

European and External Affairs Committee

Date: 11 November 2004
Location: 9.00 – 12.20
Venue: National Assembly for Wales
Title: British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body - Update

Background

1. The 29th Plenary Session of the British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body (BIIPB) took place at the Marriott St Pierre, Chepstow from 17-19 October 2004. The Assembly was represented by a cross-party Assembly delegation comprising the Deputy Presiding Officer, John Griffiths AM, Mike German AM, Dai Lloyd AM and David Melding AM.

2. The programme of business, a copy of which is included at Appendix A, included debates on recent political developments, relations with the Nordic Council, smoking in public places and waste management. This was the first time since devolution that a BIIPB plenary session had been held in one of the devolved jurisdictions. In addition to the usual address to the Body by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at its UK sessions, the Assembly Minister for Health and Social Services addressed the Body as part of a debate on smoking in public places. This was the first address to the Body by a Minister from one of the devolved governments creating a precedent for future interaction between the Body and the devolved administrations.

3. A full transcript of the plenary session is being prepared by the British Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association and will be circulated to Assembly Members on publication.

Developments

4. One of the challenges the Body presents the Assembly is in steering the agenda to matters that are devolved rather than sovereign in nature. In light of recent political developments in Northern Ireland, there has been a natural tendency for political matters relating to achieving the restoration of devolved government dominating the agenda. There are two particularly positive developments of note:

- The decision to allocate time in each plenary session to a debate sponsored by one of the devolved bodies.
- The endorsement of a new subject for enquiry by BIIPB European Committee at the suggestion of Mike German AM and John Griffiths AM. A sub-group has been formed, subject to formal approval by the Steering Committee, to develop a set of proposals for consideration by the Body of the potential for cross border European funding to support the objectives of the Good Friday Agreement. A copy of the aim and objectives is included at Appendix 2 for Members to note.

Forward Schedule

5. The BIIPB European Sub Committee will conduct its structural funds report between now and March 2005 with aim of producing a report to be put before the Body at its next plenary session. The BIIPB Economic Committee is beginning an enquiry into the effect of European Enlargement on small farms. The BIIPB Environment and Social Committee has completed its report on waste management and landfill and has moved on to a new enquiry into Special Educational Needs provision within the British Isles.

6. The 30th Plenary Session of the Body has will take place in Bundorn Co. Donegal on 6-7 March 2005.

Appendices:

1. BIIPB 29TH Plenary Session: Programme of Business
2. BIIPB Committee B Study: Use of Cross Border European Funding.

29th PLENARY SESSION

St Pierre Hotel, Chepstow: 17th to 19th October 2004

PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS

Sunday 17th October 2004

At 6 pm: Meeting in privateB Steering Committee

Monday 18th October 2004

At 9.30 am: meeting in public session

- 1. ADOPTION OF PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS AND BRIEF INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS BY CO-CHAIRMEN**

At about 9.50 am:

- 2. RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS**

The Steering Committee

That the Body notes the recent talks held at Leeds Castle between Prime Minister Tony Blair, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and the parties; looks forward to the further discussions planned proving fruitful and to the restoration of the powers devolved under the Good Friday Agreement; notes the intensification of contacts by both governments with all parties, including the recent meeting between the Democratic Unionist Party leadership and the Irish Government in Dublin; believes that it is in the interests of all parties in Northern Ireland that the devolved institutions are revived as soon as possible; and urges all involved to work towards the furtherance of the peace process and the full implementation of the Agreement.

The sitting will be suspended from approximately 1 pm to 2.30 pm

- 3. RELATIONS WITH THE NORDIC COUNCIL**

The Steering Committee

That the Body takes note of the response of the Steering Committee to the Report of Committee B (European Committee) on Relations with the Nordic Council [Doc No 101]

The Steering Committee

That the Body invites the Nordic Council formally to assume observer status at its deliberations

4. AMENDMENT TO RULES

The Steering Committee

That the Amendment to the Rules (Questions allocation [Doc No 100]) be made with immediate effect.

The sitting will be suspended from approximately 3.30 pm to 4 pm to allow for a group photograph

At 4 pm:

- **ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, THE RIGHT. HON. PAUL MURPHY M.P.**

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWER

The session will conclude not later than 5.30 pm.

Tuesday 19th October 2004

At 8.45 am: Meetings in Private – Committees B and C

At 9.20 am: Meetings in Private – Committees A and D

At 10.00 am: Meeting in public

1. SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES

The Steering Committee

That the Body notes the introduction in Ireland and Norway of legislation to prohibit smoking in the workplace as examples for consideration by governments.

At about 11 am

2. BUSINESS REPORTS FROM CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

At about 11.15 am

At about 11.15 am

1. WASTE MANAGEMENT

Report from Committee D - Culture, Education and Environment – Waste Management

The Steering Committee

That the Body takes note of the Report of Committee D: Environment and Social Committee on Waste Management [Doc. No. 99] and the conclusions and recommendations of the Report, which should be forwarded to both Governments and devolved administrations for their observations.

Not later than 12.25 pm

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Steering Committee

That the Body do now adjourn.

The Session will conclude not later than 12.30 pm.

BIIPB Committee B Study: Use of Cross Border European Funding

Aim:

To develop a set of proposals for consideration by the Body of the potential for cross-border European funding to support the objectives of the Good Friday Agreement.

Objectives:

1. To investigate the current and proposed European funding programmes which support cross border activities.
2. To report on the potential for using these funding streams to strengthen co-operation between the participant geographical areas represented by the Body.
3. To report any proposals the Body could consider for representing to governments and the European Commission on future European funding programmes containing a cross border element.

Study Structure:

1. To receive written evidence on relevant current and proposed European funding streams with a cross border dimension.
2. To receive evidence from the European Commission and European Parliament on the current and proposed programmes.
3. To receive evidence from the UK Government, the Irish Government, the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly (if reconvened) on the current and proposed programmes, actions already undertaken which have developed cross border co-operation, and the potential for assisting the aims of the Good Friday Agreement.
4. To receive evidence of the use of European programmes for cross border co-operation from an exemplar within the European Union.