



## **Communiqué**

The British-Irish Council established under the 1998 Multi-Party Agreement held its eighteenth summit meeting today, hosted by the Scottish Government in Stirling Castle.

The heads of delegations were welcomed by the First Minister Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MSP. The Irish Government was led by An Taoiseach, Mr. Enda Kenny TD. The UK Government was led by the Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt. Hon Michael Moore MP. 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 delegation was led by the Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst. The Government of Guernsey delegation was led by Chief Minister, Deputy Peter Harwood and the Isle of Man Government delegation was led by Chief Minister, Hon. Allan Bell MHK.

A full list of delegation members is attached.

The British-Irish Council 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 exchange of information on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the relevant administrations.

### **Youth Employment**

The Council recalling the common challenges and the macroeconomic factors which have led to the current rate of youth unemployment, exchanged views and examined early progress on the various initiatives aimed at helping young people into employment in each Member Administration. In order to sustain and develop this important work, the Council agreed to consider at its next summit in Wales specific proposals to develop further its work on youth employment.

## **Marine Energy**

The Council reviewed in detail the work undertaken by the British-Irish Council Marine Energy workstream and welcomed the progress on advancing Marine Energy co-operation since the issue was last discussed in 2010. It noted the excellent progress that has been made in negotiations with the European Commission since 2010 and endorsed the formalisation of an EU-wide partnership for Marine renewables through establishing an Ocean Energy ERA-NET collaborative action during 2012 between Member States and the Commission. The Council also considered how marine energy could be progressed at European level during Ireland's Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2013.

## **Update on Work Sectors**

The Council noted the good progress and work of each of the eleven sectoral groups of the BIC based upon the following reports:

### ***Collaborative Spatial Planning***

The Collaborative Spatial Planning work sector officials met most recently in Guernsey in March 2012. At this meeting, the group considered the work of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) and work on Territorial Impact Assessments led by the UK's Department of Communities and Local Government. Guernsey officials presented to the group on "Strategic Spatial Planning on Small Islands". The group also received a presentation from academics from University College London on "Planning after Devolution – Convergence, Divergence and Policy Transfer".

### ***Demography***

The Demography work sector has, in recent weeks, completed a report on the Implications of Student Migration between BIC Member Administrations.

### ***Digital Inclusion***

The Digital Inclusion work sector has continued to work on identifying common areas and themes across Member Administrations through the comparison of statistics, policy and strategy. The group has also worked on sharing information on key events and initiatives in order to ensure better co-ordination of national and local campaigns.

Officials met most recently in March 2012 and discussed future possible work areas for the group including:

- Developing case studies from the different Administrations looking at ways to promote digital inclusion;
- The economics (costs and benefit) of moving public services online and the metrics used to capture this;
- Expanding the group to consider digital delivery as well as inclusion; and
- Role of 'Assisted Digital' and how to define it.

### ***Early Years Policy***

The Early Years work sector officials met most recently in April 2012. Recent work has focussed on developing a shared understanding of the evidence base which supports the case for greater investment in the early years and the value for money of early, preventative interventions.

The group has also been exploring evidence and examples of best practice in each of the Administrations. Most recently in Edinburgh, the group were provided with details of the Scottish Government's Play Learn Read campaign and saw for themselves some of the programmes within this campaign that promote early literacy and play and which support parental engagement.

### ***Energy***

The Energy sectoral workstream focuses on two 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***

Following the successful endorsement of the All Islands Approach by the Council at the sixteenth Summit in London, officials from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) have developed draft 'Workstream Delivery Plans' with milestones.

The All Islands Approach involves four workstreams:

- The first workstream involves the extent to which the Renewable Energy Directive flexibility mechanisms could be used by the UK and Irish Governments, should Member States decide to use them.
- The second workstream involves assessing the financial, legal and regulatory issues which would need to be resolved to enable greater cross-border electricity trading.
- The third workstream explores the fit of Joint Projects with interconnector regimes to the extent to which this is not addressed through the North Seas Offshore Countries Grid Initiative (NSOCGI).
- The fourth workstream involves action that needs to be taken to achieve greater integration of wholesale British Electricity Trading and Transmission Arrangements (BETTA) in BIC partner areas with the Single Electricity Market (SEM) on the island of Ireland to realise the full benefits of interconnection, including under the European Union's France-UK-Ireland (FUI) regional electricity market initiative.

Progress in each of the workstreams will be monitored by the BIC Electricity Grid sub-group, which is chaired by DECC officials within the Future Electricity Networks team.

Officials are now working together to develop a number of desk studies to help identify the potential benefits of such an approach. The desk studies will also consider the complex financial, legal and regulatory barriers which would

need to be overcome to enable more cross-border renewables trading and greater interconnection.

### *Marine Renewables*

The Marine Renewables sub-group has focussed on raising the profile of marine renewables as an emerging viable renewable energy resource within the European Union, in collaboration with the EU Ocean Energy Association and the EU Marine Energy Interest Group.

A joint ocean energy position paper was produced by the EU Ocean Energy Association and BIC Members Administrations as the Marine Energy Interest Group and presented at the EU Energy Council in November 2011, flagging the potential for this sector at a European level. The feedback from the Commission to this paper has been positive, inviting the Interest Group to apply for support under the Ocean Energy ERA-NET coordinating.

