



BRITISH-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
TIONÓL PARLAIMINTEACH NA BREATAINE AGUS NA HÉIREANN

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

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SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

THE WORK OF THE BRITISH-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Introduction

1. This is the seventeenth annual report of the Assembly since it was decided at the Plenary Session in May 1996 that such a Report should be made. This Report summarises the work of the Assembly during 2012.

Membership of the Assembly

2. Following the significant turnover in membership in the two preceding years, arising from general elections to the two sovereign parliaments and to the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly, 2012 was a period of stability in membership, with only minor changes. A list of Members and Associate Members is set out at Appendix 1.

Political developments

3. General Overview

Relations between Britain and Ireland continued to deepen in 2012, following the success of the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and HRH the Duke of Edinburgh in 2011.

The Taoiseach and Prime Minister Cameron issued a Joint Statement following their summit meeting in Downing Street in March 2012. It sets out the key areas for British-Irish cooperation over the next decade. The statement notes the ‘uniquely close political relationship’ between Britain and Ireland. It also commits both governments to marking upcoming centenary anniversaries in a spirit of historical accuracy, mutual respect, inclusiveness and reconciliation. It reaffirms support for the full implementation of the Good Friday and St. Andrews Agreements.

The statement calls for deeper economic cooperation, with a particular emphasis on energy (including the All-Ireland energy market, the East-West interconnector and renewable energies), research and development, the agri-food sector, professional and financial services and the creative sectors. It commits the governments to preparing a joint evaluation of British-Irish economic relations and this project is now underway, with consultants working to examine the depth of interdependence between the economies and to identify common strategic challenges and opportunities to be addressed.

The statement also looks forward to Britain and Ireland working closely as partners within the European Union, and in other international organisations, including in addressing global challenges such as climate change and global hunger and poverty.

The statement envisages a comprehensive programme of engagement between the two administrations, including close bilateral engagement between respective departments and regular meetings at Secretary General/Permanent Secretary level. The process is being overseen by the Secretary General to the Taoiseach/Government and the Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet.

The British-Irish Council held three summit meetings in 2012: in Dublin in January (postponed from November 2011), in Stirling in June and in Cardiff in November.

The Edinburgh Agreement between the British and Scottish Governments, signed in October 2012, provides the terms for a referendum on Scottish independence, to be held before the end of 2014.

At a meeting in Stormont on 4 July 2012, the Working Groups established to develop proposals for the establishment of a North/South parliamentary forum by the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly respectively reached agreement on the establishment of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association, in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement. The Association will provide a forum for regular and formal discussions between Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Members of both Houses of the Oireachtas on issues of mutual interest and concern, as envisaged in the Agreements. The Association will meet twice yearly on a rotational basis. The inaugural plenary meeting of the Association was held on 12 October 2012 in the Seanad Chamber in Leinster House and the next will take place on 26 April 2013 in Stormont.

Some areas of work relating to the Good Friday and St. Andrew's Agreements remain to be implemented. These include a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, which was considered by the Forum for a UK-wide Bill of Rights who recommended that the UK-wide process not interfere or delay a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The issue of an Irish Language Act, as agreed at St. Andrews, remains unresolved, although some progress has been made in securing measures to promote and protect the Irish language and Ulster Scots. Establishment of the North South Consultative Forum also remains outstanding, as does the completion of the Review of North/South bodies.

On 3rd December, Belfast City Council voted to fly the Union Jack flag over City Hall only on designated days, instead of 365 days a year. The Alliance party had proposed this compromise motion and the party members voted it in along with Sinn Fein and SDLP councillors. Sinn Fein and the SDLP outnumber the unionist vote on the Council by 24 to 21. The decision provoked immediate violent protests by loyalists, particularly targeting the Alliance party offices and members, which have continued but on a much diminished scale.

Current Ministerial Assignments: Northern Ireland Executive:

| Department | Minister | Party |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| OFMDFM-First Minister | Peter Robinson | DUP |
| OFMDFM-Deputy First Minister | Martin McGuinness | SF |
| Finance and Personnel | Sammy Wilson | DUP |
| Education | John O'Dowd | SF |
| Enterprise, Trade and Investment | Arlene Foster | DUP |
| Regional Development | Danny Kennedy | UUP |

| | | |
|---|-------------------|----------|
| Agriculture and Rural Development | Michelle O'Neill | SF |
| Environment | Alex Attwood | SDLP |
| Social Development | Nelson McCausland | DUP |
| Culture, Arts and Leisure | Carál Ni Chuilín | SF |
| Health, Social Services and Public Safety | Edwin Poots | DUP |
| Employment and Learning | Stephen Farry | Alliance |
| Justice | David Ford | Alliance |
| Junior Minister OFMDFM | Jennifer McCann | SF |
| Junior Minister OFMDFM | Jonathan Bell | DUP |

North South Cooperation

Since the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly in May 2007, there have been significant advances in North-South co-operation. Thirty-one meetings of the North South Ministerial Council were held in 2012 in various formats including two Plenary meetings. This is the highest number held in any year since its formation. These meetings were used to ensure progress on furthering economic co-operation and advancing job creation on the island of Ireland. Preparations for the Irish Presidency of the EU in 2013 also featured prominently at most of 2012's NSMC meetings and Irish Ministers availed of all opportunities to brief their Northern counterparts on the Presidency priorities in their sectors. Ministers also used these opportunities to invite their colleagues to participate in relevant Presidency events.

Discussions took place between Ministers on the economic challenges being faced within each jurisdiction and the work being undertaken to address the global economic crisis. Specific issues which were discussed included the banking sector, NAMA, Corporation Tax and the benefits of working together to build trade links with economies such as China. Ministers re-iterated their commitment to practical cooperation on these issues and to explore areas where potential cost savings might be achieved. Opportunities to maximise the potential from Tourism events were also discussed.

Ministers re-iterated their commitment to the North West Region and welcomed the progress on the North West Gateway Initiative, especially the number and range of projects delivered and planned which aim to enhance economic and social benefits in the North West. Ministers also discussed the importance of co-operation on Third Level Education, taking account of the likely increase in student mobility between both jurisdictions and the importance of continuing collaborative action between third level institutions to assist with cost savings and on research and development.

Security Situation

There were two significant outbreaks of parades-related violence in 2012 - in the Ardoyne area of north Belfast in July and in Carrick Hill in August. There were concerns of a risk of violence arising from the parade celebrating the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant on the 29th September, however this parade passed off peacefully.

The Gardaí and the PSNI continue to cooperate very closely to combat dissident activity on both sides of the border. On 26 July, three hitherto disparate strands of dissident republicanism merged under the title of the Irish Republican Army. The most serious incident

of dissident republican violence occurred on 1 November 2012 when prison officer David Black was shot and killed on the M1 motorway near Lurgan. On 12 November, the newly-merged IRA claimed responsibility for that murder.

All three republican groupings in Maghaberry Prison called off their dirty protests in November 2012. There are, however, on-going tensions in the prison. The installation of technological alternatives to strip searching remains outstanding.

Dealing with the Past

The Smithwick Tribunal, inquiring into allegations of collusion on the part of Gardaí in the deaths of two senior RUC officers in 1989 (Breen and Buchanan), was due to present its final report in May 2012 but was granted an extension into 2013 to hear additional important evidence which had emerged. Oral hearings are ongoing. This Inquiry was the only one recommended by Judge Cory for the Irish Government to establish when he reported in 2004.

The de Silva Review of the murder of Pat Finucane was published on 12 December 2012. The review provided for an examination of all available documentation to be carried out behind closed doors by Sir Desmond de Silva QC. He did not have the power to compel witnesses and it was a non-judicial review with no powers backed by legislation. de Silva found collusion in the murder by a number of State agents but did not find any collusion at a political level. Speaking in Westminster, Prime Minister Cameron described the findings as ‘shocking’ and apologised to the Finucane family. The Irish Government reiterated their position on the need for an independent public inquiry into the murder in accordance with the Weston Park Agreement.

Work of the Assembly

Forty-fourth Plenary Conference (Dublin)

4. The 44th Plenary Conference was held in Dublin between 13th and 15th May. The conference was notable for two reasons. In the first place, the Assembly was privileged to meet in the Senate Chamber in Leinster House, the first occasion that a parliamentary chamber has been used by the Assembly. The second reason for the conference being particularly notable was that everyone attending was invited to a reception hosted by Michael O’Higgins, the President of the Irish Republic, the first time in the life of the Assembly that a Head of State had done this.
5. The hemicycle arrangement of the Senate Chamber was as close as possible to the traditional seating arrangement (the double U formation) that the Assembly has used. The Co-Chairs were, however, unable to preside together as is normal but they adapted well to the seating arrangements for the Cathaoirleach of the Senate. And the Cathaoirleach, Senator Paddy Burke, opened the proceedings with a few words of welcome.
6. The first speaker to address the Assembly was Mr Leo Varadkar TD, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. He spoke of the close ties between Ireland and the United Kingdom, saying that Britain is by some way Ireland’s most important trading partner. Relations between the two countries had never been closer following the

historic state visit by the Queen a year ago. He reported on the role of transport in supporting trade and tourism and mentioned the sea links between the two countries. Weekly services across the Irish Sea currently numbered around 600 and might well increase. The question of future port capacity in Ireland was under review but in the medium term existing infrastructure would have to suffice.

