



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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

DATE **17 November 2022**

BY **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister**

The 38th meeting of the British-Irish Council on 10/11 November was hosted by the UK Government in Blackpool. I attended the meeting virtually.

The Summit programme was opened by the Prime Minister, who attended events on Thursday 10th November. The Summit Plenary session on Friday 11th November was Chaired by the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations.

Other attendees included Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD, the First Minister of Scotland the Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP, the Chief Minister of Jersey Kristina Moore, the Chief Minister of Guernsey Deputy Peter Ferbrache, the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Alfred Cannan MHK, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP.

The theme of this Summit was Sustainable Growth and Regeneration. The Council focussed on efforts underway across BIC Member Administrations to stimulate and support sustainable economic growth, the development of more inclusive communities, and to address pressures on housing in particular. The Council also noted the recent Ministerial meeting of the BIC Social Inclusion work sector, which took place in Cardiff.

In addition, the Council discussed the latest political developments including: the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the impact of the rising cost of living, shared climate and decarbonisation objectives, and ongoing relations with the EU. The Council received an update on Northern Ireland and looked forward to the restoration of the devolved institutions. The Council also noted that 2023 would mark the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and underlined the importance of supporting the effective functioning of all of the agreement's institutions, including the British-Irish Council.

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

- working alongside communities to achieve sustainable growth, investing in infrastructure, people and places, to create the conditions in which businesses will invest;
- the role of direct Government investment in growth strategies, in areas such as climate change, research and innovation, and supporting nascent industries;
- the cost of living crisis and the need for significant further action to support vulnerable households struggling with rising costs, with a focus on practical solutions;
- the energy crisis and the need to focus on renewable energy, for the benefit of energy security, the climate crisis and to make household energy affordable;
- the concerning impacts of Brexit including on research, trade and Welsh ports, and the need for stability and improvements in the trading and the wider relationship between the UK and the EU.

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

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

The next Council Summit will be hosted by the Government of Jersey.