



**31st Summit, Isle of Man
09 November 2018**

Communiqué

The British-Irish Council (BIC) held its 31st Summit meeting today hosted by the Government of the Isle of Man. The heads of delegation were welcomed to the Island on behalf of the Government of the Isle of Man by the Chief Minister, Howard Quayle MHK. In addition to welcoming first time attendees to the Council, the Chief Minister paid tribute to Carwyn Jones AM, who today attended his eighteenth and final British-Irish Council Summit as First Minister of Wales. A full list of Ministerial participants is attached.

Latest political developments

Five months on from the Council's last meeting in June, Ministers took the opportunity to consider key political developments across their jurisdictions and provide an overview of domestic developments. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the Council and its role in promoting harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships across these islands as set out in the 1998 Agreement.

The Council agreed that political developments underlined the importance of this forum to exchange views and strengthen relationships across Member Administrations. The Council received an update on engagements in Northern Ireland and looked forward to the restoration of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

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Ministers also 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 discussed the importance of maintaining the constitutional and formal relationships across the United Kingdom and the Crown Dependencies. The Council engaged on topics including the economy and trade, free movement of goods and people, the Common Travel Area and ongoing relations with the EU.

Digital Inclusion

Ministers with particular responsibility for digital inclusion met in advance of the Summit meeting to consider a paper prepared by the Council's Digital Inclusion work sector. Ministers noted that, while recent evidence has shown that more people are getting online than ever before, there remained key barriers which prevent people from taking their first step online, including issues of accessibility, digital skills, and motivation. To address these, Ministers discussed future challenges and identified priority issues for the British-Irish Council Digital Inclusion work sector including digital rights, digital skills & literacy and partnership working between the BIC Administrations. A new forward work programme was agreed for the work sector to reflect the priorities discussed during this meeting.

Secretariat Business Plan

Ministers acknowledged that new working methods had been incorporated into the Secretariat's draft of a new multi-year Strategic Business Plan for the period 2018-20 which was reviewed and approved by the Council. In approving the Business Plan, the Council asked the Secretariat to continue to explore how to enhance the work of the British-Irish Council moving forward.

BIC Secretariat

The Council noted the Secretariat's mid-year report.

Next Summit Meeting

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

BIC Secretariat

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List of Ministerial Delegates

Isle of Man Government	
Chief Minister	Hon Howard Quayle MHK
Minister for Policy and Reform	Hon Chris Thomas MHK
UK Government	
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office	Rt Hon David Lidington MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Exiting the EU	Robin Walker MP
Minister of State for Digital and the Creative Industries	Margot James MP
Irish Government	
An Taoiseach	Leo Varadkar TD
Minister of State for Rural Affairs and Natural Resources	Seán Canney TD
Scottish Government	
First Minister	Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs	Fiona Hyslop MSP
Welsh Government	
First Minister	Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM
Counsel General	Jeremy Miles AM
Government of Jersey	
Chief Minister	Senator John Le Fondré
Minister for External Relations	Senator Ian Gorst
Government of Guernsey	
Deputy Minister for Economic Development	Deputy Andrea Dudley-Owen