



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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

DATE **15 December 2023**

BY **First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS**

I attended the 40th meeting of the British-Irish Council on 23 and 24 November, which was hosted by the Government of Ireland.

The meeting was chaired by the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD on behalf of the Government of Ireland. Other attendees included Tánaiste Micheál Martin TD, the First Minister of Scotland the Rt Hon Humza Yousaf MSP, the Chief Minister of Jersey Deputy Kristina Moore, the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Hon Alfred Cannan MHK, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP.

The theme of this summit was Transforming Children's Lives: Tackling Child Poverty and Improving Wellbeing.

The Council took the opportunity to reflect on the lasting impact of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement on its 25th anniversary, and the importance of the British-Irish Council as an independent institution under the agreement.

We discussed topics of mutual interest, including the conflict in Israel and Gaza; the Russian invasion of Ukraine; shared climate objectives; the EU-UK relationship and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. This included an update about political developments in Northern Ireland, noting that we all look forward to the restoration of enduring devolved power-sharing institutions in Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

The summit took place against the sombre backdrop of the tragic stabbings and subsequent rioting in Dublin on 23 November. I noted in the plenary session the potential for collective sharing of experiences to support community cohesion.

We discussed the efforts across the member administrations to tackle child poverty and improve wellbeing. As well as highlighting Wales' Flying Start programme, the roll out of free

school meals in primary schools and the reform of the school year consultation, I also outlined our basic income pilot for care leavers.

A joint communiqué was issued after the meeting, which is available here: [40th BIC Summit - Communique.pdf \(britishirishcouncil.org\)](#)

The next British-Irish Council summit will be hosted by the Isle of Man Government.