7. He then referred to the air transport market. In the last two decades this had changed enormously; the competitive market which had emerged was of immense importance to economic development. The Government couldn't influence the provision of services but would work closely with carriers to create the right conditions for increased tourism. The Irish Government had made large investments in the road network in recent years and improvements in rail services between the North and the Republic were under way.
8. Mr Varadkar then spoke about the importance of tourism as an essential driver of economic activity across the islands. The Irish Government had put the tourism and hospitality industries at the heart of economic recovery and it was estimated to generate 5 billion euros. VAT in hotels and restaurants had been lowered to 9% to encourage tourism. He mentioned the advantages of the new visa waiver scheme which allows visitors to the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, travelling on a valid visa to visit the Ireland without a separate Irish visa. The Government had agreed an extension of the scheme.
9. Road freight was another way to strengthen the common travel area. He was concerned that cabotage regulations imposed unnecessary bureaucracy and costs on British and Irish hauliers and was happy that the European Commission was reviewing these regulations. On road safety, he spoke about the issue of the mutual recognition of penalty points; it was a difficult matter to resolve but he asked Members of the Oireachtas and Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly to ensure that progress in this matter was maintained.
10. He ended his address with a mention of "The Gathering" in Ireland, 2013. This would be Ireland's biggest ever tourism initiative reaching out to the 70 million people of Irish heritage across the world and asking them to visit Ireland in 2013. There would be festivals up and down Ireland, some large, some small and some of family reunions. He asked the Assembly to consider how it could contribute to "The Gathering", possibly by a gathering of present and former parliamentarians in Ireland.
11. Mr Varadkar then answered questions from a large number of Members including Senator Paschal Mooney, Barry McElduff MLA, Jim Sheridan MP, David Melding AM, Arthur Spring TD, Robert Walter MP, Senator Jim Walsh, Chris Ruane MP, Lord Dubs, Jim Dobbins MP, Ken Skates AM, Senator Cait Keane, Darren Miller AM, John Scott MSP, Dolores Kelly MLA, William Powell AM, Baroness Smith of Basildon, Steve Rodan SHK, Michael McMahon MSP, Bethan Jenkins AM and William Coffey MSP.
12. The Assembly then heard an address by Dr Maurice Manning, a former member of the Body (as it then was) and Chairman of the Irish Government's Advisory Committee on Commemorations for the Decade of Centenaries. Dr Manning explained that the committee was an advisory one made up of academic historians.

The committee wished their advice to be in a whole-world context, although inevitably the island of Ireland would be at the core. In view of Ireland's past history, it was important that official events should be inclusive and non-partisan. There was potential for mischief in the issue of all-Ireland events so the committee must establish proper communication with both groups in Northern Ireland.

13. Dr Manning spoke briefly about themes such as the suffragettes, trade unionism and the more controversial issue of southern unionism. His committee would consult widely and advise the Government on how best these issues can be tackled. The commemorations would offer opportunities for research and scholarship. Schools should be encouraged to teach history. RTÉ would be encouraged to use new technology to publicise the events being marked. The Government should be encouraged to avail itself of the burgeoning number of local historical associations.
14. He ended his address by saying he saw the committee as providing a link between the Government and the many people and associations who would like to contribute to the commemorative events planned during the next decade.
15. The Assembly then turned its attention to the work of Committees.
16. Frank Feighan TD, Chair of Committee A, reported that the Committee was looking at the decade of commemorations between 1912 and 1922. The events of this decade shaped the relationship between the people of Ireland for generations. The Committee's first meeting had been with Professor Roy Foster of Hertford College, Oxford, who had given a thought-provoking presentation of how historical events should be commemorated. At the beginning of the decade there had been 250,000 armed militia in the island; if it had not been for the outbreak of the First World War, the situation could have been catastrophic. The Committee also had a meeting with Mr John Kennedy in the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht where they were briefed on the Government's overall approach. They had also met Dr Manning and, on another occasion, Deirdre McBride of the Community Relations Council in Northern Ireland. The question of lottery funding had been discussed. All these discussions would be fed into the Committee's final report.
17. Mr Feighan then briefly spoke about other visits made by Committee members both north and south of the border. The committee was now considering whether to make a report on British-Irish economic relations; another subject under consideration was a proposal on North-South education initiatives on commemorations.
18. Paul Flynn MP, Chris Ruane MP, Lord Bew, Barry McElduff MLA and Kris Hopkins MP made brief comments.
19. Jack Wall TD then introduced the report of Committee C. He said that the Committee had been looking at small and medium-sized enterprises. Their focus had been on access to finance because of the difficulty of firms getting the loans they needed. They had received evidence from a large number of relevant organisations on both sides of the Irish Sea. The evidence reinforced the importance of SMEs to economic growth. They were finding it difficult to access finance and in Ireland there was a lack of detailed, undisputed information about how much lending was taking place. Undoubtedly the banks were being cautious in granting credit and the Brendon Report

commissioned by the British Government suggested that by 2016 there would be a shortfall of lending to SMEs of between £25 billion and £59 billion. This would have implications not just for the British economy but also for the Irish. The Committee hoped that both Governments would act urgently to improve the flow of finance to small businesses. Finally, Mr Wall said that the Committee had looked briefly at SMEs involvement in public procurement and were pleased to learn of some successful initiatives to boost their chances of winning public contracts.

20. Among those who spoke on the report were John Robertson MP, Paul Farrelly MP, Ann Phelan TD, Arthur Spring TD, Seamus Kirk TD and Stephen Lloyd MP, all of whom supported the Committee's recommendations.
21. The Assembly then turned its attention to the food sector in Britain and Ireland and heard an address by Darina Allen from the Ballymaloe Cookery School. Darina Allen spoke about the opportunities for growth in food tourism. In the USA there were 40 different travel agencies concentrating on food tourism. She also mentioned "agritainment" as an area with gathering momentum, where dinners are held, for instance, in the middle of greenhouses. Many people wanted to get back to nature and support green initiatives. She was opposed to the granting of permissions for genetically modified crops in Ireland where the strongest selling point was produce which is clean, wholesome and pure. The loss of industrial jobs in the big cities gave an opportunity for developing employment in the food sector and in tourism. Darina Allen gave Turin as an example where, because of positive action by local officials, the loss of jobs in the car industry had been more than compensated for by jobs in the food and tourism sectors.
22. Ms Allen went on to say that the epicentre of the gastronomic world had moved to the Nordic countries because they had decided that there was no point in imitating the cuisine of the Mediterranean when they themselves had unique produce which all visitors would thoroughly enjoy once they had tasted it. The number one restaurant in the world was Noma in Copenhagen where the menu includes many wild foods obtained via foraging. Each country has its own food and food culture; Ireland didn't have olive oil or wine but it had whiskey and Guinness and many wonderful foods. She spoke enthusiastically about Ballymaloe House and its achievements in promoting fresh locally sourced food.
23. The Government could help reduce youth unemployment by using the opportunities afforded by the many organisations involved in food and agriculture. The Minister of Health could ensure that all hospitals must buy food locally. Regulations were necessary to ensure hygiene and food safety but should be examined to see where they could be reduced; unnecessary regulations should be repealed. It was important to create an environment in which small micro-businesses could flourish.
24. After she had spoken, she answered questions from Arthur Spring TD, John McCallister MLA, Seamus Kirk TD, William Powell AM, Senator Paschal Mooney, Ken Skates AM, Senator Cait Keane, John Scott MSP, Ann Phelan TD, Ciara Conway TD, Baroness Harris of Richmond, Jim Sheridan MP and Mary Scanlon MSP.
25. Mr Paul Murphy MP then moved the following motion:

That the 44th plenary of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

“Notes with concern the proposal of the Irish public service broadcaster, RTÉ (Radio Telefís Éireann), to close its London bureau and cease operations from September 2012;

Pays tribute to the illustrious record of service provided by the bureau and its staff in keeping viewers informed about British economic, political and cultural life, contributing to the peaceful resolution of conflict and promoting increasingly close relations between Britain and Ireland and the people of our respective islands;

While recognising the drastic fall of broadcasting revenue at a time of economic crisis, further notes the concerns of the Irish community in Britain for the long term consequences of not having an RTÉ correspondent in Britain;

And that Parliamentarians here assembled from jurisdictions throughout Britain and Ireland believe that on-the-spot access for Irish-based media and engagement in public life in Britain supports the fulfilment of the vision of future British-Irish relations as set out by the Prime Minister and Irish Taoiseach in their historic statement of 12th March 2012; and urge the two Governments to support the case for retention of the RTÉ London correspondent and assist in the search for alternatives to closure.”

26. Paul Murphy said he recognised the significant financial difficulties faced by RTÉ but he hoped that the broadcaster would rethink the decision. He explained that during the period leading up to the Good Friday Agreement, RTÉ had played an enormous role in informing people on both sides of the Irish Sea of the importance of the negotiations. He also spoke of the importance of RTÉ to the Irish community in the United Kingdom; the removal of an RTÉ presence in London would do a great disservice to people of Irish origin living in Britain. Another reason for RTÉ remaining in the United Kingdom was devolution; since RTÉ had a presence in Northern Ireland, it was important that the politics of Scotland and Wales should also be covered. He hoped that RTÉ could come up with imaginative ways of keeping a presence in London, possibly by sharing studio space with other broadcasters.
27. Chris Ruane MP supported the case made by Paul Murphy and added that the cost of RTÉ per person of Irish extraction living in the UK was as low as 12 pence a year. Many of these were elderly who relied on radio and TV for their news. Senator Paul Coghlan spoke of the importance of retaining journalists in London. Senator Jim Walsh acknowledged that there was a serious financial problem facing RTÉ but said that the organisation was to blame; excessive expenditure and excessive remuneration had led to the current situation and these had to be addressed. He suggested that the Assembly might enter into a dialogue with the Director-General to ensure that a void was not created by the absence of RTÉ staff in London. Senator Cait Keane supported the motion, particularly the suggestion made by Senator Walsh.

