



## **Sixteenth Summit Meeting – London – 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

The British-Irish Council established under the agreement reached in Belfast on Good Friday, 1998, held its 16th summit meeting today, in Lancaster House, London.

The heads of delegations were welcomed by the UK Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP. The Irish Government delegation was led by An Taoiseach, Mr. Enda Kenny TD. The Scottish Government was led by First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MSP. The Welsh Government was led by the First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM. The Northern Ireland Executive delegation was led by the First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Peter Robinson MLA, and the deputy First Minister, Mr. Martin McGuinness MP MLA. The Government of Jersey was represented by the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Treasury and Resources, Senator Philip Ozouf. The Government of Guernsey was led by the Chief Minister, Deputy Lyndon Trott and the Isle of Man Government delegation was led by Chief Minister, Hon. Tony Brown MHK.

The British-Irish Council (BIC) plays a unique and important role in furthering, promoting and developing links between its member administrations through positive, practical relationships and in providing a forum for consultation and cooperation on East-West issues. Member administrations consult, discuss and exchange information with each other on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant administrations.

### **Economic growth**

The summit provided an opportunity for an update of each administration's economic position and for a substantive discussion of the common objectives of promoting economic growth and related challenges and opportunities. The council discussed how to achieve strong, sustainable and balanced growth that is more evenly shared across the member administrations. It considered measures to promote economic growth including incentives for businesses to start, finance and grow a business; encouraging investment and exports as a route to a more balanced economy; and creating a more educated and flexible workforce. The council acknowledged that member administrations should continue to learn from each other's successes and to identify synergies across administrations.

### **Electricity grid infrastructure**

The council welcomed the discussion paper on an All Islands Approach (AIA) to energy resources. The council agreed the AIA vision of an approach to energy resources across the British Islands and Ireland which enables opportunities for commercial generation and transmission, facilitating the cost-effective exploitation of the renewable energy resources available, increasing integration of their markets and improving security of supply. The council agreed a set of principles to underpin the vision, and launched a programme of joint work spanning the potential for renewable energy trading, as well as workstreams on interconnection and market integration.

### **BIC Standing Secretariat**

The council discussed progress on the work to establish the Standing Secretariat. The council will receive a further progress report at the next summit in Dublin. A target start date of 1 January 2012 was agreed, subject to final details and related issues being agreed.

### **Update on Work Sectors**

The council noted the progress of each of the 11 sectoral groups of the BIC based upon the following reports:

#### **Collaborative Spatial Planning**

The collaborative spatial planning sectoral group brings together officials responsible for regional development strategies, national planning strategies and frameworks in each member administration. The group most recently met in London in March 2011 where it was briefed on European funded research about territorial impacts, for which the UK Department of Community and Local Government is a lead stakeholder. The group will meet next in September in Guernsey.

#### **Demography**

The demography workstream's current area of focus is on understanding the implications of wider student flows amongst the BIC member administrations. Meetings of appropriate policy leads were held on 26 November 2010 and 2 June 2011. The group has collated available evidence on statistics and policies relating to student flow in each of the BIC administrations and is currently preparing a paper for ministers.

#### **Digital Inclusion**

Digital inclusion was one of the main subjects of discussion at the BIC summit in the Isle of Man in December 2010. At the summit, the future work plan of the sectoral group was agreed which will focus on developing a body of knowledge and best practice around programmes to support digital inclusion; understanding the links between digital inclusion and public sector cost savings; identifying and sharing cost effective ways to encourage and facilitate more widespread engagement of those digitally excluded; and shared and common statistics and other relevant information.

## **Early Years Policy**

The early years policy sectoral group remains committed to driving forward work on early years' childcare, education and health policies, within which interventions are key in improving children's life chances, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to support families in these challenging economic times. The group has undertaken study visits including a visit to "Young Ballymun" organised by the Department of Education and Science in Ireland recently. The workstream will now focus on best practice in assessing whether policy interventions are delivering effective outcomes and getting best value for money.

## **Energy**

The energy sectoral group focuses on 2 areas: electricity grid infrastructure and marine renewables. The electricity grid aspect of the group is led by the UK whilst the marine renewables aspect is led by Scotland.

### **Electricity Grid Infrastructure**

The BIC electricity grid sub-group has been taking forward the work programme agreed at the Energy Ministerial meeting in March 2010 focusing on: interconnection and market integration; planning and consents; Smart Grids, National Renewable Energy Action Plans, the North Sea Countries Offshore Grid Initiative and the ISLES Offshore Grid Feasibility Study. The electricity grid group has also prepared a summit discussion paper on a proposed "All Islands Approach" covering the areas of energy trading, interconnection and market coupling policy areas.

### **Marine Renewables**

The energy marine renewables sub-group continues to share best practice around research and development, policy support and marine environment activities.

Following the BIC summit in Guernsey in June 2010, BIC energy Ministers wrote jointly to EU Energy Commissioner Oettinger in August 2010 to promote the work being taken forward by member administrations in the area of marine renewables. The letter included a request for commission officials to engage with BIC officials to consider what support the EU could offer to the further development of this sector. The BIC marine energy group is working collaboratively with the EU Ocean Energy Association and Marine Energy Interest Group to achieve shared goals of increasing the profile of marine renewables with the European Commission and adoption within the Strategic Energy Technology Plan.

