

Press release: Joint Communiqué of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 2 November 2018

The Government of Ireland was represented by Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Simon Coveney TD, and the Minister for Justice and Equality, Mr Charles Flanagan TD. The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was represented by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon David Lidington MP, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP.

The Conference was established under Strand Three of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement “to promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on all matters of mutual interest within the competence of both Governments”.

The Conference discussed the following:

Legacy

The Conference reviewed progress towards the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement legacy framework.

Following the completion of the public consultation on draft legislation to establish the Stormont House Agreement legacy institutions, the UK Government updated the Conference on its next steps. The Irish Government updated the Conference on the progress on the legislative measures it is bringing forward to implement and support the Stormont House Agreement legacy framework and raised other legacy issues of concern.

Both the Irish and UK Governments reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the framework set out in the 2014 Stormont House Agreement to comprehensively address the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past, taking account of the outcome of the UK Government’s public consultation on establishing the legacy institutions.

Security Co-Operation

The Conference reviewed the current security situation, and discussed the continuing threat posed by paramilitary activity and Northern Ireland Related Terrorism in both jurisdictions.

Both the UK and Irish Governments recalled commitments in the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement to ending paramilitarism. They welcomed the publication of the first report of the Independent Reporting Commission established under that Agreement, and considered its findings and recommendations. The Conference noted in particular the Commission’s view that the restoration of the institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement are essential to ending

paramilitarism and achieving community transformation.

The Conference expressed their gratitude to all those involved in both jurisdictions who work tirelessly to keep people safe.

East-West Matters

The Irish and UK Governments underlined the unique relationship between their two countries and the strong cooperation that takes place at all levels of government, and across many policy areas. They reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that this close relationship would be maintained and built upon.

The Conference discussed a number of possible models for ensuring that the high level of bilateral co-operation between the United Kingdom and Ireland is maintained and strengthened following the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union next March.

The Conference agreed that these new structures should clearly demonstrate the strength and depth of the relationship; provide opportunities for ministers and officials to continue to engage both formally and informally with each other; and to maintain the spirit of cooperation that has been engendered through such contacts in an EU context; as well as provide an overall architecture for cooperation that is both meaningful and sustainable in the future.

Officials were asked to take forward more detailed work in this area with a view to presenting fully worked through proposals for future East-West cooperation, for consideration by the UK and Irish Governments at a future meeting of the Conference. They agreed that these should be ambitious and should reflect the importance attached by both Governments to the bilateral relationship.

Political Stability

The Conference reviewed political developments since the last meeting in July and considered how the Irish and UK Governments can continue to work together to seek the effective operation of all of the institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

The UK and Irish Governments re-affirmed their shared commitment to securing the operation of the devolved power-sharing Executive and Assembly in Northern Ireland and the consequent resumption of meetings of the North South Ministerial Council at the earliest opportunity.

Both the Irish and UK Governments reiterated their strong support for the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements. They underlined that the institutions of the Agreement have been essential for the progress made in Northern Ireland over the past two decades and that they remain the indispensable framework for the political process in Northern Ireland. Both the UK and Irish Governments agreed to continue working closely together in full accordance with the three-stranded approach set out in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Future meetings

It was agreed that the Conference would meet again in spring of 2019.

[Press release: Gulf security tops agenda at Chiefs of Defence meeting](#)

UK Chief of the Defence Staff Sir Nick Carter and Omani Chief of Staff SAF Lieutenant General Ahmed bin Harith al Nabhani co-chaired the meeting that discussed issues of mutual security, including maritime security, and defence reform.

Chief of Defence Staff General Sir Nick Carter said:

As Chiefs of Defence we share a long-standing friendship, respect and understanding of the regional challenges in the Gulf.

The UK is committed to sustaining security in the region and will continue to work in partnership with our allies to uphold the stability on which it depends.

At the meeting, the Chiefs gave their assessment of the current issues affecting maritime security and discussed proposals for increasing cooperation and information sharing. They also commended the fact that for first time all three Coalition Maritime Forces Task Forces are under command of GCC nations.

In addition, the Chiefs shared their experiences of defence reform as the UK and many regional partners are currently undergoing, or considering, reform and modernisation programmes.

They also discussed the common challenges, how to tackle them collectively, and how the constantly evolving security context and risks drive defence's objectives and procurement choices.

The meeting follows the success of Exercise Saif Sareea 3 which saw over 70,000 UK and Omani personnel live, work and train side by side over the past five weeks. It also marks the beginning of a wide-ranging defence engagement programme which will see the UK Armed Forces work with every single one of our Gulf partner nations in a combination of engagements in the air, on land, and at sea in the coming months.

[Press release: Minister: "Northern Ireland's businesses are champion exporters"](#)

International Trade Minister, Baroness Fairhead, today (Friday 2nd November) visited Belfast where she met members of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in Belfast to understand their concerns and help encourage SMEs to make the most of ever increasing global opportunities and demand for their high-quality goods and services.