28. The motion was agreed to and was communicated to the two Governments.
29. The Assembly moved on to consider the potential of shared services in the area of health provision and heard an address by the Minister of Health, Dr James Reilly TD. Dr James began by explaining some of the key transformations occurring in the Irish health service. The Government was embarking on a major reform in order to deliver a single-tier health service supported by universal health insurance. The steps to achieve this goal were strengthening primary care services, tackling waiting times and establishing a purchaser-provider split whereby hospitals would be established as not-for-profit trusts. A few months earlier he had appointed an implementation group on universal health insurance; the group was now focusing on some key work streams, including hospital financing, hospital structures, the private health insurance market and the overarching universal health insurance design. He said that they were looking to team up with leading experts in the UK.
30. Dr Reilly then gave details about a whole range of initiatives being taken. He spoke about the impact on the health service of chronic diseases and the need for patients to be encouraged to manage their conditions. It was important to share experiences of best practice across Europe. Health and Wellbeing would be one of the themes of the Irish Presidency. He himself was focused on developing a national plan to deal with rare diseases. He mentioned the organ donation service and the approach being taken in Ireland on cancer services. Cooperation and collaborative sharing of resources was imperative as financial pressures on health services across the islands increased.
31. Dr Reilly then answered questions from a large number of Members including Jim Wells MLA, Patrick O'Donovan TD, Senator Jimmy Harte, Senator Jim Walsh, Frank Feighan TD, Chris Ruane MP, Viscount Bridgeman, Barry McElduff MLA and Senator John Crown.
32. After the lunch adjournment, the Assembly was once again privileged to hear from the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD. Mr Kenny began by congratulating the Assembly on its work in building trust and reconciliation between the North and the South. He described the past year as a momentous one, with the visit by the Queen almost exactly a year ago being a ground-breaking occasion. Her visits to the Garden of Remembrance and Islandbridge had brought together strands of shared history between Ireland and Britain. A number of anniversaries in the coming decade would provide further opportunities to reflect on shared history.
33. Since the Queen's visit there had been further concrete examples of co-operation between the Islands, including his meeting with the Prime Minister in March. He spoke of the place of the European Union in creating a partnership between Dublin and London. He stressed the importance of a "Yes" vote in the forthcoming Irish referendum on the European Stability Treaty; this would ensure that multi-national companies would have confidence in the Irish economy, provide access to the Stability Mechanism and ensure good budgetary discipline across Europe.
34. Mr Kenny referred to the joint responsibilities of both Governments for the Peace Process and mentioned the joint statement of March 2011 which outlined this commitment. However, he emphasised that much still remained to be done to achieve reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust. He looked forward to the publication by the

Northern Ireland Executive of a revised Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy. He accepted that economic growth was important in helping the healing process and both Governments and the Executive would have to find ways of creating sustainable growth.

35. It was only in recent years, as a consequence of the economic crisis, that Britain and Ireland had begun to appreciate the depth of their economic relationship. Britain was Ireland's most important economic partner and Ireland was a significant market for Britain's exporters. In the short and medium terms, both economies faced similar challenges. Restoring growth across Europe was a goal shared by both Governments. The energy sector and food security and supply were areas where there was scope for greater collaboration. The newly created British-Irish Chamber of Commerce would help further trade between the islands and Mr Kenny saw many opportunities to deepen economic relations between Dublin and London. He ended by saying that the Queen's visit had laid the ghosts of past conflicts and it was now time to further develop the strong ties between Britain and Ireland.
36. The Taoiseach then answered questions from, among others, Delores Kelly MLA who asked about the needs of victims of the troubles, Padraig MacLochlainn TD who asked about improving road links to Donegal, Robert Walter MP who raised the question of the Greek economy and its dangers for the whole of Europe, Jim Sheridan MP on whether the same degree of dubious press activities as in the UK had reached Ireland; Jim Wells MLA on the closure of Protestant schools in the Republic, Joe O'Reilly TD on the Taoiseach's assessment of the dissident threat and Barry McElduff MLA on the Pat Finucane case.
37. The Tuesday business began with a report by the Chair of Committee B (European Affairs), Robert Walter MP. Mr Walter said that his report was very much a 'progress report'. Committee B had been considering the European Convention on Human Rights and its application to various jurisdictions. They had heard evidence from, among others, a distinguished human rights lawyer, Lord Lester of Herne Hill, and the British Ambassador to the Council of Europe. The committee would be holding further meetings and would hope to present a report when the Assembly next met.
38. The Assembly then moved on to consider a report from Committee D (Environment and Social Affairs). Lord Dubs, Chair, began by explaining why some subjects which had been suggested for inquiry couldn't be undertaken without damaging their work on people trafficking. However, the Committee had looked at 'flooding' because of its impact on wide areas of Britain. One of their recommendations was that there should be better flood prediction. They had also looked at the insurance problem and the speed at which insurance companies reacted. Where flood protection measures had been initiated, the insurers should respond appropriately to the lower risk of claims. The Committee also believed that despite the financial constraints both in Dublin and London, more funds should be allocated to flood defences. Finally, they felt that planning authorities should cooperate fully with other agencies to minimise the likelihood of planning consent being given for building developments on flood plains.
39. Chris Ruane MP spoke about the situation in his constituency and supported the Committee's view that insurance companies should set lower premiums for home owners living in areas where flood protection measures had been introduced. Jim

Wells MLA referred to the ending in 2013 of the agreement between the insurance companies and HMG to provide cover to those living in areas where floods were prevalent. Darren Millar AM also spoke about the need for more finance for flood defences. He suggested that in areas like his own constituency which were liable to tidal flooding, tidal barrages for the generation of energy could help offset the cost of defences.

40. The Assembly's Annual Report for 2011 was agreed without debate.
41. The Assembly then debated developing trade opportunities between Britain and Ireland with the help of three guest speakers who gave industry's perspective. The first of these speakers was Sean O'Driscoll, Chairman and CEO of Glen Dimplex. He began by saying that the Group he represented had been set up in Newry in 1973, a very difficult time in Northern Ireland; over the last 40 years it had grown as an international company. He had five themes---the first was the amount of trade between Ireland and Britain. He felt that this was taken too much for granted and suggested the setting-up of a bi-annual Irish Exhibition and a British trade event in the alternate year. He said it would be great if the Taoiseach and Prime Minister were to attend these trade exhibitions. His second theme was the need to build a strong manufacturing sector in both economies. Thirdly, he strongly recommended more steps to conserve energy in homes, offices and public buildings; these would both save money and also provide employment. His fourth theme was to find ways of civil servants working more closely together. Finally, Mr O'Driscoll urged a reduction of regulation much of which was senseless and unproductive.
42. Eoin Tonge, the Group Development Director of Greencore plc (a leading producer of convenience foods) was the next speaker. He spoke about the UK market where the bulk of Greencore's business was located. They produced 400 million sandwiches every year which made them the largest manufacturer of sandwiches in the world. He repeated the points made by Darina Allen about the importance of the food sector for the economies of the UK and Ireland and the synergies which exist between the two. The first synergy was sustainability of the supply chain, largely led by retailers such as M&S and Sainsbury's. The second was around common standards in respect of regulation. It was important that there was no duplication of regulation. Mr Tonge said his third synergy was in applying European Union regulation; it was important to adopt a common approach to the application of EU regulation. His fourth synergy was the desirability of co-operation between the UK and Ireland to ensure the growth of the food sector. Fifthly, he spoke of the need for innovation and finally he mentioned education and the need for more to be done to make the food sector as appealing as law or business.
43. The last of the guest speakers was Sally Storey, the General Manager of GlaxoSmithKline. She spoke about the health care industry. She said how proud she was to lead a British company in Ireland. Her company was watching with close attention the outcome of the referendum on the Fiscal Treaty at the end of the month. It was vital that Ireland had access to the European Stability Fund. She spoke about the supply of medicines in Ireland and the long-term agreement between the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive and the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association. This agreement had expired earlier in the year and she very much hoped it would be renewed so as to safeguard innovation. Medicines took many

years and billions of euros to develop so companies like GSK had to be confident that their costs would be reimbursed at a fair price.

44. The pharmaceutical industry in Ireland accounted for 50% of exports and confirmed Ireland as the largest exporter of medicines in the world, a phenomenal achievement. It was important however for Ireland to remain competitive by cutting labour costs. She drew attention to a good example from the UK where the Chancellor of the Exchequer had cut corporation tax on profits generated from UK-owned intellectual property to encourage investment in R&D. This was designed to significantly improve the UK's international competitiveness.
45. She strongly supported the Irish Government's "Action Plan for Jobs", in particular the proposals to create a manufacturing development forum and the health innovation hub. GSK would like to contribute to both initiatives.
46. Many members asked questions or raised issues at different points in the discussion. Senator Paschal Mooney asked about indications that major investors were withdrawing funds from Ireland; Jim Sheridan MP bemoaned the decline in manufacturing and suggested that Government procurement could prevent this; Senator Paul Coghlan supported the elimination of senseless regulation; Stephen Lloyd MP spoke about energy efficiency; Patrick O'Donovan TD asked about the priorities for government; Ann Phelan TD expressed her and her constituents' anger at Greencore's ending of the sugar industry in Carlow; Baroness Smith of Basildon supported the idea of exchanging civil servants between the UK and Ireland; Martin Heydon TD, Noel Coonan TD, Jack Wall TD and Mattie McGrath TD all expressed their criticism of the ending of sugar beet production in Ireland; Frank Feighan TD asked about the problem of obesity and what food companies were doing to counteract it; Chris Ruane MP raised the issue of long term depression and the number of anti-depressant prescriptions each year; Seamus Kirk TD asked about the level of cooperation in pharmaceutical research while David Melding AM asked about competition from the emerging economies; and Paul Flynn MP was very critical of GSK's ethics.
47. The last business before the close of the plenary was an address by Brian Hayes TD, Minister of State at the Department of Finance, on Britain's and Ireland's economic relations. Mr Hayes began by recalling his eight year membership of the Assembly and saying what a role the Assembly had had already and would continue to play in developing closer relations between Britain and Ireland. Geography and geology had placed the islands of Britain and Ireland side by side and the relationship was still evolving. Prime Minister Cameron and the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, had issued a joint statement after their recent meeting, speaking of "a decade of renewed and strengthened co-operation between our two countries". Arising from the meeting a joint study on economic relations was being supervised at the highest levels in both London and Dublin. Brian Hayes spoke about the pressures on the budgets of all European governments following the collapse of economic activity and the question of how to stimulate growth and get people back to work. He mentioned the Irish government's limited internship programme called JobBridge which had been reasonably successful.
48. The fate of the euro was hanging as a shadow over the entire continent. The crisis had undermined trust in politics and dangerous forces were emerging in Europe.

