



BRITISH IRISH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (BIPA): 52nd PLENARY SESSION

Introduction

1. The 52nd Plenary Session of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) took place in the Grand Hotel, Malahide, Ireland from Monday 4 July to Tuesday 5 July 2016. The Scottish Parliament was represented at the Malahide Plenary by Willie Coffey MSP, John Scott MSP and Ross Greer MSP.

Themes

2. The theme of the plenary was “International tourism opportunities for Ireland and the UK” and “Commemoration and Reconciliation” and whilst these two issues were discussed and explored, the result of the UK’s June EU referendum, and its implications, was the main topic of discussion over the two days.

Plenary Summary

3. The Plenary began with an address by the Irish Minister of State for the Diaspora and Overseas Development Aid (and former BIPA Co-Chair), Joe McHugh TD, on current developments in British/Irish relations. The Minister acknowledged the important work conducted by BIPA and its members since its formation, in fostering friendship and cooperation between the BIPA’s constituent parliaments and assemblies and urged this work to continue in the post referendum period.
4. The Minister’s comments were followed by a debate for the remainder of the morning on the impact of the EU referendum with a particular focus on its implications for British/Irish relations.
5. Thereafter followed an address by Dr Martin Mansergh, historian and former member of the Irish Parliament and Government, entitled ‘British-Irish friendship today based on almost a century of Irish Independence and the peace settlement in Northern Ireland’. Questions followed by members of the Assembly on the theme of his address within the context of the EU referendum.
6. The afternoon session began with a joint address by Dr Fionnuala Walsh, National Library of Ireland and Ms Sinead McCool, author and historian, on

the role of women in World War 1 and the 1916 Rising and War of Independence. Given the additional time allocated by the Co-Chairs to the EU referendum and the implications of its outcome, the joint address was not followed by questions by Assembly members.

7. Thereafter, the Irish Minister of State for Tourism and Sport (and former BIPA member), Patrick O'Donovan TD, addressed the Assembly on 'tourism and interconnectivity opportunities between the two islands' which was followed by questions by Members.
8. The final item on the agenda of the first day of plenary was a panel discussion on shared international tourism opportunities. Panel members included Mr John McGrane, Director General, British/Irish Chamber of Commerce; Mr Niall Gibbins, CEO, Tourism Ireland; Mr Shaun Quinn, CEO Failte Ireland; and Mr John McGrillen, CEO, Tourism Northern Ireland. The panel then took questions from Assembly members.
9. The second day of Plenary began with a continuation of the debate on the impact on British/Irish relations following the result of the UK referendum on EU membership. As per the debate on day 1 of the 52nd plenary, contributions were received by members of all legislatures represented on the BIPA.
10. Thereafter followed a the discussion on the Committee B (European Affairs) report on Visa Systems within the EU and how they affect the relationship between Ireland and the UK. The report highlights the benefits of the Common Travel Area (CTA) and other measures such as the British Irish Visa Scheme and "urges joint co-operation to ensure that the CTA continues to operate in the event of the UK leaving the EU". The report also underlines the role the CTA has played historically in supporting British –Irish relation. A copy of the report can be found on the BIPA website at: <http://www.britishirish.org/assets/VISAS-report-FINAL-002.pdf>
11. The final item on the agenda at the 52nd plenary was a joint address by Senator James Reilly, former Irish Minister for Health and Senator Jerry Buttimer, former Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health. The Senators' joint address was entitled, 'Significant legislative developments with societal impact: recent legislation progressed by the former Minister for Health and pre legislative scrutiny undertaken by the former Joint Committee on Health'. Their address was followed by questions from the floor of the Assembly.

Further Information

12. The 53rd plenary of the BIPA will be held in Cardiff, Wales from 28 November – 29 November 2016 (inclusive).

**International Relations Office
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