99% of Northern Ireland's large businesses already export. Baroness Fairhead will urge SMEs to consider exporting as a way to boost their prosperity, hire more people and drive growth in their communities.

The event comes ahead of Small Business Saturday, with FSB and the Department For International Trade (DIT) organising a series of events to promote 'business-to-business' engagement and overseas trade. Baroness Fairhead will be attending the latest of these events, which will give companies the chance to share their thoughts on exporting and current government support.

Speaking at the event, Baroness Fairhead, said:

Northern Ireland's export performance is a great example to the rest of the UK, and I hope to see others taking inspiration from those businesses that are selling their goods and services in all corners of the world.

Our job is to ensure that SMEs, and all of Northern Ireland's businesses, are able to make the most of increasing export opportunities. The government's [Export Strategy](#) sets out an offer which will help companies reap the rewards that exporting brings, and I'd encourage companies to talk to their local Trade Adviser or visit GREAT.gov.uk to access this support as soon as they are ready.

Members of the FSB in Northern Ireland, such as Core Systems, Environmental Street Furniture, SMART Global and The Momentum Group will all attend the event.

Commenting, FSB NI Head of External Affairs, Roger Pollen said:

The SME sector in Northern Ireland employs more people than the entire public sector and all larger businesses combined, and is vital to the overall success of the NI economy. FSB members run

businesses across a variety of industry sectors, with many already exporting their products in markets around the globe. For some not currently exporting, there exists an opportunity to expand their business overseas. It is crucial that the support and guidance is available from government to help them on that path.

Looking closer to home, in the run up to Small Business Saturday, we would encourage consumers to support their local small business, in what are challenging times for the high street. While the world of retail is changing, local small businesses provide a personal service which often can't be replicated elsewhere. Beyond this, we must look to assist businesses that have traditionally served a home market to seize the opportunity to export as well – whether that is in manufacturing or retail. We are very pleased to be working with the department to help assist this expansion of trade for our members and look forward to continued engagement.

Last month, FSB and DIT hosted an 'engagement day' in Dungannon, which included a number of workshops on key topics such as Brexit, exporting, procurement and social media, with one of the aims being to break down common preconceptions to trading overseas.

Northern Ireland exported £10 billion worth of goods and services in 2017. The country's renowned aerospace industry, with 60 companies serving the sector, is particularly prominent as machinery and transport make up £2.6 billion of the total figure.

In the Summer, DIT launched the government's Export Strategy which sets out how they will support businesses to make the most of the opportunities presented by markets around the world.

A government-led collaboration with business, developed after extensive engagement with a range of UK firms – the Strategy sets a new ambition increase exports as a proportion of UK GDP to 35%.

Further Information:

DIT's [Survey of UK Registered Businesses 2017](#) shows that only 1% of Northern Irish businesses with a turnover of more than £500k and a product that suitable for export are yet to do so

Export support is available to businesses of all sizes, including:

- [GREAT.gov.uk](#) – which offers a tool to help SMEs take their first steps towards international trade, a range of export opportunities and details of how to contact our network of Trade Advisers in the UK
- [UK Export Finance](#) – which has up to £50 billion of export credit available to help British businesses break into exciting overseas markets

- Export Champions – DIT has set up a network of businesses who currently export across the UK, these champions are on hand to offer help and advice to their fellow SMEs.
- If you or your business is interested in exporting, the Department for International Trade has a range of support to suit your business. You can contact your regional trade team here or access wider support on your export journey. [here](#)

Press release: Chief Executive's Blog – 3rd Edition – October 2018

October has been another busy month and one that has asked questions about how we can shape the future of the Parole Board.

Justice Select Committee, 10 October

I appeared at the Justice Select Committee on 10 October to speak about the work of the Parole Board and how the prison population can be safely reduced, as part of the “Prison Population 2022: planning for the future inquiry.”

The evidence I gave showed the work being done by the Parole Board and its justice partners to reduce delays caused by unnecessary deferrals and adjournments – important work which I spoke about in my last blog.

I also spoke about the fact that the backlog of outstanding parole cases that had occurred after the 2013 Osborn Booth & Reilly Supreme Court Judgment has been cleared. This backlog had a peak of over 3000 prisoners in 2015 and it was a huge success to eliminate it. To do this we had to completely change how we worked and now hold more oral hearings than we have ever held before (and 5 times the amount held in 2005/6!).

Despite the success of getting rid of the backlog, the number of parole eligible prisoners remains at a high level and we cannot stop working and innovating to ensure that they are provided with fair and timely hearings.

The IPP sentence

Prisoners sentenced under the Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) are a contributing factor to the high prison population. My evidence to the Justice Select Committee explained that there are many reasons why the IPP population isn't going down as quickly as we would like.

The IPP sentence was abolished in 2012, but not retrospectively, and many prisoners remain in custody years after their original tariff has expired.