Nevertheless, the Irish government was aiming to bring its budget deficit down to 3% by 2015. It was undertaking a programme of structural reform of the public service and was in contact with the administrations in Northern Ireland and London on this matter, so that experiences could be shared. It was expected that the Irish public sector would have reduced from 320,000 to 280,000 between 2009 and 2015, resulting in a saving of 3.5 billion euros over that period.

49. Ireland continued to attract a high level of foreign investment and exports remained robust; indeed, exports to the UK were up 15%, helped by a weak euro. Growth was expected in the renewable energy sector. Brian Hayes also drew attention to the electricity connector between Ireland and Britain which was being constructed with European Union grant assistance. He suggested that if all the administrations in the islands could present a combined renewable energy strategy to the European Union, significant new investment might be available. Ireland would pursue this agenda vigorously when it assumed the Presidency in 2013.
50. He ended by saying that there were grounds for optimism in Europe. The European Central Bank had shown skill and flexibility and the German finance minister had indicated that he would like to see higher wage levels in Germany as a means of boosting demand across Europe. However, these were uncertain times, both politically and economically so it would be important to be realistic and not raise expectations. Hard work and determination would be required to ensure a better future.
51. Among those who asked questions at the end of the Minister's address were Paul Murphy MP, Baroness Harris of Richmond, Robert Walter MP, Joe O'Reilly TD, Chris Ruane MP, Senator Cait Keane, John McAllister MLA, Seamus Kirk TD and Senator Paschal Mooney.

45th Plenary Conference (Glasgow)

52. The 45th Plenary Conference was held in the Grosvenor Hilton Hotel, Glasgow, between 21st and 23rd October.
53. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP, was the first to address the Assembly. She began by praising the Assembly for its role in fostering closer relations between the UK and Ireland. She then spoke about the Northern Ireland economy saying what an excellent place the province was to do business. She mentioned that Northern Ireland was the first region in Europe to have 100% broadband access and that Belfast was due to become one of the UK's first ten super-connected cities. Inward investment was a real success but she urged that Northern Ireland should capitalise on the worldwide diplomatic representation provided by the United Kingdom. The Government aimed to rebalance the economy away from the public sector to the private and she was aware of the pressure to devolve decisions on the rate of corporation tax. Much had been achieved by a working party of the Treasury and the Northern Ireland Executive to find a possible way forward but important principles still had to be resolved.
54. Theresa Villiers next spoke about relations between the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The Queen's visit and the Olympic flame's unprecedented journey to Dublin

indicated the new spirit of co-operation between the two countries. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach made clear in their joint statement how closely they were working to commemorate the decade of centenaries. She said that the two economies are inextricably linked and was the reason why the UK government had acted bilaterally to provide financial assistance to the Republic in the autumn of 2010.

55. She then referred briefly to the political institutions in Northern Ireland. She said that the Government was fully committed to power-sharing and inclusiveness but the current arrangements should not remain in place for ever. The consultation paper published in the summer had sought views on the possibility of moving to a more normal system of Government and opposition. She stressed that there was nothing prescriptive in these ideas and any change would have to come with the agreement of all parties and across the Northern Ireland community.
56. Mrs Villiers turned her attention to the security situation saying that it had been transformed over the past two decades. But it would be wrong to assume that the threat of violence no longer existed. The British Government was committed to ensuring that terrorists did not undermine the peace and political institutions. An additional, exceptional £200 million had been made available over the next four years to help the Chief Constable bear down on terrorism. Cross-border co-operation between the two police forces was crucial to defeating those who wished to do harm to Northern Ireland and she had already been able to thank the Garda Commissioner for this help.
57. The Secretary of State then answered a range of questions from Senator Imelda Henry, Jim Wells MLA, Chris Ruane MP, Barry McElduff MLA, Jim Sheridan MP, John Scott MSP, Senator Jim Walsh, Patrick O'Donovan TD, Lord Mawhinney, Willie Coffey MSP, Baroness Blood, Lord Dubs and Ken Skates AM.
58. The next item on the agenda was a motion proposed by Senator Cait Keane, as follows:
59. That this Assembly recognises unequivocally the signed languages of the Deaf communities in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, namely British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language respectively, and calls on the parliaments of the two countries to proceed with the official recognition of these signed languages without delay.
60. The motion was tabled under Rule 16b under which Motions tabled by Members and supported by at least fifteen Members from at least three participating institutions shall appear in the proposed programme of business.
61. Senator Keane explained the reasoning behind the motion and the moves which had been made in various jurisdictions to grant official recognition to signed languages. As long ago as 2004, Paul Murphy MP, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, had issued a press statement (not legislation) which recognised both British and Irish sign languages. This had led to some better services for the deaf in Northern Ireland. Some progress had also been made in the Republic with regard to Irish sign language. However, even faster progress was being achieved in countries such as Hungary, Iceland and Scotland. As long ago as 1998, the European Parliament had called on the

Commission to recognise sign languages used by the deaf community in each member state and to ensure that EU funding programmes should support the various sign languages. She ended her speech by saying that in 2011 Hungary and Iceland had both enacted legislation to support sign language; if those two countries could do it, she saw no reason why the countries represented in the Assembly could not do so and she commended her motion to Members.

62. Connetable Daniel Murphy and David Melding AM spoke strongly in support of the motion, which was then agreed to unanimously.
63. The Assembly then turned its attention to the Scottish Economy, and the first guest speaker on the subject was Mr Grahame Smith of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC). He spoke warmly about Glasgow and its shipbuilding heritage. He acknowledged that much was changing and wryly suggested that “shopping” was now more important than “shipbuilding”. He explained that the STUC was not party-politically affiliated. Union membership had remained steady over the years but perhaps a female graduate professional was now a more likely member than a male manual worker. The STUC placed great value on its relationship with the other Trades Union congresses of the islands, including the Irish Congress. Grahame Smith then spoke about the variations in the labour market in different parts of the country. In the east, where the oil and gas industries were based there was a shortage of trained engineers while the employment situation in tourism and construction was facing considerable challenges. Employment levels across the board were significantly below the levels before the recession and youth unemployment had doubled.
64. Mr Smith expressed his concern at the so-called labour-market flexibility which had resulted from the current slump. He feared that the labour market would be more polarised than ever when it emerged from the recession, with significantly more people in low-paid, part-time jobs. He said that real wages and household incomes remained under severe pressure and he was gloomy about the Scottish Government’s target of doubling exports by 2020 as a way of exporting the economy out of recession. He turned his attention to mentioning challenges that had to be faced. The first challenge was to understand the real factors contributing to economic success and he did not believe that these were sufficiently understood. Another challenge would be to maximise the employment benefits of renewable energies and a low carbon economy. Scotland was well placed in these fields but it was important to connect jobs in these sectors with areas that needed them most. A third challenge would be to move on from the rhetoric about rebalancing the economy to designing and implementing a modern industrial strategy for Scotland. This would require a new kind of financial sector as well as a different approach by Government. Training and apprenticeships were very important to the development of the skills required for a modern economy. It was estimated that investment by British business in innovation had fallen by £24 billion since 2008 and that Scotland could benefit from an annual investment of £12 billion for the next ten years. He ended by saying that responsibility for all the things he had talked about lay at Westminster, although the Scottish Government also had a significant role.
65. Grahame Smith then answered questions from Joe Benton MP, Mary Scanlon MSP, Lord Rogan, John Robertson MP, Lord Gordon of Strathblane, James Dornan MSP, Joyce Watson AM, Paul Flynn MP, Arthur Spring TD, Willie Coffey MSP, Oliver

Colville MP, Jim Dobbin MP and Jim Sheridan MP. Many of the questions were about the referendum on Scottish independence and the STUC's attitude towards the question of independence or otherwise. Mr Smith said that the STUC had always been opposed to Trident being based in Scottish waters but apart from that issue, the STUC wanted to make people think about the issues at stake and decide what is in the best interests of Scotland. He was not aware of any trade union committing itself to the cause of independence.

