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FROM: NEILL JACKSON

DATE: 26 MAY 2020

TO: PS/FIRST MINISTER AND PS/DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

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ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NI EXECUTIVE HOSTED BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL (BIC) SUMMIT MEETING: LOUGH ERNE RESORT, ENNISKILLEN ON 11 JUNE 2021

Issue:	Arrangements for the BIC Summit to be hosted by the Executive on 11 June 2021 and Ministerial notifications.
Timing:	Routine - early approval essential to assist with statutory notification of attendance to the Assembly.
Press Office Advice:	Likely to attract media attention – EIS will provide media handling plan'
FOI implications:	Unlikely to be disclosable.
Legislation implications:	None.
Financial Implications:	The Executive Office will meet the hosting costs of the Summit meeting.
Executive referral:	Yes.
Recommendation:	That the First Minister and deputy First Minister:- (i) note the proposed agenda for the forthcoming NI Executive hosted BIC Summit (Annex A); (ii) write to Executive colleagues to notify them of the date of the BIC Summit (draft letter at Annex B);

- (iii) seek notifications of attendance at the meeting; and
- (iv) seek agreement from Executive colleagues to a Statement being made to the Assembly following the BIC Summit, on behalf of all those who attended the meeting; and that the Statement to the Assembly should be based closely on the Communiqué agreed at the meeting.

Background

1. The 35th BIC Summit will be hosted by the Executive in the Lough Erne Resort on Friday 11 June 2021.

Advising the Executive and the Assembly

2. The First Minister and deputy First Minister are required by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to give the Executive and the Assembly, as far in advance of each BIC meeting as is reasonably practicable, the following information in relation to the meeting: the date; the agenda; and, once determined, the names of the Ministers who are to attend the meeting. A further submission to enable these notifications will be provided once this information is confirmed.

Agenda

3. The proposed Agenda for the Summit is attached at **Annex A**:
 - The meeting will begin with a discussion on **Priorities for Covid-19 – Recovery and Planning for Potential Impacts (to include latest political developments)**. A discussion paper is being prepared and each administration will highlight its priorities for recovery and the potential future issues which will need to be addressed to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. Under this Agenda item, there will also be the opportunity for administrations to raise and discuss **Latest Political Developments**.
 - A discussion paper will be tabled on the **Future of the Council**, to fulfil the request made at the Dublin Summit in November 2019.

- A paper providing options for next steps following completion of an external **Operational Review of the BIC Secretariat** will be discussed.
- **The Ongoing Work of the Council** will provide an update from each of the BIC workstreams, outlining what has happened, or is planned, in each work sector during 2021.
- The **Secretariat End of Year Report for 2020** will also include for Council approval details of the Secretariat's budgetary requirement for 2021-22

Attendance and Participation by Ministers

4. A Minister who has responsibility for a matter on the agenda of a BIC meeting is entitled to attend the meeting and participate in the meeting as far as it relates to that matter. These Ministers are referred to as "appropriate Ministers".
5. The substantive item on the agenda of this Summit will be Covid-19 – Recovery and Planning for Potential Impacts. As all Executive Ministers have been involved in actions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, they could be deemed "appropriate Ministers". However, experience from the previous Summit hosted by the Scottish Government was that Ministerial discussion had to be curtailed with some administrations having little opportunity to provide input to the meeting. In the light of this it has been proposed that Ministerial attendance should, where possible, be restricted to Heads of Administrations and only Heads of Administration should speak. In view of this, and as for previous Summit meetings, the First Minister and deputy First Minister should, while providing the opportunity for Executive Ministers to attend, reiterate their request that Ministers consider attendance only if there is likely to be substantive discussion on an issue for which they have responsibility.

Notification of Intention to Attend

6. Each appropriate Minister must notify the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether or not he/she intends to participate in the meeting. If he/she is not intending to do so another Minister (or the First Minister and deputy First Minister) may be nominated, with their consent, to participate on their behalf.

7. It is recommended that you now write to Executive colleagues to notify them of the date of the meeting and to invite them to indicate their intentions concerning participation. A draft letter is attached at **Annex B**.

Summit Dinner

8. We are awaiting confirmation of attendance from other administrations, but it is likely that some administrations will need to arrive at the location on Thursday 10 June. The First Minister and deputy First Minister are therefore invited to confirm that they will host a dinner for those Heads of Administration on that evening.

Participation by Officials/Advisers

9. The meeting will be held in the Lough Erne Resort with a facility for those administrations unable to attend in person to participate in the meeting via Zoom. Due to Covid restrictions entry to the BIC Summit meeting room will be restricted to Ministers and only those essential officials required to assist Ministers during the meeting. A live feed will be provided for other officials who will be accommodated elsewhere in the Resort complex and to officials unable to travel to the meeting. Further details will follow on official level access.

Report to the Executive and the Assembly

10. Following the Summit, the First Minister and deputy First Minister and all other Ministers who participated are required to make a report to the Executive and to the Assembly.
11. It is recommended that the Assembly Statement should be closely based on the text of the agreed Communiqué and that, in writing to seek notification of Ministerial attendance, agreement should be sought that the First Minister and deputy First Minister make the statement to the Assembly on behalf of all Ministers who attended the Summit. A further submission will be made on the Assembly Statement.