### ***Environment***

The Environment workstream continues to look at ways in which Governments, agencies and researchers across the BIC Member Administrations can work together to improve their collective understanding of our impacts on the environment and the environment's impact on us. Environment Ministers from all Member Administrations have agreed that these meetings give a synergy to cross-jurisdiction working, and provide an ideal opportunity for Ministerial colleagues to understand each others' agendas and priorities.

The Environment workstream are preparing for their next Ministerial meeting which will be taking place in Scotland in 2012. Ministers agreed that the theme of the meeting will be Biodiversity.

### ***Housing***

Officials of the Housing work sector met most recently in March 2012 and the group has developed a housing directory which provides detail on a number of key areas across the Member administrations as well as on new initiatives.

The next Ministerial meeting is planned for September 2012 and will focus on:

- The Impact of Welfare Reform;
- A Comparison of Rent Levels;
- Empty Homes; and
- Access to funding

### ***Indigenous, Minority and Lesser Used Languages (IMLs)***

The officials group met most recently in June 2012 in Belfast at which a draft paper of the effect of the work sector's work since 2006 was discussed.

The work sector has been facilitating annual seminars to share best practice amongst practitioners and policy makers across the islands. To date, the work sector has held seminars in the fields of adult education, legislation, community development and on young people's use of IMLs. The next

seminar will take place in late 2012 focusing on early years education through the medium of IMLs.

### ***Misuse of Drugs***

Misuse of drugs was a theme of the seventeenth summit in January 2012 in Dublin at which the Council discussed Recovery from Problem Drug Use.

Officials met in May 2012 and discussed issues relating to prescription drugs, in particular Benzodiazepines, and preparations for the forthcoming Ministerial meeting in late June, which will focus on Young People and Drugs – How to Break the Cycle. The Ministerial meeting will also consider the possibility of expanding the work sector's remit to look at collaboration around combating alcohol abuse.

### ***Social Inclusion***

At the most recent Ministerial meeting in March 2012, Ministers endorsed a report produced by the work sector on "The Contribution of the Third Sector to Social Inclusion". In developing the report, officials engaged with the third sector and sought to address the objectives set by Ministers through a series of study visits. The work sector also produced a number of videos which showcase examples of the kind of work and projects the third sector is involved in across Member Administrations.

The report to Ministers "The Contribution of the Third Sector to Social Inclusion" was published on the British-Irish Council website along with the videos produced by the group.

At the Ministerial meeting in March 2012, Ministers agreed a new theme for the work sector on preventative spend, particularly in the context of an ageing population. Ideally the work programme would also address the issue of funding models, and with consideration also being given to early years.

### ***Transport***

The Transport work sector has two sub-groups which deal with accessible transport and sustainable transport issues.

Two papers have been produced by the Accessible Transport sub-group which were endorsed by the Council today: 1) Development of Web Based Travel information for People with Disabilities and 2) Mutual Recognition of Concessionary Fares.

The Sustainable Transport sub-group met on 13 March 2012 and discussed a number of options for the forward work programme of the sub-group. These included the following topics for prioritisation at the next meeting:

- Promotion of walking and cycling;
- Electric vehicles;
- Safer routes to schools;
- Agreed standards/targets;
- Provision of information;
- Public transport;

- Ferries and air travel;
- Connectivity; and
- Vehicle choice/duty.

### ***Possible New Work Sector***

The Council had a brief exchange on the possibility of collaboration around the creative industries. Heads of Administrations asked the Secretariat to prepare a scoping paper in time for the next Summit on the potential benefit of BIC Member Administrations co-operating in this area.

### **BIC Standing Secretariat**

The Council noted the Secretariat's progress since its establishment in Edinburgh on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and endorsed the Secretariat Business Plan.

### **Date and Location of the Next Summit Meeting**

The Council noted that the next BIC Summit in November 2012 will be hosted by the Welsh Government.

**BIC Secretariat**  
**22 June 2012**

## List of Delegates

<b><u>Irish Government</u></b>	
An Taoiseach	Mr. Enda Kenny TD
Minister for Energy, Communications and Natural Resources	Mr. Pat Rabbitte TD
<b><u>UK Government</u></b>	
Secretary of State for Scotland	Rt. Hon Michael Moore MP
Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change	Rt. Hon. Edward Davey MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Rt. Hon. Owen Paterson MP
<b><u>Scottish Government</u></b>	
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
Minister for Youth Employment	Ms. Angela Constance MSP
<b><u>Welsh Government</u></b>	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM
Deputy Minister for Skills	Mr. Jeff Cuthbert AM
<b><u>Northern Ireland Executive</u></b>	
First Minister	Rt. Hon. Peter D Robinson MLA
deputy First Minister	Mr. Martin McGuinness MP MLA
Minister of the Environment	Mr. Alex Attwood MLA
<b><u>States of Jersey</u></b>	
Chief Minister	Senator Ian Gorst
Assistant Chief Minister	Senator Paul Routier MBE
<b><u>States of Guernsey</u></b>	
Chief Minister,	Deputy Peter Harwood
Deputy Chief Minister	Deputy Jonathan Le Tocq
<b><u>Government of the Isle of Man</u></b>	
Chief Minister	Hon. Allan Bell MHK
Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture	Hon. Phil Gawne MHK