66. The final agenda item on the Monday morning was Tourism in Scotland. Mr Riddell Graham, Director of Partnerships at VisitScotland, addressed the Assembly. Mr Graham began by saying that tourism, together with tourism-supported jobs, was Scotland's most important industry. It was an old industry and a sustainable industry. It had been identified as a key driver of the Scottish economy. There were difficulties which had to be faced---the high level of VAT, air passenger duty, exchange rates and visa requirements but these could be overcome. However, he could report some real positives in terms of investment; the National Museum of Scotland, the Edinburgh International Conference Centre, Stirling Castle and several leading hotels had all been refurbished recently at considerable cost. VisitScotland's chairman had coined the phrase "The Winning Years" as a development of themed based years. In 2012, there had been the Olympics and the launch of Disney Pixar's film "Brave", based on a fictitious Scotland. This was being shown in 75 countries and was a way of promoting Scotland and encouraging visitors.
67. Riddell Graham explained that VisitScotland worked in three main ways. First, they tried to seize every opportunity to promote Scotland; the film "Brave" was an example. Second, they worked in partnership with others in the public and private sectors and third, they were trying to develop tourism on a sustainable basis. Their sister organisation EventScotland was hugely important in bringing major events to Scotland, including the Ryder Cup and the Commonwealth Games. Business conferences were also encouraged and Scots were now being encouraged to explore their own country and take their holidays in Scotland. Mr Graham mentioned the quality assurance scheme which Scotland had developed and was now being copied in countries as far afield as Canada, Norway and Botswana. He finished his address with reference to four areas where he felt they could share experiences. First, VisitScotland was about to launch a national tourism development plan which was intended to help local authorities make planning decisions informed by the importance of tourism. Secondly, they were working with local destination organisations. Thirdly, they were working on promoting insights from the research they carry out. Fourthly, they believed in the importance of local promotions such as "Glasgow, service with style" which was something which related to the whole experience of visiting Glasgow.
68. He then answered a number of questions from among others Ann Phelan TD, John Scott MSP, Lord German, Senator Paschal Mooney, Steve Rodan SHK, Arthur Spring TD, Patrick O'Donovan TD, Mary Scanlon MSP and Frank Feighan TD.
69. After the lunch adjournment the Assembly heard an address by Professor Sir William Mackay KCB, Chairman of the Commission on the Consequences of Devolution for the House of Commons and a former Clerk of the House of Commons. Sir William said how delighted he was, as a former Clerk to the Assembly, to have an opportunity

to speak. He explained what the Commission had been doing and that they were required to report in early 2013. The Commission had heard a lot of evidence from a wide range of people. The story started in 1998 with the devolution of powers from Westminster to Scotland and Wales and later to Northern Ireland; but the devolution settlement to all three devolved administrations was not the same, with all three enjoying the power to legislate in different areas of policy. Out of this complicated picture emerged the “West Lothian Question” which raised the issue of Scottish MPs (or MPs from other devolved jurisdictions) voting in the House of Commons on a matter which would have implications for England in particular but also for another devolved jurisdiction. However, the importance of the West Lothian Question had not emerged immediately; it was perhaps that the English were now feeling unfairly treated. When there were Scottish votes contributing to the passage of contested legislation on subjects such as tuition fees or hunting with dogs, which did not affect Scotland, a sense of unfairness was felt.

70. Sir William believed that some of the explanation lay in the nature of Englishness. The English were perhaps not happy that they alone among the peoples of the United Kingdom did not have a legislature of their own. Party allegiances in the past 50 years had become more associated with different parts of the UK. The Commission was attempting to find out where public opinion in England was going and would then try to find a solution. But the whole area was extremely complex and each solution (for instance, reducing the number of MPs from the devolved jurisdictions) created problems in other respects. Taking care not to say what conclusions the Commission might reach at the conclusion of its enquiry, Sir William gave examples of the many difficulties it would face in making a recommendation to solve, or at least alleviate, the problem commonly referred to (inaccurately) as the “West Lothian Question”.
71. Inevitably, this was not a subject which was of much constitutional interest to members of the Dail, so almost all the questions to Sir William came from members of jurisdictions where the West Lothian Question might apply. Paul Murphy MP, Chris Ruane MP, Lord German, Lord Mawhinney, Paul Flynn MP, Deputy Roger Perrot, John McAllister MLA, Willie Coffey MSP, Jim Dobbin MP and Steve Rodan SHK all asked questions to which Sir William gave full replies.
72. The Assembly then agreed a small change in its Rules to enable Committees to take evidence in public without the prior agreement of the Steering Committee. Lord Dubs welcomed the change on behalf of Committee D which had recently been unable to allow filming of some evidence on people trafficking in Wales because they had been unable to get approval at short notice from the Steering Committee.
73. The Assembly moved on to consider a report from Committee A on the Decade of Commemorations, introduced by Frank Feighan TD. Mr Feighan reported that Committee A had been considering the number of anniversaries of significance to both the Irish and the British which would occur in the coming decade. He listed some of them and said that some would have to be treated with sensitivity because there were risks that events of the past could be used to reignite tensions. He reported on the meetings held with those in the two Governments who were thinking of how various anniversaries, particularly that of the First World War, could be marked. The War was important in the context of British-Irish relations because, for far too long, the Irish experience of the war had not been accorded the recognition it deserved. The

Committee had recently been in Belfast where they had held extremely useful meetings and had learned from the groups they had met how the exploration of history was a profoundly contemporary exercise.

74. In the short debate which followed, Lord Bew said that the contribution of Irish servicemen in the First World War was not being ignored but it was important that there should be a consistency of approach to the matter. The Committee recommended that the advisory panels on both sides of the Irish Sea should establish a joint working group. He also warned that there were some extremely controversial anniversaries coming up and just because matters had gone well so far, no-one should assume that all would be plain-sailing. Chris Ruane MP welcomed the report and spoke of the need for reconciliation. He added that it should be recognised that some events would touch raw nerves. Senator Paul Bradford spoke of the need for history to be taught seriously. Paul Murphy MP mentioned the battle of the Somme and the roles of the Ulster and Welsh regiments. He felt that the Committee's recommendation that the Assembly should meet at a location close to a First World War battlefield should be followed up. Lord Empey believed that if the proposed commemorations went well, it would show what progress had been made in bringing communities together. Senator Paul Coghlan, Senator Paschal Mooney and Patrick O'Donovan TD all spoke about the importance of properly managing the decade of commemorations so that events would not be hijacked by trouble-makers.
75. The Committee's Report was agreed and was passed to Governments and the devolved administrations
76. This debate was followed by consideration of a report from Committee B on Human Rights Legislation in a European Context. Pádraig MacLochlainn TD, Chairman, introduced the report and said that the Committee had held meetings in London, Belfast and Dublin looking at the implementation of human rights legislation in each jurisdiction, including the Crown Dependencies. The European Convention on Human Rights came into force in 1953 but the rights enshrined in the convention were not universally afforded. The judicial body charged with ensuring compliance with the convention was sinking under the weight of cases before it. The Committee looked at the UK Government's proposed Bill of Rights and hoped that it will enshrine in UK law the rights set out in the Convention. They also looked at the issue of a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights and expressed the hope that it should be proceeded with as an important step on the north's journey to a more prosperous and peaceful society.
77. In the debate on the report, Lord Dubs was critical of the report commending the British Government for its compliance with the Convention, drawing attention to the Government's refusal to grant the vote to convicted prisoners as required by the European Court of Human Rights. Senator Jim Walsh said that the Irish Human Rights Commission was sometimes influenced by certain ideologies. Deputy Roger Perrot said so far as Guernsey was concerned some of the wording of the report was inappropriate. His point was supported by Steve Rodan SHK on behalf of the Isle of Man. Oliver Colville MP was at odds with Lord Dubs over the European Court's decision that convicted prisoners should be allowed to vote. He said that the House of Commons had debated and voted on the matter and he supported the view taken by the British Government. Jim Wells MLA said that there would be a lack of

enthusiasm for a Northern Ireland bill of Rights among the Unionist community. He saw such a Bill as a litigant's charter and was worried that it might undermine the unique moral position taken by Northern Ireland on issue such as abortion or gay adoption. Baroness Blood rejected Jim Wells' point of view and pointed out that a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights was part of the Good Friday Agreement. She didn't personally support abortion but thought women should be free to choose.

78. At the end of the discussion, because there was no consensus, the report was referred back to the Committee.
79. Tuesday's business began with an address by Ian McMillan, Director of CBI Scotland, who gave the employers' perspective on the Scottish economy following the address the previous day by the STUC. Ian McMillan began by saying that CBI members employed one-third of the Scottish workforce and it was through the private sector that most of the economic growth would come. But this would not be easy with economies elsewhere in the world struggling. The IMF had estimated that Eurozone economies would contract by 0.4% in 2012 and that growth in 2013 would be no more than 0.2%. Growth in the United States was estimated to be as low as 2.2% while the economies of China, Brazil and India were no longer achieving their previous high rates of growth. Mr McMillan went on to say that deficit reduction was essential; the National Debt was estimated to expand by £250 billion by 2016/2017; the cost of servicing this debt absorbed money which could otherwise be spent on investment, infrastructure and tax reduction. Unemployment in the United Kingdom was now gradually reducing but unfortunately in Scotland it was increasing; economic growth in 2013 was also predicted to be lower in Scotland than in the UK as a whole.
80. The Scottish CBI strongly supported policies to bring public spending under control in order that money could be made available for investment in the future. They supported the Scottish Government's wish to invest in infrastructure but the planning situation could lead to endless delays; he cited as an example the intention to build a by-pass round Aberdeen which had been held up for years and had resulted in millions of pounds being spent on planning appeals. The CBI was also very encouraged by the Scottish Government's target of a 50% growth in exports by 2017. Exports were essential to growth and it was vital that protectionism should be resisted and open markets and free trade should be supported.
81. Mr McMillan then spoke of the importance of education and training to ensure that Scotland had a well-equipped workforce for the future. Sadly, too many young people were leaving Scottish schools without even basic literacy and numeracy qualifications. He admitted that he had painted a rather grim picture of the present situation but there were a few chinks in the gloom which suggested that the world was about to emerge from the slowdown of the last four years.
82. At the end of his address, he answered questions from Jim Wells MLA, Chris Ruane MP, Willie Coffey MSP, Joyce Watson AM, John Scott MSP, James Dornan MSP, Mary Scanlon MSP, Stephen Lloyd MP, Oliver Colville MP and Ken Skates AM. The question which was repeatedly asked was "What view did CBI Scotland have on the independence question?" Mr McMillan constantly replied that it was the CBI's view that, as an employer's organisation representing many different companies, it was not

entitled to come down on one side of the argument or the other; that was for individual companies to decide. However, the CBI did believe that the independence question was creating uncertainty and uncertainty was always bad for business. The Scottish CBI would respect the outcome of the referendum.

