



## **32<sup>nd</sup> British-Irish Council Summit, Manchester 28 June 2019**

### **Communiqué**

The British-Irish Council (BIC) held its 32<sup>nd</sup> Summit meeting today hosted by the UK Government. The heads of delegation were welcomed to Manchester by Rt Hon David Lidington MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on behalf of the UK Government. In addition to welcoming all first time attendees to the Council, Minister Lidington extended a particular welcome to Rt Hon Mark Drakeford AM, who attended his inaugural British-Irish Council Summit as First Minister of Wales. A full list of Ministerial participants is attached.

#### **Latest political developments**

Ministers reflected that 2019 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the British-Irish Council. Since the inaugural meeting in London, in 1999, the Council has met regularly at Summit, ministerial and official level to exchange information, discuss, consult and co-operate on matters of mutual interest within the respective competencies of the eight Member Administrations.

Ministers took the opportunity to discuss the latest domestic political developments across their jurisdictions and engaged on topics of mutual interest such as the economy, trade, and ongoing relations with the EU.

The Council received an update on the most recent engagements in Northern Ireland and looked forward to the restoration of the devolved institutions.

Ministers updated the Council on their activity in relation to the UK's exit from the European Union (EU), particularly with reference to engagement between Member Administrations. They also discussed the importance of maintaining the constitutional and formal relationships across the United Kingdom and the Crown Dependencies.

The Council agreed that twenty years on, the Council remained a valued strand of the Belfast – Good Friday Agreement. Ministers reflected on the need for this continued engagement and collaboration and the importance of continuing to strengthen the links and relationships between the people of these islands.

### **Energy**

Ministers with particular responsibility for energy policy met in advance of the Summit meeting to consider a paper prepared by the Council's Energy work sector with a particular focus on smart energy systems. Ministers discussed the most effective approaches in realising the transition to smart energy systems and the existing barriers to overcome. They agreed that smart energy systems are crucial in enabling the decarbonisation of energy that is necessary to combat climate change. They also considered how smart systems might be promoted at a local and community level and the key priorities for research and innovation funding. Ministers welcomed the work sector's plans for further engagement on smart energy within their wider energy work programme and encouraged officials to continue to work together to identify and share best practice across the Member Administrations. Ministers agreed to publish the discussion paper on the Council's website and to make it available to interested stakeholders.

### **Environment**

As part of their discussion on the ongoing work of the Council, Ministers welcomed the update on the BIC Marine Litter Symposium, held in Glasgow in February 2019. Heads of Administration had committed the Council to deliver this event at the Guernsey Summit in June 2018. They noted that the

Symposium had brought together Environment Ministers, officials, stakeholders and young ambassadors from across the eight Member Administration to discuss possible solutions to tackling the issue of marine pollution around these islands. Ministers noted the Environment work sector continued to collaborate on actions to tackle marine litter as part of their current work programme and Ministers welcome the registration of these actions via a joint voluntary pledge in the UN Communities of Ocean Action registry of voluntary commitments for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. Ministers also welcomed the ongoing collaborative work of the Environment work sector on climate adaptation.

### **BIC Secretariat**

The Council noted the Secretariat's end-of-year report and welcomed the publication of the Council's Annual Report for 2018/19. The Council confirmed the Secretariat would retain the same budget for the financial year 2019/20.

### **Next Summit Meeting**

The Council noted that the next BIC Summit would be hosted by the Government of Ireland.

### **BIC Secretariat**

**28 June 2019**

## **List of Ministerial Delegates**

<b>UK Government</b>	
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office	Rt Hon David Lidington MP
Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation	Chris Skidmore MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Exiting the EU	Robin Walker MP
<b>Irish Government</b>	
An Taoiseach	Leo Varadkar TD
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment	Richard Bruton TD
<b>Scottish Government</b>	
First Minister	Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations	Michael Russell MSP
Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands	Paul Wheelhouse MSP
<b>Welsh Government</b>	
First Minister	Rt Hon Mark Drakeford AM
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs	Lesley Griffiths AM
<b>Government of Jersey</b>	
Chief Minister	Senator John Le Fondré
Minister for External Relations	Senator Ian Gorst
<b>Government of Guernsey</b>	
Chief Minister	Deputy Gavin St Pier
Energy Minister	Deputy Shane Langlois
<b>Isle of Man Government</b>	
Chief Minister	Hon Howard Quayle MHK
Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture	Geoffrey Boot MHK