



Communiqué

25th Summit – Lancaster House, 27th November 2015

The British-Irish Council held its 25th Summit meeting today hosted by the UK Government in London. The heads of delegation were welcomed to Lancaster House by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP, on behalf of the UK Government.

The Irish Government delegation was led by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by the First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA and the deputy First Minister, Mr Martin McGuinness MLA. The Scottish Government delegation was led by the First Minister, the Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP. The Welsh Government delegation was led by First Minister, the Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM. The Isle of Man Government delegation was led by the Chief Minister, Hon Allan Bell MHK. The Government of Jersey delegation was led by the Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst, and the Government of Guernsey by the Chief Minister, Deputy Jonathan Le Tocq. A full list of delegation members is attached.

The British-Irish Council (BIC) was established under the 1998 Multi-Party Agreement and plays a unique and important role in developing and furthering links between its Member Administrations. It provides a forum for exchange of information and collaboration on matters of mutual interest and it fosters positive, practical relationships across these islands. Council Members welcomed the agreement published on 17 November, 'A Fresh Start: the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan', following ten weeks of cross party talks involving the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK and Irish Governments.

The Council Members offered their condolences to the people of France following the recent terrorist attacks in Paris.

Domestic Resettlement of Refugees

The Council reflected on the effects of the conflict in Syria and the refugee situation in the Middle East and the impact this was having within Europe. It

noted the efforts across the eight BIC Member Administrations and internationally to help those refugees. Specifically, Ministers noted the value of joint working and cooperation between Member Administrations on the domestic resettlement of refugees.

The Economy

The Council discussed the economic situation across the Member Administrations and considered the continued improvements in their respective Administrations. All administrations reaffirmed the value of the Council's discussions in this matter. The Council also reviewed the latest youth employment statistics across the Member Administrations and they welcomed the progress in this area.

BIC Work Sectors

The Council discussed the twelve BIC work sectors and noted the positive achievements since the last Summit took place in June 2015. This included Ministerial meetings held by the Creative Industries and Housing work sectors.

All Member Administrations reaffirmed the importance they attach to the British-Irish Council especially through the valued work undertaken by the work sectors. The Council agreed various principles (within the parameters set out in Strand 3 of the 1998 Agreement) to reinforce the sectors' work and ensure BIC continues to deliver value for all Member Administrations.

In accordance with the principles the Council further agreed that the two subgroups which form the BIC Energy work sector should merge. The Energy work sector was established in 2009 as: Marine Energy (led by the Scottish Government) and Electricity Grids (led by the UK Government). In the time since the two groups were established their policy focus has become more closely aligned. The Scottish and UK Governments will remain as joint Chairs of the group which will continue to look at both Marine Energy and Electricity Grids and which will focus on collaboration and knowledge sharing in relation to research and funding.

Environment: Protecting Our Natural Capital And Resources

The BIC Environment work sector presented a collaborative paper on Natural Capital and resources. The paper explored the challenge of safeguarding Natural Capital with a particular focus on pollinators, and discussed the value of a strategic and collaborative approach.

Responding to the paper, the Council had a detailed discussion on the need for continued collaboration to attain maximum impact, especially given the cross-border implications of the decline of Natural Capital. Member Administrations discussed the role of a natural capital framework in deepening

understanding of the value of the environment and managing it better. The Council recognised that combining resources across BIC Administrations in this matter also allows for valuable efficiency gains.

The Council agreed that Member Administrations would work together to further their knowledge and understanding of Natural Capital and the benefits it provides.

BIC Secretariat

The Council noted the Secretariat's mid-year report and agreed a new Secretariat Business Plan for the period 2015-18.

Date and Location of the Next Summit Meeting

The Council noted that the next BIC Summit would be hosted by the Scottish Government in June 2016.

BIC Secretariat

27 November 2015

List of Ministerial Delegates

UK Government	
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Lord Gardiner of Kimble
Irish Government	
An Taoiseach	Mr Enda Kenny TD
Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Ms Heather Humphreys TD
Northern Ireland Executive	
First Minister	Rt Hon Peter Robinson MLA
deputy First Minister	Mr Martin McGuinness MLA
Minister of the Environment	Mr Mark H Durkan MLA
Scottish Government	
First Minister	Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs	Ms Fiona Hyslop MSP
Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform	Dr Aileen McLeod MSP
Welsh Government	
First Minister	Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM
Minister for Natural Resources	Mr Carl Sargeant AM
Isle of Man Government	
Chief Minister	Hon Allan Bell MHK
Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture	Hon Richard Ronan MHK
Government of Jersey	
Chief Minister	Senator Ian Gorst
Minister for the Environment	Deputy Steve Luce
Government of Guernsey	
Chief Minister	Deputy Jonathan Le Tocq
Minister for Commerce and Employment	Deputy Kevin Stewart