83. The debate on the Scottish economy was followed by a discussion on the Food and Drinks Sector in Ireland and Scotland led by Ms Ailish Forde, Head of Industry Affairs and Alcohol Policy with Diageo Ireland and Ms Jane Richardson, Corporate Relations Director with Diageo Scotland both of whom made presentations accompanied by a short film. Jane Richardson spoke first saying that there would be many similarities in the two businesses. Diageo was the world's leading premium drinks company with 40% of its business in the fast growing emerging markets overseas. The company had recently entered the top ten companies quoted on the FTSE 100. Scotland was Diageo's biggest global supply centre and employed 4,000 staff at fifty sites.
84. The company owned Gleneagles Hotel and golf course, the host venue for the 2014 Ryder Cup, an event which should generate tourism and investment in Scotland; Diageo was in discussion with others as to how they could ensure the best possible outcome. Ms Richardson emphasised the importance of whisky to the company's business and the need to invest in products which would not come to the market for twelve or more years. She finished by referring to the company's commitment to apprenticeships and to community programmes.
85. Ailish Forde followed and spoke of the part that Diageo plays in the Irish economy. Not only was the business important domestically but the beer produced was exported to more than 150 countries worldwide. These overseas sales were worth more than 1 billion euros. Diageo was extremely proud of its contribution to the agriculture sector; 19,000 jobs were supported in this sector of the Irish economy. As an alcohol-producing company, Diageo took very seriously the promotion of responsible drinking in every country where it operates. In Ireland, alcohol consumption had reduced by almost 20% in ten years but Diageo recognised that further progress was necessary.
86. She went on to talk about Diageo's involvement in the community. The company supported social entrepreneurs through the Arthur Guinness Fund. Looking to its future, Diageo was centralising its brewing activities by developing a new site at St James's Gate in Dublin, thus also creating 300 new jobs in the construction industry. She acknowledged that this had meant hard decisions over closing breweries in other parts of Ireland.
87. Jane Richardson and Ailish Forde then answered questions from a number of members including Deputy Roger Perrot, Jim Wells MLA, Ann Phelan TD, Senator Paul Coghlan, John Scott MSP, Willie Coffey MSP, Mattie McGrath TD, Senator Terry Brennan, Senator Paschal Mooney and Mary Scanlon MSP.
88. This item was followed by a report on progress by Committee C by Ann Phelan TD. The Committee hadn't met since the plenary in Dublin where they had agreed to launch two enquiries, one into credit unions and the other into marine renewable energy. Connetable Daniel Murphy and Mary Scanlon MSP both added a few words

on tidal energy developments in the areas they represent. Lord Dubs, Chairman of Committee D, agreed to postpone a report from that Committee for reasons of time.

89. The final item of business of the plenary was an address by Fergus Ewing MSP, the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism in the Scottish Government. Mr Ewing said how delighted he was to be able to speak to the Assembly and, on behalf of the Scottish Government, to welcome the delegates to Scotland. He began with a reference to renewable energy and the cross-party agreement on the huge potential for renewable. He said it was very important that Governments and parliamentarians from across the islands should cooperate in the development of renewable energies. Scotland and Ireland were already cooperating in connection with the Irish Presidency and Scotland had seconded two civil servants to assist Ireland in this work. More people worked in the renewable sector in Scotland than in whisky production, a statistic which some delegates might have found hard to believe!
90. Fergus Ewing then spoke about the Isles project and the possibility of developing an interconnector. This was a very exciting project and would create several thousand new jobs. Some people were suggesting that investment in the grid was the most likely way in which the UK would emerge from recession. The construction industry which had been hardest hit in the recession would benefit the most. He ended his speech with briefly mentioning other actions which the Scottish Government was doing to boost the economy.
91. Mr Ewing answered questions from Ann Phelan TD, Paul Flynn MP, Senator Cait Keane, Connetable Daniel Murphy, Sean Conlan TD, Willie Coffey MSP, Senator Paschal Mooney, Senator Terry Brennan, John Scott MSP, Frank Feighan TD and Chris Ruane MP.

Debates in the Sovereign Parliaments

92. Reflecting the Assembly's wish to engage with its parent bodies and inform them about its work, a debate on the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly was held in Dáil Éireann on 17 May 2012, opened by the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore) and closed by the Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Perry); and a similar debate was held in the House of Commons on 21 June 2012, opened by the British Co-Chair and closed by Hugo Swire MP, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office.

The Steering Committee

93. The Steering Committee met on the occasion of the two plenary sessions, and also in London in January, a meeting which welcomed Laurence Robertson MP as the new British Co-Chair, and which was timed to allowed the two Co-Chairs to attend meetings, also held at Westminster, of Committees A and C; and in Dublin in July, at which it agreed a change to the rules governing quorum of committees. Other matters discussed in the Steering Committee during the year including the organization of plenary sessions, links between the Assembly and the British-Irish Council, the future handling of media arrangements, and the possibility – proposed by the National Assembly for Wales delegation, of setting up a fifth committee, on “devolved

matters”. A sub-group consisting of the two Co-Chairs and David Melding AM was set up to consider this matter further; the sub-group met in Dublin in January 2013.

Committees

94. The work of the Committees during the year is set out in Appendix 3.

Staffing of the Assembly

95. Details of the staffing of the Assembly can be found at Appendix 4.

Prospects for 2013

96. The theme of the Irish Plenary taking place on 3th to 5th March 2013 in Donegal will focus on energy and delivering the economic opportunities of the renewable energy sector for Ireland and Britain, building on the business theme of the Irish and UK plenaries last year. The continuing activity of the Committees will be welcome in 2013 following the hiatus arising from the General Elections in 2010 and 2011 in the UK, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In the coming year, the Assembly hopes to build on recent achievements such as the debates in the two Sovereign Parliaments following the plenary meetings in Dublin and Glasgow in 2012.

APPENDIX 1

Members of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

Members of the Assembly

Ireland—January 2012

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Mr Joe McHugh TD | Mr James Bannon TD |
| Mr Seamus Kirk TD | Mr Jerry Buttimer TD |
| Mr Pádraig MacLochlainn TD | Senator Paul Bradford |
| Senator Paul Coghlan | Senator Terry Brennan |
| Mr Seán Conlan TD | Mr Joe Carey TD |
| Ms Ciara Conway TD | Senator Michael Comiskey |
| Mr Noel Coonan TD | Ms Marcella Corcoran Kennedy TD |
| Senator John Crown | Mr Pat Deering TD |
| Senator Maurice Cummins | Ms Anne Ferris TD |
| Mr Stephen Donnelly TD | Mr Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan TD |
| Mr Frank Feighan TD | Mr Dominic Hannigan TD |
| Mr Martin Ferris TD | Senator James Heffernan |
| Senator Jimmy Harte | Mr Charlie McConalogue TD |
| Senator Imelda Henry | Ms Sandra McLellan TD |
| Mr Martin Heydon TD | Mr Tony McLoughlin TD |
| Senator Cáit Keane | Ms Maureen O’Sullivan TD |
| Mr Mattie McGrath TD | Mr Brian Stanley TD |
| Senator Paschal Mooney | Mr Brendan Smith TD |
| Mr Patrick O’Donovan TD | Ms Joanna Tuffy TD |
| Mr Joe O’Reilly TD | |
| Ms Ann Phelan TD | |
| Mr John Paul Phelan TD | |
| Mr Arthur Spring TD | |
| Mr Jack Wall TD | |
| Senator Jim Walsh | |

Ireland—January 2013

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Mr Joe McHugh TD | Mr James Bannon TD |
| Mr Seamus Kirk TD | Mr Jerry Buttimer TD |
| Mr Peadar Tóibín TD | Senator Paul Bradford |
| Senator Paul Coghlan | Senator Terry Brennan |
| Mr Seán Conlan TD | Mr Joe Carey TD |
| Mr Noel Coonan TD | Senator Michael Comiskey |
| Mr Seán Crowe TD | Ms Marcella Corcoran Kennedy TD |
| Senator John Crown | Mr Pat Deering TD |
| Senator Maurice Cummins | Ms Anne Ferris TD |
| Mr Frank Feighan TD | Vacancy |
| Mr Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan TD | Mr Dominic Hannigan TD |

Senator Jimmy Harte
Senator Imelda Henry
Mr Martin Heydon TD
Senator Cáit Keane
Mr John Lyons TD
Mr Mattie McGrath TD
Senator Paschal Mooney
Mr Patrick O'Donovan TD
Mr Joe O'Reilly TD
Ms Ann Phelan TD
Mr John Paul Phelan TD
Mr Arthur Spring TD
Mr Jack Wall TD
Senator Jim Walsh

Senator James Heffernan
Mr Charlie McConalogue TD
Ms Sandra McLellan TD
Mr Tony McLoughlin TD
Ms Maureen O'Sullivan TD
Mr Brian Stanley TD
Mr Brendan Smith TD
Ms Joanna Tuffey TD

The UK Parliament—January 2012

Mr Laurence Robertson MP
Rt Hon Paul Murphy MP
Mr Robert Walter MP
Mr Joe Benton MP
Lord Bew
Baroness Blood MBE
Viscount Bridgeman
Mr Conor Burns MP
Ms Lorely Burt MP
Mr Oliver Colville MP
Mr Jim Dobbin MP
Lord Dubs
Mr Paul Flynn MP
Lord Glentoran
Baroness Harris of Richmond
Mr Kris Hopkins MP
Mr Stephen Lloyd MP
Basildon
Ms Esther McVey MP
Rt Hon Lord Mawhinney
Mr John Robertson MP
Mr Andrew Rosindell MP
Mr Chris Ruane MP
Mr Jim Sheridan MP
Lord Skelmersdale
Mr Gavin Williamson MP

Sir Tony Baldry
Lord Bates
Mr Neil Carmichael MP
Mr Michael Connarty MP
Miss Rosie Cooper MP
Mr Ian Davidson MP
Mr Paul Farrelly MP
Lord Gordon of Strathblane
Mr Richard Graham MP
Lord German OBE
Mr Brandon Lewis MP
Lord Lexden
Mr Jack Lopresti MP
Mr Jim McGovern MP
Baroness O'Loan DBE
Mr Mark Pritchard MP
Rt Hon Baroness Smith of

