

EUROPEAN & EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

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Date:	24 November 2005
Time:	09:00 - 12.30
Venue:	National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay
Title:	British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body 31 st Plenary

Purpose

1. To advise the Committee of the draft programme for the 31st Plenary Meeting of the British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body (BIIPB).

Background

2. The 31st Plenary Meeting of the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body will take place in Edinburgh 28-29 November 2005. A delegation of BIIPB Members from the National Assembly for Wales will attend. The anticipated composition is Glyn Davies AM, Mike German AM, John Griffiths AM, and Dai Lloyd AM.

3. A copy of the draft agenda is included at Appendix 1. The programme includes a main debate on economic regeneration in Northern Ireland. This represents a departure from previous conferences in which the main debate has always been a political motion referring in some way or other to the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

4. The programme also includes oral questions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. There will be two further debates, one on the work of expatriate Irish societies; and the other on COOPERATION, the successor programme to INTERREG, with specific reference to the programme operating between the North of Ireland and the South West of Scotland.

5. The Body will be addressed by Professor Paul Bew of Queen's University Belfast. Professor Bew has previously addressed the Body as a means of offering a Unionist perspective within the meeting in the continuing absence of participation in the Body by the Democratic Unionist Party.

6. It is anticipated that the Body's committee activities will commence after the Edinburgh Plenary having been stalled for some months by the UK parliamentary elections and the confirmation of the UK Parliament membership to the Body. Inquiries in progress include the Economic Committee's inquiry into the small farms and the European Committee's inquiry on the Common European Defence Policy.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 BIIPB 31ST Plenary, Draft Programme of Business.

Appendix 1

Provisional

31st PLENARY SESSION

Dalmahoy Hotel and Country Club, Edinburgh

27 to 29 November 2005

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS

Sunday, 27th November 2005

At 6 pm: Meeting in private - Steering Committee

Monday, 28th November 2005

At 8.30 am : Meeting in Private – Committee D

At 9.30 am: meeting in public session

- 1. ADOPTION OF PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS AND BRIEF INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS BY CO-CHAIRMEN**

At about 9.50 am:

2. ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND POLITICAL PROGRESS

The Steering Committee

That the Body, recognising that economic and political progress go hand in hand, welcomes recent developments in Northern Ireland, including the independently verified statement by the IRA that it has decommissioned all its weapons and the indications by loyalist groups that they were prepared to consider a positive response; urges all paramilitary groups to complete the process of decommissioning; notes the particular potential of deeper North/South economic co-operation to deliver real benefits for all the people of Ireland; trusts that the January report of the Independent Monitoring Commission will be favourable to the early restoration of the devolved institutions so that a renewed devolved government may play a central role in linking communities with the political and economic decision-making process; and calls on all appropriate authorities and political parties to work for the social and economic development of all communities in Northern Ireland.

Mr Stephen Kingon of PricewaterhouseCoopers, Belfast, has been invited to make the keynote speech

The sitting will be suspended from approximately 1 pm to 2.30 pm

A group photograph will be taken at approximately 2 pm.

3. ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR PAUL BEW

Professor Paul Bew of Queen's University Belfast will address the Body, giving his understanding of the Unionist

perspective on recent political developments, and answer questions from the floor.

Members may like to refer to Professor Bew's speech at the 27th Plenary session in Ware in October 2003, which can be found on the website www.biipb.org

At 4 pm:

4. ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, THE RIGHT. HON. PETER HAIN M.P.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWER [see Appendix]

The session will conclude not later than 5.30 pm.

Tuesday, 29th November 2005

At 8.45 am: Meetings in Private – Committees B and C

At 9.20 am: Meeting in Private – Committee A

At 10.00 am: Meeting in public

1. BUSINESS REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES.

At about 11 am

2. THE WORK OF IRISH SOCIETIES

Committee D

That the Body notes the useful work done by the Federation of Irish societies among ex-patriate Irish people

At about 11.15 am

3. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME

Committee B

That the Body takes note of the ‘CO-OPERATION’ programme, the successor to INTERREG 111A, which will encourage

co-operation between the North of Ireland and South-West Scotland.

The Report from Committee B on European Funding Programmes and Developing Understanding across Borders [Doc No 102] is relevant.

Not later than 12.25 pm

4. ADJOURNMENT

The Steering Committee

That the Body do now adjourn.

The session will conclude not later than 12.30 pm.

APPENDIX

ORAL QUESTIONS 31ST PLENARY

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

- 1. Senator Brian Hayes:** What plans he has for the granting of pardons to the 306 Irish soldiers who were executed during the First World War; and if he will make a statement.
- 2. Lord Dubs:** What discussions he has had with the Irish government about the proposed introduction of identity cards in the United Kingdom.
- 3. Mr Murray Tosh M.S.P (West of Scotland)** "What work has the Government carried out to assess the importance to the Northern Ireland economy of transport links from Northern Ireland to, and through, Scotland?"
- 4. Senator Paschal Mooney:** If he will make it his policy that a full pardon should be granted to those Irish soldiers who served during World War who were shot at dawn and if he will make a statement on the matter.
- 5. Mr Andrew Mackinlay M.P.(Thurrock):** If he will set up an independent Environment Protection Agency for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.
- 6. Dr Dai Lloyd A.M. (South Wales West):** What plans he has to ban smoking in public places in Northern Ireland.
- 7. Séamus Kirk T.D. (Louth):** What plans he has to extend PEACE 11 funding to groups with a strong reconciliation criteria in view of the need to build bridges between North and South and if he will make a statement.
- 8. Mr Michael Mates M.P. (East Hampshire):** If he will make a statement on the peace process.
- 9. Mr Iain Smith M.S.P (North-East Fife)** What is his timetable for lifting the suspension of the

devolved institutions in Northern Ireland.

10. Mr John Griffiths AM (Newport East) If he will make a statement on the role of the Body in normalising politics in Northern Ireland.

11. Mr John Ellis T.D. (Sligo-Leitrim): If he will make a statement on progress by the North/South Bodies over the past year and the progress he envisages for the next year.

12. Mr Robert Walter M.P. (North Dorset): To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the current extent of cross border money laundering and what discussions he has had with the Irish Government with regard to the implementation Third European Union Money Laundering Directive in respect to the proceeds of crime.

13. Mr Jim O'Keeffe T.D. (Cork South West): What estimate he has made of the current extent of criminal activities by Para-Militaries and former Para-Militaries in Northern Ireland and of their cross-border implications; and if he will make a statement on measures to combat them.

14. Senator Francis O'Brien: What is his policy in respect of the sale of machetes in Northern Ireland and if he will make a statement.

15. Ms Cecilia Keaveney T.D. (Donegal North-East): What plans he has, pending the appointment of a Northern Ireland Executive and North-South Ministerial Council meetings and in the context of ten year national plans being developed in the Republic, to ensure that physical infrastructural projects such as gas, train, plane, roads or projects of concern to the North West in the Health Sector are progressed.

16. Mr Johnny Brady T.D. (Meath): If he will make a statement on progress on harmonising Veterinary Regime North & South.

17. Mr Joe Sherlock T.D. (Cork East): If he will make a statement on recent efforts to insist that paramilitary organisations allow those people they have exiled from Northern Ireland to return, and on the reasons why this demand was not made before the publication of legislation relating to the 'on the runs'.

18. Mr Arthur Morgan T.D. (Louth): What steps are being taken to integrate the economies North and South, with particular reference to tax harmonisation.

19. Mr Damien English T.D. (Meath): If he will establish an auditing commission to evaluate the achievements of the North-South Bodies in relation to their targets; and what future goals he has identified for those bodies.