

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

17/06/2016 - 24/06/2016



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Monday 20 June 2016

British-Irish Council

Summary: In accordance with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, First Minister Foster made the following statement on the twenty-sixth summit meeting of the British-Irish Council, which took place in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow, on Friday 17 June 2016.

Mrs Foster: The Scottish Government hosted the summit, and the heads of delegations were welcomed by the First Minister, the Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP. The Irish Government delegation was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD; the UK Government delegation was led by the Rt Hon David Mundell MP, Secretary of State for Scotland; the Welsh Government delegation was led by the First Minister, the Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM; the Isle of Man Government delegation was led by the Chief Minister, Hon Allan Bell MHK; the Government of Jersey delegation was led by the Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst; and the Government of Guernsey by the Chief Minister, Deputy Gavin St Pier.

The British-Irish Council plays a unique and important role in developing and furthering links between its member Administrations. It provides a forum for exchange of information and collaboration on matters of mutual interest, and it fosters positive, practical relationships across these islands. At the beginning of the meeting, the Council observed a minute's silence following the death of Jo Cox, MP for Batley and Spen, and offered condolences to her family.

The Council reflected on recent elections across a number of member Administrations and discussed how the Council could continue to promote cooperation on issues of mutual interest, such as economic progress in member Administrations, education and closing the attainment gap, housing and healthcare. The Council also noted there might be scope for new areas of cooperation based on emerging priorities across these islands. The Council discussed the forthcoming referendum on the UK's membership of the EU.

Ministers with particular responsibility for unpaid carers met in advance of the summit to consider a detailed paper prepared by the Council's social inclusion work sector. The discussion was then taken forward by heads of administration. The Council acknowledged that carers are an integral part of

society, caring for family, friends and neighbours affected by physical or mental illness, disability, frailty or substance misuse. The Council noted that whilst caring can be a positive and rewarding experience, high-intensity caring in particular can result in poor carer mental health and physical difficulties. Across member Administrations, carers policy sits within a wider context of tackling economic, health and social inequalities and, with regard to young carers, within the holistic, child-at-the-centre approach. The Council reflected on the benefits of preventative approaches rather than crisis-led responses, as well as greater integration of services at a local level.

The Council agreed that further action is required to support carers. Member Administrations committed themselves to working together in order to further their knowledge and understanding of good practice in supporting carers, especially with regard to young carers and older carers; carer identification; and telecare, telehealth and assistive technology. Member Administrations will work with partners in the statutory and third sectors, in communities and in academia to take forward this agenda. The work sector paper will be published on the BIC website.

The Scottish Government updated members on the work which has been done to take forward the ongoing review of the council's work. The Council agreed to examine further whether there are common policy objectives in emerging and established programmes for government across member Administrations and whether there is scope for further collaboration. The Council also agreed to the introduction of a task-and-finish approach to the work of the current BIC work sectors, to ensure continued relevance, and endorsed the forward work plan agreed by the collaborative spatial planning work sector. Work on the review will now be progressed by the Welsh Government in advance of the next summit.

The Council noted the Secretariat's end of year report and agreed a new Council communications plan for the period 2016-18. It welcomed the publication of the BIC annual report 2015. Finally, the Council noted that the next BIC summit will be hosted by the Welsh Government.

Source: <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-20-06-2016.pdf>



Tuesday 21 June 2016

Department of the Taoiseach

Cross Border Projects

Summary: Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach about his role in working with the Northern Ireland Executive in agreeing and implementing cross-Border projects that can benefit from European Union funding, as per the programme for Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Enda Kenny: The Irish Government outlined its commitment to supporting North-South development in the National Development Plan 2016 - 2021, in the "Fresh Start Agreement" and in the Programme for a Partnership Government. The Irish Government is committed to investing in infrastructure to support North-South cooperation and unlock the full potential of the economies of both jurisdictions.

As co-chair of the North South Ministerial Council, I ensure that the focus of Ministers is on the priorities for additional North South co-operation which they have identified in their respective areas of responsibility, particularly as regards assisting economic recovery, job creation, the best use of public funds and the most effective delivery of services for citizens across the island.

As indicated in the recent Programme for a Partnership Government, I look forward to the further development of mutual North South benefit, particularly through the ongoing work of the NSMC.

Narrow Water Bridge:

Under "A Fresh Start - Stormont House Agreement" the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government have agreed to undertake a review of the Narrow Water Bridge project with a view to identifying options for its future development, for consideration by the North South Ministerial Council next month. Discussions at official level have taken place between Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government officials and a report has been prepared for consideration at the next NSMC.

British-Irish Council

I attended the 26th Summit of the British-Irish Council on 17 June hosted by the Scottish Government in Glasgow. The heads of delegation were welcomed by First Minister Sturgeon on behalf of the Scottish Government.

First Minister Sturgeon commenced the meeting with a minute's silence to mark the shocking death of Jo Cox MP. The Council reflected on priorities for Member Administrations and discussed how the Council could continue to promote cooperation on issues of common concern. The Council also noted that there might be scope for new areas of cooperation based on emerging Government and Member Administration priorities across these islands, many of which have had elections in recent times. In the context of current issues, the forthcoming UK EU Referendum was discussed. I clearly set out the Irish Government position and our programme of outreach to Irish citizens in Britain who have a vote.

Minister of State, Helen McEntee met with counterparts with particular responsibility for unpaid carers in advance of the Summit to consider a detailed paper prepared by the Council's Social Inclusion work sector. The discussion was then taken forward by Heads of Administration, where the Council agreed that carers are an integral part of society, caring for family, friends and neighbours affected by physical or mental illness, [disability](#), frailty or substance misuse. It was agreed that further sharing of research and good practice in this important area will be pursued by Member Administrations.

The Scottish Government updated the Council on the work done in advance of the Summit to take forward work being undertaken to review the operation of the Council. It also noted the

Secretariat's end of year report and agreed a new Council Communications Plan for the period 2016-18. The Council also approved publication of the BIC Annual Report 2015.

The next British Irish Council Summit is scheduled for Wales in November 2016.

Source: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-06-21a.71&s=cross-border>