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COMMUNIQUÉ

The British-Irish Council, established under the Agreement reached in Belfast on Good Friday 1998, held its sixth Summit meeting today at Castle Cornet in Guernsey . The meeting was chaired by Deputy Laurie Morgan, Chief Minister of the States of Guernsey.

The Irish and British Governments were represented by the Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD and the Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt Hon John Prescott MP respectively.

The Welsh Assembly Government was represented by the First Minister, Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM and the Scottish Executive by Patricia Ferguson MSP, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport.

The Isle of Man was represented by the Hon Richard Corkill MHK, Chief Minister of the Government of the Isle of Man , and Jersey was represented by Senator Wendy Kinnard, of the Policy and Resources Committee.

[A full list of delegation members is attached.](#)

The British-Irish Council is a forum for its Members to exchange information, discuss, consult and endeavour to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the respective competencies.

The Council noted the ongoing engagement between the two Governments and the parties in Northern Ireland and looks forward to the restoration of the devolved institutions, established under the Agreement, as soon as possible.

Tourism

The main focus of today's meeting was tourism, the sector in which Guernsey takes the lead within the BIC. The Council noted the importance of the tourism sector in their economies, as well as the valuable contribution tourism makes to relations between Members through social and cultural interchange. The meeting highlighted the common challenges faced by BIC members and the benefits that accrue from exchanging experiences and best practice.

The Council agreed on a number of areas where enhanced co-operation would be beneficial.

Recognising the importance of relevant and accurate statistics to deepen the available knowledge and understanding of tourism and its benefits for BIC administrations, the Council agreed to continue assessing the benefits of using Tourism Satellite Accounting (TSA). This is

an internationally recognised technique for measuring the impact of tourism, and has the potential to allow policymakers within BIC administrations increased access to objective evidence.

The training and recruitment of leisure staff is another important area in the Tourism Sector. The Council noted the potential in this area for confirming and reinforcing the relationships established between the administrations through the BIC, and agreed to a pilot training project that would produce tangible benefits for all the administrations.

In addition to the discussion on Tourism, the Council was updated on work being undertaken in other British-Irish Council areas by the relevant administrations.

Drugs

Ireland leads the work of the Council in relation to the Misuse of Drugs. BIC Ministers with responsibility in this area in their respective administrations met for the third time in Edinburgh in November 2004 to report progress and identify future work. Interventions with young people through formal and informal education projects, children of drug misusing parents and confidential enquiries into drug related deaths were identified as important topics of mutual concern which would form the basis of the work programme in the coming year. A further BIC Ministerial meeting to review progress is scheduled for 2005.

Environment

The UK is the lead Administration on the Environment. BIC Environment Ministers met for the fifth time at a meeting in June 2004 in Cardiff , and agreed that work on biodiversity, which is of interest to BIC members, should start in the autumn of 2004. BIC officials were invited to take part in a conference on Challenge and Opportunities for Sustainable Development in EU25, organised by the Irish Presidency of the EU. BIC Ministers are due to meet again in the spring and autumn of 2005, to discuss follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and integrated Coastal Zone Management, amongst other topics.

Health: the Application of Telemedicine

The Isle of Man leads the work of the Council on the application of Telemedicine and e-health. This work provides a useful forum for the exchange of information and ideas between officials and experts in Member Administrations on the identification and implementation of telemedicine/ e-health solutions. The group is also working on a discussion paper for the Council which will present information on the current status of Telemedicine across the BIC administrations and identify a wide range of issues and future challenges.

Knowledge Economy

Jersey takes the lead on the work of the BIC in relation to the Knowledge Economy. In May officials discussed an early version of a report on Access to ICT by those with Disabilities. The report is based on a study carried out across the BIC area. The final results will be made available to all BIC members. The Group have also continued to develop the BIC Website,

which was used as the primary delivery vehicle for the publication of the BIC Report in July 2004. Future work includes looking at how BIC members can use the UK 's Digital Inclusion Climbing Frame model to map levels of development in this area.

Transport

Northern Ireland is the lead administration on transport. The work of the Group continues to focus on transport links between members, road safety and integrated transport. Work on road safety has focussed on two issues; Driving and Drugs Misuse and Mutual Recognition of Driving Disqualifications. Officials attended a Driving and Drugs Workshop in March 2004 hosted by the UK . Future work includes a scoping study of existing transport links between BIC members, which will serve as a basis for identifying any deficiencies. A meeting of road safety researchers to look at the drugs and driving issue is planned for early 2005, and a working group to look at the mutual recognition of driving offences is also planned.

Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages

Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages was the main topic for discussion at the last BIC summit in November 2003. The Welsh Assembly Government take the lead on this issue, which aims to build on the rich linguistic heritage that all BIC members possess. The Group is focussing on three specific areas, namely language transmission within the family, the teaching of Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages in the field of education , and ICT. Wales is taking the lead on language transmission and building on the work done by the Welsh

Language Board. Future work of the group is likely to focus on data, research and analysis, and planning policy and linguistic considerations.

Social Inclusion

The Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly Government take the lead on the work of the BIC in relation to Social Inclusion. Work since the last Summit has continued to focus on the topic of financial inclusion. This included a two day study visit for officials to Dublin in December 2003 and a BIC Ministerial Meeting in Cardiff in July 2004. Ministers agreed a new focus for future work: disability – access to employment, education and training. Study visits to Northern Ireland , Jersey and the Isle of Man to look at best practise and innovative projects are planned in 2005 to take this work forward. BIC Ministers are due to meet again in 2006.

Future Summit Meetings

The Council noted that the Isle of Man is scheduled to host a summit focussing on telemedicine in 2005.

British-Irish Council

19 November 2004

www.British-IrishCouncil.org

List of Delegates

Guernsey	
Chief Minister	Deputy Laurie Morgan
Minister Department of Commerce & Employment	Deputy Stuart Falla
Chief Executive States of Guernsey	Mr. Mike Brown
Director of Visitor Economy Unit, Commerce & Employment Department.	Mr. Stuart Pinnell
Irish Government	
Taoiseach	Mr. Bertie Ahern TD
Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism	Mr. John O'Donoghue TD
Minister for Foreign Affairs	Mr. Dermot Ahern TD

British Government	
The Deputy Prime Minister	The Rt Hon John Prescott MP
Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs	The Rt Hon The Lord Falconer of Thoroton QC
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	The Rt Hon Paul Murphy MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office	Mr Barry Gardiner MP
Welsh Assembly Government	
First Minister	Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM
Minister for Economic Development and Transport	Mr Andrew Davies AM
Scottish Executive	
Minister for Tourism, Culture & Sport	Ms Patricia Ferguson MSP
Jersey	
Policy and Resources Committee	Senator Wendy Kinnard

Vice-President of the Economic Development Committee	Deputy Lyndon Farham
Chief Executive, Policy and Resources Department	Mr Bill Ogley
Government of the Isle of Man	
Chief Minister	Hon Richard Corkill MHK
Minister for Tourism and Leisure	Hon David Cretney MHK