Recommendation

12. That the First Minister and deputy First Minister:-

- i. note the proposed agenda for the forthcoming BIC Summit (**Annex A**);
- ii. write to Executive colleagues to notify them of the date of the BIC Summit (draft letter at **Annex B**);
- iii. seek notifications of participation in the meeting and;
- iv. seek agreement from Executive colleagues to a Statement being made to the Assembly following the BIC Summit, on behalf of all those who attended the meeting; and that the Statement to the Assembly should be based closely on the Communiqué agreed at the meeting.

Personal Data

NEILL JACKSON

EXT: **I&S**

Encls: Annex A: Draft Agenda for BIC Summit.
 Annex B: Letter to Executive

Copy Distribution List

HOCS
Dr Andrew McCormick

NR

Karen Pearson
Deirdre Griffith
Donal Moran

NR

Jane Holmes

NR



35th British-Irish Council Summit, Northern Ireland Executive

Lough Erne Resort

11 June 2021

10.00 – 12.00 (followed by Press Conference)

Draft Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Discussion topic: Priorities for Covid-19 – Recovery and Planning for Potential Impacts (to include latest political developments)
3. Future of the Council
4. Operational Review of the Secretariat
5. Ongoing work of the Council
6. BIC Secretariat End-Year Report
7. Minutes of the 34th Summit, hosted virtually by Scottish Government, 6th November 2021
8. Date and location of the next BIC Summit
9. Any Other Business
10. Draft Communiqué

FROM: FIRST MINISTER & DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

DATE: [] MAY 2020

TO: MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL (BIC) SUMMIT MEETING: FRIDAY 11 JUNE 2021

Background

We will host the British Irish Council (BIC) Summit meeting on Friday 11 June 2021.

Attendance and Participation by Ministers

The proposed agenda for the meeting is attached. In accordance with the relevant statutory provisions a Minister or Junior Minister who has responsibility for a matter on the agenda of a BIC meeting is entitled to attend and participate in the meeting as an “appropriate Minister” so far as it relates to that matter. While we acknowledge and will respect the statutory provisions regarding attendance, we would ask Ministers to consider the need to keep the Executive’s representation proportionate to that of the other BIC administrations particularly now as Covid-19 restricts the numbers gathering indoors and hospitality venues are required to provide mitigations to stop the spread of the virus.

Notification of Intention to Attend

Each “appropriate Minister” must notify us whether or not they wish to participate in the meeting. If a Minister does not propose to do so, he or she may nominate, with their consent, another Minister, or the First Minister and deputy First Minister, to participate instead. This should be done as soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event no later than 10 days before the meeting - **by 31 May 2021**.

We should therefore be grateful if you would notify us concerning your participation in this virtual Summit meeting using the attached form which should be returned to ps.ministers@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk and copied to

NR @executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk no later than 31 May 2021. Officials will advise all attending Ministers of the arrangements for the meeting in due course.

Report to the Executive and Assembly

As First Minister and deputy First Minister, we and all Ministers and Junior Ministers who participate are required to make a report to the Executive and to the Assembly, following a BIC meeting.

We therefore propose that we should make a Statement to the Assembly following the BIC meeting on behalf of all Executive Ministers and that the Statement should be based closely on the Communiqué agreed at the meeting. We would be grateful if you could confirm your agreement to this proposal on the attached form.

Agenda and Papers

The Agenda and related papers will be circulated in due course to enable consideration by the Executive in advance of the Summit.

**THE RT HON ARLENE FOSTER MLA
FIRST MINISTER**

**MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

FROM: MINISTER []

DATE: [] May 2021

TO: FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

NOTIFICATION OF MINISTERIAL ATTENDANCE AT BIC SUMMIT MEETING ON FRIDAY 11 JUNE 2021

In accordance with Section 52A (4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (as amended) - 'The Act', I hereby confirm that:-

- (a) I intend to attend the BIC Summit meeting on Friday 11 June 2021 and, in accordance with Section 52C (2) of the Act, I agree that the First Minister and deputy First Minister will make a Statement to the Assembly on my behalf closely based on the Communiqué agreed at the BIC Summit*; or
- (b) I do not intend to attend the BIC Summit meeting on Friday 11 June 2021 and, in accordance with section 52A (3) of the Act, I hereby nominate the First Minister and deputy First Minister to attend in my place*; or
- (c) I do not intend to attend the BIC Summit meeting on Friday 11 June 2021 and, in accordance with section 52A (3) of the Act, I hereby nominate [name of Minister] to attend in my place*; or
- (d) I do not intend to attend the BIC Summit meeting on Friday 11 June 2021 and do not intend or am unable to nominate another Minister or junior Minister to attend in my place*.

SIGNED: []

NB: Completed forms should be returned to TEO Private Office (ps.ministers@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk) and copied to Name Redacted @executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk by 31 May 2021.

*** Delete as appropriate.**