Since the abolition of the sentence, the headline IPP prison population has now fallen by 57% – from a peak of 6,080 in 2012 down to 2,598 by 30 September 2018. These cases are some of the most complex that come before the Board and so, despite increased progression rates in recent years, there is further work to be done across the system.

Whilst this progress is encouraging, the number of IPP prisoners recalled to custody continues to rise. Without further legislative change the legacy of IPP prisoners will remain for many years to come, not least because and it can be expected that the rate of progression will slow down as the number of IPP prisoners in the system falls.

IPP Families Event in Parliament

On 17 October I spoke at a policy launch event on ‘The Secondary Pains for Family Members of Indeterminate Imprisonment’. The research by Drs Harry Annison and Rachel Condry (from the Universities of Southampton and Oxford respectively) examines the challenges faced by family members of prisoners sentenced to the indeterminate Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentence.

What is clear is that the Parole Board can play its part to help family members of IPP prisoners. For example, the work we are carrying out to reduce the number of deferrals – we know the impact such delays have on prisoners and their families.

Another way we can help is by doing our main role well – ensuring that we continue to deliver timely hearings in a safe manner. To do that we need a steady stream of members joining the Parole Board.

New Members Joining on 1 November

On 1 November we welcome 25 new members to the Parole Board (13 judicial members and 12 psychiatrist members). This comes at an important time – a lot of our members came to the end of the tenure in September 2018 and we need these new members to fill the gaps that our very experienced former colleagues have left. We held a great New Members Training event in Derbyshire last week and I am sure that our new 2018 cohort will be a credit to the Board.

Welcome Caroline

And last – but by no means least – Caroline Corby starts her tenure as permanent Chair of the Parole Board on 1 November. She has been our Interim Chair since the Spring and I have every confidence that she is the right person to guide us through the reforms that are happening, and help make the Board more effective than ever before.

Press release: 'Exceptionally rare' 19th century marble sculpture' at risk of export

- Culture Minister steps in to prevent Antonio Canova's 'Bust of Peace', valued at £5.3 million, from export
- Bust deemed to be a significant cultural object symbolising end of Napoleonic era and return of peace to Europe after years of conflict

An original work by one of the greatest 19th century sculptors is at risk of being exported from the UK unless a buyer can be found to match the asking price of £5.3 million.

The white marble 'Bust of Peace', made by Antonio Canova (1757-1822) has been blocked from export by Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

The neo-classical bust, one of a handful of original works by the Italian neoclassical artist that remain outside museum collections, was sold to a private buyer at Sotheby's in July 2018. Until then, it had been more than 200 years since it had last been seen in public.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, administered by The Arts Council. They made their recommendation on the grounds that the sculpture is closely connected with the UK's history and national life.

It can be seen to symbolise the return of peace to Europe after years of struggle and unrest during the Napoleonic era, which culminated in the Battle of Waterloo, where Napoleon was defeated.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:

Canova is widely recognised as one of the greatest sculptors of his – or any – era.

The 'Bust of Peace' combines a crucial moment in our history with beauty and elegance, pointing to a more peaceful future ahead. Therefore it is essential that we do our best to save this superb item for the benefit of the nation.

The bust is one of Canova's celebrated 'Ideal Heads:' female heads carved in marble, just under life size, representing a different conception of beauty and presented as gifts to friends and patrons who had helped him.

It was carved between 1814-15 and may have been given to John Campbell, Lord

Cawdor, in part to thank him for his help in repatriating art looted from Italy by the French armies during the Napoleonic Wars. It was the first such bust to reach Britain, and the first to be presented to a British patron after Napoleon's defeat. It was displayed at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1817.

Following Lord Cawdor's death in 1821, the bust remained under the ownership of five generations of descendants in his family mansion of Stackpole Court in Pembrokeshire. However by the time the contents of the home were sold at auction in 1962, the bust's significance had been lost. When it was sold, the head was simply described as "a white marble bust of a lady wearing a diadem," without attribution.

The location and storage conditions were unclear for the following 50 years, until its re-emergence at an auction in 2012.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest member Aidan Weston-Lewis said:

This outstanding bust was probably given by Canova as a token of friendship and gratitude to his most loyal British patron and champion, Lord Cawdor. Over nearly three decades, Cawdor commissioned several of Canova's most celebrated works, including the reclining and standing versions of Cupid and Psyche, both now in the Louvre.

Due to political circumstances and periods of personal insolvency, he took possession of only a few, although among them was the Amorino now at Anglesey Abbey (National Trust), the first sculpture by Canova to come to Britain. As a testament to the special relationship between a brilliant and innovative British patron and statesman and the greatest artist of his day, every effort should be made to retain the Bust of Peace in the UK".

Canova's works are revered for his subtle artistry, sensitively working the surface of the marble, thereby giving his works a texture unparalleled by any of his contemporaries.