Lord Tugendhat

The UK Parliament—December 2012

Mr Laurence Robertson MP
Rt Hon Paul Murphy MP

Sir Tony Baldry MP
Lord Bates

Mr Robert Walter MP
Mr Joe Benton MP
Lord Bew
Baroness Blood MBE
Viscount Bridgeman
Mr Conor Burns MP
Mr Oliver Colvile MP
Mr Jim Dobbin MP
Lord Dubs
Lord Empey OBE
Mr Paul Flynn MP
Lord German OBE
Baroness Harris of Richmond
Mr Kris Hopkins MP
Mr Stephen Lloyd MP
Rt Hon Lord Mawhinney
Mr John Robertson MP
Lord Rogan
Mr Andrew Rosindell MP
Mr Chris Ruane MP
Mr Jim Sheridan MP
Lord Skelmersdale
Mr Gavin Williamson MP

Mr Neil Carmichael MP
Mr Michael Connarty MP
Miss Rosie Cooper MP
Mr Ian Davidson MP
Mr Paul Farrelly MP
Lord Gordon of Strathblane
Mr Richard Graham MP
Mr Brandon Lewis MP
Lord Lexden
Mr Jack Lopresti MP
Mr Jim McGovern MP
Baroness O’Loan DBE
Mr Mark Pritchard MP
Lord Shutt of Greetland
Lord Tugendhat

The Scottish Parliament – January 2012

Mr John Scott MSP
Mr Willie Coffey MSP
Ms Alison McInnes MSP
Mr Michael McMahon MSP
Ms Mary Scanlon MSP

Mr James Dornan MSP
Mr Gordon MacDonald MSP
Mr David McLetchie MSP
Ms Siobhan McMahon MSP

The Scottish Parliament – December 2012

Mr John Scott MSP
Mr Willie Coffey MSP
Ms Alison McInnes MSP
Mr Michael McMahon MSP
Ms Mary Scanlon MSP

Mr James Dornan MSP
Mr Gordon MacDonald MSP
Mr David McLetchie MSP
Ms Siobhan McMahon MSP

National Assembly for Wales – January 2012

Ms Bethan Jenkins AM
Mr David Melding AM
Mr Darren Millar AM
Mr William Powell AM
Mr Ken Skates AM

Ms Antoinette Sandbach AM
Mrs Joyce Watson AM
Mr Lindsay Whittle AM

National Assembly for Wales – December 2012

Mr David Melding AM
Mr Darren Millar AM
Mr William Powell AM
Mr Ken Skates AM
Mr Lindsay Whittle AM

Ms Elin Jones AM
Ms Antoinette Sandbach AM
Mrs Joyce Watson AM

Northern Ireland Assembly- January 2012

Mr Willie Clarke MLA
Mr John McCallister MLA
Mr David McClarty MLA
Dr Alasdair McDonnell MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Mr Alex Atwood MLA
Mr Sam Gardiner MBE, MLA

Northern Ireland Assembly- December 2012

Mr John McCallister MLA
Mr David McClarty MLA
Dr Alasdair McDonnell MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Ms Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Sam Gardiner MBE, MLA

States of Jersey – January 2012

Deputy Alan Breckon

Connetable Daniel Murphy

States of Jersey – December 2012

Connetable Daniel Murphy

Deputy Alan Breckon

States of Guernsey – January 2012

Deputy Jane Stephens

Deputy Jack Honeybill

States of Guernsey – December 2012

Deputy Roger Perrot

Deputy Al Brouard

Tynwald – January 2012

Hon Steve Rodan, SHK

Mr Eddie Lowie MLC

Tynwald – December 2012

Hon Steve Rodan, SHK

Mr Eddie Lowie MLC

APPENDIX 2

Reports and other Documents approved by the Assembly

Forty-fourth plenary, Dublin, 14 and 15 May 2012

The Assembly agreed to the following Resolutions:

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF LONDON BUREAU OF RTÉ

That the Assembly:

notes with concern the proposal of the Irish public service broadcaster, RTÉ (Radio Telefís Éireann), to close its London bureau and cease operations from September 2012;

pays tribute to the illustrious record of service provided by the bureau and its staff in keeping viewers informed about British economic, political and cultural life, contributing to the peaceful resolution of conflict and promoting increasingly close relations between Britain and Ireland and the people of our respective islands;

while recognising the drastic fall of broadcasting revenue at a time of economic crisis, further notes the concerns of the Irish community in Britain for the long term consequences of not having an RTÉ correspondent in Britain;

and that Parliamentarians here assembled from jurisdictions throughout Britain and Ireland believe that on-the-spot access for Irish-based media and engagement in public life in Britain supports the fulfilment of the vision of future British-Irish relations a set out by the Prime Minister and Irish Taoiseach in their historic statement of 12th March 2012; and urge the two Governments to support the case for retention of the RTÉ London correspondent and assist in the search for alternatives to closure.

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

That the Assembly takes note of the Sixteenth Annual Report (Document No 190).

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

That the Assembly takes note of the report of Committee C on small and medium-sized enterprises.

Forty-fifth plenary, Glasgow, 22 and 23 October 2012

The Assembly agreed to the following Resolution:

SIGNED LANGUAGES OF THE UK AND IRELAND

That the Assembly:

recognises unequivocally the signed languages of the Deaf communities in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, namely British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language respectively, and calls on the parliaments of the two countries to proceed with the official recognition of these signed languages without delay.

DECADE OF COMMEMORATIONS

That the Assembly takes note of the report of Committee A on the Decade of Commemorations, and the conclusions and recommendations of the Report, which should be forwarded to both Governments and the devolved administrations for their observations [Doc. No 191].

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

That the Assembly takes note of the Government responses to Committee reports set out in Documents Nos 196 to 200.

APPENDIX 3

Work of Committees

Committee A Sovereign Matters

1. The Committee met formally on six occasions during 2012, in London in January and July, in Dublin in April and in Belfast in October. The Committee also met during the plenary meetings in Dublin and Glasgow.
2. All the meetings in 2012 were dominated by the Committee's inquiry into the Decade of Commemorations, which was launched at the first meeting of the year in London in January. The Committee heard from a range of academics, government officials, national and local politicians, and community organisations and representatives. The report was presented at the plenary held in Glasgow in October 2012.
3. The report was well-received by fellow BIPA Members at the Glasgow plenary and it also received positive media coverage in both Britain and Ireland. The report commended the work of the various groups – state, civil society and local community – which had been engaged in activities related to the decade of commemorations. The Committee particularly welcomed the manner in which the recent commemorations of the signing of the Ulster Covenant had passed off without major incident, and called on authorities and others involved in commemorative activities to learn from the manner in which this sensitive event was managed.
4. One of the report's key recommendations was to establish a cross-border educational initiative to arrange, on a single day on an annual basis, exchanges and the teaching of the history of a particular anniversary. The Committee also called for the British and Irish governments to establish a fund to support joint commemorations over the next decade and that the British and Irish Governments develop a joint approach, through a working group, on the British-Irish dimension on World War One commemorations.
5. The Committee agreed a new inquiry for 2013 into the Implementation of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and the St. Andrews Agreement. The Committee will carry out a stock-take of progress to date, identify outstanding issues and consider recommendations for further action. The Committee will seek to hold meetings with the British and Irish governments, the Northern Ireland Executive, the political parties in Northern Ireland (represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly), and civil society/non-governmental organisations. The Committee held its first meeting for the inquiry in February 2013 in Dublin.

Attendance at meetings of Committee A in 2012:

London 30 January 2012: Mr. Frank Feighan T.D. (Chair), Mr. Conor Burns M.P. (Vice-Chair), Mr. Martin Heydon T.D., Mr. Patrick O'Donovan T.D., Mr. John Paul Phelan T.D., Senator Jim Walsh, Mr. Jim Sheridan M.P., Lord Mawhinney, Lord Gordon

Dublin 23 April 2012: Senator Paul Coughlan, Senator Jim Walsh, Lord Bew, Lord Mawhinney

Dublin 14 May 2012: Mr. Frank Feighan T.D. (Chair), Senator Paul Coghlan, Senator Jim Walsh, Mr. Jim Sheridan M.P., Lord Mawhinney, Lord Bew, Viscount Bridgeman, Baroness Blood

London 9 July 2012: Frank Feighan TD (Chair), Patrick O'Donovan T.D., Martin Heydon T.D., John Paul Phelan T.D., Senator Paul Coghlan, Jim Sheridan M.P., Baroness Blood, Lord Bew, Lord Mawhinney, Viscount Bridgeman

Belfast 15 October 2012: Frank Feighan TD (Chair), Conor Burns M.P. (Vice-Chair), Martin Heydon T.D., John Paul Phelan T.D., Senator Paul Coghlan, Baroness Blood, Lord Bew, Lord Mawhinney, Viscount Bridgeman

Glasgow 22 October 2012: Frank Feighan TD (Chair), John Paul Phelan T.D., Senator Paul Coghlan, Baroness Blood, Lord Bew, Lord Mawhinney, Lord Gordon, Jim Sheridan M.P.

