Mr. Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment

Government of the Isle of Man

Mr. John Shimmin MHK, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture

States of Jersey

Deputy Robert Duhamel, Assistant Minister for Planning and Environment

States of Guernsey

Deputy Peter Sirett, Minister Environment Department