## **Environment**

The environment workstream held its 11th ministerial meeting in Newport, Wales in February 2011. The meeting included updates on climate change and marine, but focused mainly on waste issues. 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; ways 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 member administrations developed their strategies for reducing and managing waste.

## **Housing**

The BIC housing workstream held its second ministerial meeting at St Mary's University College in Belfast on 16 February 2011. The meeting was chaired by Alex Attwood MLA, the then Minister for Social Development. Ministers discussed a paper which detailed the progress made in each BIC member administration to deliver their housing obligations as agreed at the previous BIC ministerial meeting held in December 2009. Ministers welcomed the work which had been undertaken by the group and agreed that it was important to continue to share and exchange information and best practice as administrations continue their work in this area.

## **Indigenous, Minority and Lesser Used Languages**

The workstream has agreed a detailed forward work programme for 2011. This will include a seminar for practitioners and policy makers to discuss how to increase the use of indigenous, minority and lesser used languages by young people within the member administrations. A ministerial meeting will also be held during the seminar which will discuss the policy recommendations resulting from the 2010 Community Development Seminar, organised by the workstream in Belfast in October 2010. The seminar and ministerial meeting will both take place in Ireland during November 2011. During 2011, the workstream will also discuss lessons that can be learnt from each other in the education field, specifically in terms of immersion and second language education; and arrangements for broadcasting in the minority language across the administrations.

## **Misuse of Drugs**

Tackling the misuse of drugs is a challenge for all member administrations. Ireland takes responsibility for advancing co-operation in this area within the council. The misuse of drugs workstream endeavours to cover a wide range of issues concerned with drug misuse in its annual work programme. Meetings are regularly attended by professionals and academics in the relevant field which greatly adds to the discussion. The ongoing regular contact between BIC member administrations on a range of drug related issues has contributed to broader co-operation and exchange of information across the BIC area.

A full programme is expected to be undertaken in 2011, and the theme of the next summit in Dublin will be the misuse of drugs.

## **Social Inclusion**

The social inclusion workstream continues to make good progress on the following objectives set by ministers for social inclusion at their 26 March 2010 ministerial meeting: how the third sector working together can make communities more sustainable and socially cohesive; how we can enable wider civil activity; and how we enable the third sector to become part of the mainstream in service delivery.

An information gathering exercise has been conducted and is providing a baseline on policies, funding, partnership working and size and scope of the sector; together with established current arrangements in each member administration to meet the 3 new objectives.

In March 2011, senior third sector representatives from each member administration attended the officials meeting in London and provided evidence of their work in terms of the 3 objectives, and addressed their top 3 policy recommendations for engagement with the third sector. The opportunity to contribute in this way was warmly welcomed by the third sector representatives attending.

## **Transport**

Officials of the transport group are considering the action that could be taken to make progress towards mutual recognition of lesser driving offences between the UK and Ireland.

The BIC accessible transport sub-group has considered improving accessible travel information by developing a common webpage which provides a range of information for disabled people travelling from one administration area to another. Testing is currently underway after which the outcome will be presented to the main transport committee. The sub group has also prepared a paper on the mutual recognition of concessionary fares which is to be considered by the main transport committee.

Proposals are being developed for a ministerial meeting in 2011 to fit in with the timing of the production of Northern Ireland's new Regional Transportation Strategy. Transport officials will be meeting to consider the subject matter.

## **Next Summit**

The council agreed that the autumn BIC Summit in 2011 will be hosted by Ireland.

**BIC Secretariat**  
**20 June 2011**

## List of delegates

Irish Government	
An Taoiseach:	Mr. Enda Kenny TD
Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources:	Mr. Pat Rabbitte TD
British Government	
Deputy Prime Minister:	Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland:	Rt. Hon. Owen Paterson MP
Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change:	Mr. Charles Hendry MP
Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury:	Mr. David Gauke MP
Scottish Government	
First Minister:	Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs:	Ms. Fiona Hyslop MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth:	Mr. John Swinney MSP
Welsh Government	
First Minister:	Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM
Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science:	Ms. Edwina Hart MBE AM
Northern Ireland Executive	
First Minister:	Rt. Hon. Peter D Robinson MLA
Deputy First Minister:	Mr. Martin McGuinness MP MLA
Minister of Justice:	Mr. David Ford MLA
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Industry:	Ms. Arlene Foster MLA
Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure:	Ms. Caral Ni Chuilin MLA
Minister for Employment and Learning:	Mr. Stephen Farry MLA
Minister of the Environment:	Mr. Alex Attwood MLA
Minister for Regional Development:	Mr. Danny Kennedy MLA
Junior Minister:	Ms. Martina Anderson MLA
Junior Minister:	Mr. Jonathan Bell MLA
States of Jersey	
Deputy Chief Minister and Treasury and Resources Minister:	Senator Philip Ozouf
Assistant Minister, Economic Development:	Constable Leonard Norman
States of Guernsey	
Chief Minister:	Deputy Lyndon Trott
Minister, Treasury and Resources:	Deputy Charles Parkinson
Minister, Commerce and	Deputy Carla McNulty Bauer

Employment:	
Government of the Isle of Man	
Chief Minister:	Hon. Tony Brown MHK
Treasury Minister:	Hon. Anne V Craine MHK
Minister for the Environment Food and Agriculture:	Hon. John Shimmin MHK