



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **British-Irish Council Summit in Guernsey**

DATE **21 July 2022**

BY **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister**

I attended the 37th meeting of the British-Irish Council on 7/8 July, which was hosted by the Government of Guernsey. The Minister for Climate Change attended the meeting virtually.

The meeting was chaired by the Chief Minister of the Government of Guernsey, Deputy Peter Ferbrache. Other attendees included An Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD, the First Minister of Scotland the Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP, the Chief Minister of Jersey Senator John Le Fondré, the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Alfred Cannan MHK, and the Rt. Hon. Conor Burns MP, Minister of State for Northern Ireland.

Before the main BIC meeting, I took part in a discussion with the other Heads of Delegation on the Cost of Living crisis. We took the opportunity to share our most pressing concerns, offering examples of the actions our Governments are taking and noted areas where further action was needed. As part of this I emphasised the need for action to be taken on the inequity where energy customers on pre-payment meters also face standing charges.

The theme of this Council meeting was Collaborative Spatial Planning. The Minister for Climate Change attended virtually a constructive and informative inter-Ministerial discussion on this topic ahead of the Council meeting, and the Council then also discussed the matter. The Council noted potential opportunities to revitalise our towns and make them places where people want to live, do business, and spend their leisure time, while delivering on a range of wider outcomes including inclusive development, addressing climate change, supporting green recovery and promoting active and sustainable travel.

In addition, the Council discussed the latest political developments including: the cost of living crisis, particularly in the areas of fuel and housing; ongoing relations with the EU, and the concerning current situation in relation to the Northern Ireland Protocol; climate change; developments in Ukraine and the continuing challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In contributing to this discussion, I highlighted a number of areas that need to remain as high priorities for the BIC:

- the cost of living crisis and the need for significant further action to support vulnerable households struggling with rising costs;
- Ukraine, and the continued imperative to support refugees fleeing the conflict;
- the ongoing impact of Covid-19, which would continue to put pressure on public services and for which effective collective planning needs to be in place for the coming winter;
- the concerning impacts of Brexit including on trade and Welsh ports, and the need for improvements in the trading and wider relationship between the UK and the EU; and
- climate change, which remains an overarching priority for all Governments and where new issues cannot lead to compromises to the detriment of future generations.

I also reflected briefly on political developments within the UK Government, and the need for the next Prime Minister to reset relationships based on productive and respectful dialogue.

A joint Communiqué was issued after the meeting, which is available at:

<https://www.britishirishcouncil.org/bic/summits>

The British-Irish Council published its Annual Report 2020/21 in June, which is available at:

<https://www.britishirishcouncil.org/>

The next Council Summit will be hosted by the UK Government.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.