Committee B ***European Affairs***

1. During 2012, Committee B met formally at the plenary meetings in Dublin and Glasgow as well as holding meetings in London, Belfast and Dublin for two different inquiries.
2. In May 2012, the Committee met in London for the initial hearings on an inquiry into *Human Rights Legislation in a European Context*. In that context the Committee met with Mr. Rob Lynam (Ministry of Justice) and Ms. Eleanor Fuller (UK Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe). The Committee also met informally with Lord Lester, member of the Commission on a Bill of Rights.
3. At the Dublin plenary in the spring of 2012, the Committee considered progress on the human rights inquiry into *Human Rights Legislation in a European Context*.
4. In July 2012, the Committee travelled to Dublin and Belfast as part of its human rights inquiry. The Committee took evidence in Dublin from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Minister for Justice and Equality and Defence, Mr. Alan Shatter T.D. In Belfast, the Committee took evidence from the Minister for Justice, Mr. David Ford MLA, representatives of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Professor Colin Harvey, Queens University Belfast and representatives of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Consortium.
5. At the Glasgow plenary in October 2012, the Committee agreed its Report on Human Rights Legislation in a European Context and presented it to the plenary. It was not possible to reach consensus on the report at plenary, and the Committee agreed to look again at the Report. The Committee also agreed its next inquiry; *The Atlantic Strategy: Benefits for Britain and Ireland*. The Committee held an informal meeting in London in November 2012 on the topic, and travelled to Brussels in January 2013.

Attendance at meetings of Committee B in 2012

London, 1 May 2012: Mr. Robert Walter MP (Chairman), Jim Dobbin MP, Senator Imelda Henry, Senator Terry Brennan, Mr. Noel Coonan T.D., Mr. Sean Conlan T.D.

Dublin, 14 May 2012: Mr Robert Walter MP (Chairman), Lord German OBE, Senator Imelda Henry, Willie Coffey MSP, Baroness Harris of Richmond, Noel Coonan TD, Seamus Kirk TD, Jim Dobbin MP, Rt Hon Paul Murphy MP, William Powell AM, Joe O'Reilly TD, Gavin Williamson MP, Stephen Gilbert MP.

Dublin and Belfast, 2 and 3 July 2012: Mr Robert Walter MP (Chairman), Noel Coonan TD, Sean Conlan TD, Jim McGovern MP, Senator Terry Brennan, Joe O'Reilly TD (Belfast only)

Glasgow, 22 October 2012: Mr Pdraig MacLochlainn TD, Willie Coffey MSP, Senator Imelda Henry, Noel Coonan TD, Stephen Lloyd MP, Jim Dobbin MP, Rt Hon Paul Murphy MP, Lord German OBE, William Powell AM.

Committee C Economic Affairs

Committee C presented a report on small and medium-sized enterprises to the Assembly's 44th Plenary session in Dublin in May 2012. The report focused on access to finance, and briefly touched on the potential for credit unions to lend to businesses. The Committee decided to pick up and expand on the theme of credit unions in its next inquiry.

Committee C met twice during the Assembly's 45th Plenary session in Glasgow in October 2012. At the first of these meetings the Committee began taking evidence for the inquiry into credit unions. The Committee held discussions with representatives from Glasgow City Council and Credit Unions in the Glasgow Strategy Group. At the second meeting the Committee held discussions with a representative of the European Marine Energy Centre Limited as to how the Committee might approach marine renewable energy as a subject matter for a separate inquiry. The Committee conducted preliminary investigations which had shown that given the early stage in the development of the industry it might be best to focus on the policy for renewable energy and in that regard sought the advice of the Strategy Group.

On 14 January 2013 the Committee met in Dublin and held discussions with representatives from the Small Firms Association, Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association, Credit Union Development Association, and the Irish League of Credit Unions on the potential of credit unions to lend to businesses. The Committee also requested a written memorandum from the Registrar of Credit Unions in the Central Bank of Ireland.

The Committee met in London on 4 February 2013 to conclude its evidence-gathering on credit unions. Discussions were held with representatives from the London Community Credit Union, Your Credit Union, Association of British Credit Unions Ltd, officials from the Credit Union Expansion Project team at the Department for Work and Pensions and the Chairman of the All-Party Group on Credit Unions, Damian Hinds MP.

The Committee's intention is to agree a report on credit unions for presentation at the 46th BIPA Plenary in March 2013.

Attendance at meetings of Committee C in 2012-13

Glasgow on 22 October 2012:

John Robertson MP (Vice-Chairman), Lord Empey, Paul Flynn MP, Mattie McGrath TD, Senator Paschal Mooney, Ann Phelan TD, Lord Rogan, Mary Scanlon MSP.

Glasgow on 23 October 2012:

Ann Phelan TD (Acting Chairperson), Oliver Colvile MP, Lord Empey, Paul Flynn MP, David McClarty MLA, Mattie McGrath TD, Senator Paschal Mooney, Mary Scanlon MSP.

Dublin on 14 January 2013:

Jack Wall TD (Chairman), John Robertson MP (Vice-Chairman) Senator John Crown, David McClarty MLA, Mattie McGrath TD, Senator Paschal Mooney, Ann Phelan TD, Lindsay Whittle AM.

London on 4 February 2013:

John Robertson MP (Vice-Chairman), Lord Empey, Paul Flynn MP, David McClarty MLA, Mattie McGrath TD, Senator Paschal Mooney, Ann Phelan TD, Lindsay Whittle AM, Paul Farrelly MP (Associate Member)

Committee D
Environmental and Social Issues

Committee D met six times during 2012: two meetings during plenary sessions; and four meetings taking evidence.

At the plenary meeting in Brighton in October 2011 it was suggested that committee D conduct an urgent inquiry into flooding, following the severe floods that had struck Dublin during the plenary. Accordingly, the committee agreed to defer starting its inquiry into human trafficking, and to undertake a short inquiry into flooding, with the aim of reporting to the plenary in spring 2012.

The committee visited Dublin in February 2012 to hear about how the floods had affected the city, and what measures could be put in place to deal better with flooding in future. Evidence was heard from representatives of Dublin City Council and the Office of Public Works. In March 2012 the committee took evidence in London from representatives of the Association of British Insurers, the Environment Agency, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Local Government Association. The committee agreed a report in time for the plenary meeting in Dublin in May. The report made recommendations about replacing the agreements between the insurance industry and governments in the UK to guarantee insurance for at-risk properties; the use of data to map flood plains and set insurance premiums; co-operation between responsible authorities; funding for flood defences; and the granting of planning permission on flood plains. The report was debated at the Dublin plenary.

In June the committee began its deferred inquiry into human trafficking. During the inquiry the committee wanted to examine the extent of human trafficking in the various jurisdictions; what counts as best practice in tackling it (having regard to local circumstances); how each jurisdiction can learn from the others; and the cross-border elements of trafficking. The committee first took evidence in Cardiff, where it heard from the chair of the Assembly's All-Party Working Group on Human Trafficking in Wales, the Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO) and the Anti Human Trafficking Co-ordinator (Wales). The committee then took evidence in Belfast in November. There it heard from Amnesty International, an MLA promoting a private member's bill on human trafficking, the chairman of the Assembly's All Party Group on Human Trafficking and the relevant minister.

In January 2013 the committee took further evidence on human trafficking in Edinburgh. It heard from representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and the Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance Project at Glasgow Community and Safety Services. The committee plans to take further evidence in London and Dublin, with a view to reporting to the plenary in autumn 2013.

The chairman would like to thank the members of committee D for their work during the year.

Attendance at meetings of committee D in 2012

Dublin: 19–20 February 2012

Lord Dubs (chairman), Senator Maurice Cummins (co-chairman), Stephen Donnelly TD, Senator Cait Keane, Michael McMahon MSP, Jim Sheridan MP and Jim Wells MLA.

London: 25–26 March 2012

Lord Dubs (chairman), Senator Maurice Cummins (co-chairman), Ciara Conway TD, Senator Jimmy Harte, Kris Hopkins MP, Senator Cait Keane, Chris Ruane MP, Jim Sheridan MP, Lord Skelmersdale, Baroness Smith of Basildon and Jim Wells MLA.

Dublin plenary: 14 May 2012

Lord Dubs (chairman), Senator Jimmy Harte, Senator Cait Keane, David Melding AM, Michael McMahon MSP, Chris Ruane MP, Jim Sheridan MP, Baroness Smith of Basildon and Jim Wells MLA.

Cardiff: 24–25 June 2012

Lord Dubs (chairman), Ciara Conway TD, Lord German, Senator Cait Keane, Michael McMahon MSP, David Melding AM and Jim Wells MLA.

Glasgow plenary: 22 October 2012

Lord Dubs (chairman), Senator Maurice Cummins (co-chairman), Joe Benton MP, Senator Cait Keane, Barry McElduff MLA, David Melding AM, Chris Ruane MP, Lord Skelmersdale, Joyce Watson AM and Jim Wells MLA.

Belfast: 11–12 November 2012

Lord Dubs (chairman), Senator Maurice Cummins (co-chairman), Kris Hopkins MP, Michael McMahon MSP, Joyce Watson AM, Lord Skelmersdale and Jim Wells MLA.

APPENDIX 4

Staff of the Assembly in 2012

Ireland:

Clerk: Ms Sinéad Quinn

Clerk: Mr Paul Kelly (until March 2012)

Policy Adviser:
Ms Olive Hempenstall

Policy Adviser:
Ms Émer Deane (until August 2012)

Clerk, Committee A:
Ms Sighle Doherty

Shadow Clerk, Committee B:
Ms Jillian O’Keeffe/Ms Jullee Clarke

Clerk, Committee C:
Ms Jillian O’Keeffe/Ms Jullee Clarke

Shadow Clerk, Committee D:
Ms Jillian O’Keeffe

Irish Secretariat:
Ms Jullee Clarke

United Kingdom:

Clerk: Dr Robin James

British Consultant:
Sir Michael Davies KCB

Shadow Clerk, Committee A:
Mr Marek Kubala

Clerk, Committee B:
Mr Eliot Wilson (until May 2012)
Ms Alison Groves (from May 2012)

Shadow Clerk, Committee C:
Ms Judith Boyce

Clerk, Committee D:
Mr Nic Besly

UK Secretariat:
Mrs Amanda Healy

Media Consultant: Mr Ronan Farren