



COMMUNIQUÉ

5th Ministerial meeting of the Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-used Languages work sector 21/22 November 2019

The British-Irish Council Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used (IML) Languages work sector held its fifth Ministerial meeting today, hosted by the Isle of Man Government. Ministers were welcomed by Graham Cregeen MHK, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture on behalf of the Isle of Man 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 today focused on three principal topics: Adult Learning of IML languages; Workforce Planning; and Social use of IML languages, including through the arts and digital technology.

The meeting was chaired by Eluned Morgan AM, Minister for International Relations and Welsh Language in the Welsh Government. The Isle of Man Government was represented by Graham Cregeen MHK, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture. The Irish Government was represented by Seán Kyne TD, Government Chief Whip and Minister of State with responsibility for the Irish Language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands. The Scottish Government was represented by Kate Forbes MSP, Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy. The Jersey Government was represented

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by Deputy Montfort Tadier, Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Rhian Tooley, Member of the Committee for Education, Sport & Culture.

IML 2018 Conference and Report

Ministers discussed the report arising from the conference ‘Adult Learning of IML languages’ which took place on 8/9 March 2018 in Belfast. The focus was primarily on adult learning of IML languages and links with community, workplace and wider society which straddled the three topics of the work sector. In particular, speakers addressed issues such as language learning outside of traditional classroom settings and the role of language in building community cohesion. Approximately 75 delegates and speakers from across the eight BIC Member Administrations attended the event, representing a cross section of the public and community sectors as well as academia.

Ministers noted the report of the conference and agreed to make the report available for public reference. The report of the conference can be viewed in the reports section on the British-Irish Council website: www.britishirishcouncil.org.

Presentation from Jeebin

Ministers also received a presentation from Phil Gawne on behalf of Jeebin, the Manx Language Network. The presentation outlined the history of the Manx language and celebrated the work of those involved in its remarkable resurgence.

UNESCO International Year of Indigenous languages, 2019

The United Nations declared 2019 The Year of Indigenous Languages (IY2019) “in order to raise awareness of our languages, not only to benefit the people who speak these languages, but also for others to appreciate the important contribution they make to our world’s rich cultural diversity”. It was noted that an important part of the IML work sector’s remit is to share best practice, to learn from one another and to celebrate the varied and diverse languages used on these islands. Ministers highlighted a number of activities that have been undertaken by the Member Administrations to partake in this initiative and it has served as a good foundation for more progress on supporting IML languages in the future.

Future work

Ministers agreed that the sixth Ministerial meeting will be hosted by Jersey. In addition to the commitments outlined above, Ministers considered proposals for the future work programme of the IML languages work sector. Noting the primary importance of facilitating the use of IML languages in social settings, they agreed that promoting the use of IML languages should become a standing item of focus for the work sector. They agreed that the work sector should additionally focus on:-

- Social use of language (standing item);
- Early Years; and,
- Infrastructure / Technology/Economic Impact

The Ministers agreed that these policy areas were worthy and highly interesting work topics and endorsed them as the basis of a future work area subject to agreement by the Council at the next Summit. Once formally approved by the Council, the work sector will report back on progress to the next meeting of IML Languages Ministers.

BIC Secretariat

22 November 2019

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

Welsh Government

Eluned Morgan AM, Minister for International Relations and Welsh Language

Isle of Man Government

Graham Cregeen MHK, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture

Scottish Government

Kate Forbes MSP, Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy

Guernsey Government

Deputy Rhian Tooley, Member of the Committee for Education, Sport & Culture

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