



**Ministerial Meeting of the Social Inclusion Sectoral Group
15-16 July 2004
Communiqué**

Edwina Hart AM MBE, the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, hosted a meeting of Representatives from the British-Irish Council in Cardiff on 15 and 16 July 2004 on Social Inclusion.

The British-Irish Council was established under the Strand Three Provisions of the Good Friday Agreement as a forum for its Members to exchange information and best practice and, where possible, take forward joint action.

The Welsh Assembly Government and Scotland's devolved government lead the work of the Council on social inclusion.

The Welsh Assembly Government was represented by Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration Edwina Hart AM MBE, who hosted the meeting. Margaret Curran MSP Minister for Communities represented the Scottish Executive. The British Government was represented by Maria Eagle MP, Minister for Disabled People, Department for Work and Pensions and Ian Pearson MP, Under Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office, representing the interests of Northern Ireland. The Irish Government was represented by Mary Coughlan TD Minister for Social and Family Affairs. Jersey was represented by Senator Paul Routier President of the Employment and Social Security Committee. Guernsey was represented by Deputy Mary Lowe Minister of the Social Security Department. The Isle of Man was represented by Director of Social Services David Cooke.

A full list of delegation members is attached.

Mrs Hart welcomed delegates to the meeting. BIC members reviewed the Group's first phase of work covering financial inclusion as agreed at the BIC Summit on Social Inclusion at New Lanark in Scotland in November 2002. Members reiterated their commitment to combating poverty and social exclusion and agreed to explore further key areas of this agenda.

Ministers recognised that the problems of social and financial exclusion affect communities throughout all BIC Administrations. The meeting heard progress reports on the range of strategies that Members are working on to tackle these problems.

Ministers reviewed progress in the Council's work programme on financial inclusion, as agreed at the BIC summit meeting in New Lanark, Scotland, in November 2002. Ministers discussed this work, which is enabling individuals and communities affected by poverty and deprivation to have greater access to appropriate financial products and services. It was noted that financial inclusion strategies can make a major contribution to improving individual and household income, employability, health and well being. At a community level, financial inclusion programmes can support ownership of assets and the capacity of communities to foster wealth creation and enable local businesses to grow.

The Council's work has included promoting best practice, at both national and local levels. It has looked at improving access to financial products and services such as credit unions and money advice. It has studied efforts to improve financial capability across BIC Member Administrations. Finally, it has examined how governments can best support the development of social enterprises aimed at benefiting the economic and social regeneration of communities.

Ministers agreed that BIC Member Administrations have learned a great deal from each other and that exchanges of information have had a significant influence on developments in financial inclusion in several of the BIC Member Administrations. They reaffirmed the important role that financial inclusion can play in social inclusion and anti-poverty strategies more generally. BIC Member Administrations will continue to exchange information and ideas and learn from each other's experience.

Ministers agreed that the next topic for work within the Council's social inclusion theme would be disability, access to employment, education and training.

List of Delegates

Welsh Assembly Government	
Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration	Edwina Hart AM MBE
Director, Social Justice and Regeneration Department	John Bader
Head of Social Inclusion Unit	Lynne Schofield
Scottish Executive	
Minister for Communities	Margaret Curran MSP
Head of Social Inclusion Division	Kay Barton
Irish Government	
Minister for Social and Family Affairs	Mary Coughlan TD
Principal Officer, Office for Social Inclusion, Ireland	Orlaigh Quinn
Advisor to Mary Coughlan	Helen Faughnan
Jersey	
President, Employment and Social Security Committee	Senator Paul Routier
Controller of Employment and Social Security	Ann Esterson
Guernsey	
Minister of the Social Security Department	Deputy Mary Lowe
Chief Officer of the Social Security Department	Malcolm Nutley
Head of Policy and Research Unit, States of Guernsey Policy Council	Paul Veron
British Government	
Minister for Disabled People, Department for Work & Pensions	Maria Eagle MP
Director for Disability and Carers, DWP	Bruce Calderwood
Minister for Finance	Ian Pearson MP
Head of New Targeting Social Need Unit, OFMDFM	Harriet Ferguson
Head of Equality and Social Needs Division	Dr Gerry Mulligan
Isle of Man	
David Cooke	Director of Social Services
Assistant Director of Social Services (Adults)	Andrew Swithinbank