

Concept Note

Strategic Review of Irish-Scottish Relations

Ireland and Scotland have close political, economic, community and cultural ties, and both the Government of Ireland and the Scottish Government are committed to deepening Irish-Scottish cooperation - enhancing cooperation in existing areas and identifying new areas in which collaborative work may be of benefit to both countries. The changing context for the Irish-Scottish relationship, particularly in light of Brexit, provides an opportunity to undertake a joint strategic review of that relationship, aimed at consolidating existing ties in a new international environment and unlocking the relationship's further potential.

The review will be conducted jointly by both Governments, led on the Irish side by the Consulate General of Ireland in Edinburgh and the Ireland, UK and Americas Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and on the Scottish side by the Scottish Innovation and Investment Hub in Dublin and the Scottish Government External Relations Directorate. A steering group, composed of relevant officials from each Government, will manage the review process. The aim of the process will be to produce a joint report setting out current areas of bilateral cooperation and identifying opportunities for cooperation or joint initiatives in new areas, which are devolved to Scotland, where these have the potential to support the policy objectives of both Governments. This report will be a public document, setting out how Scotland and Ireland will work together in the period 2020-2025.

Proposed Consultation Process

Internal Mapping Exercise

Consultations will be undertaken across government to identify and map existing areas of bilateral cooperation. This should take account of formal structures and frameworks for cooperation (e.g. the Scottish-Irish Health Forum); specific areas of Irish-Scottish cooperation within broader multilateral frameworks (e.g. in the context of the British-Irish Council); and ad hoc contacts and cooperation on specific initiatives (e.g. the development of the Scottish Citizens' Assembly). Each Government will define its own approach to the internal consultation process and reconcile the results of that process on each side to produce an agreed mapping of existing government-to-government cooperation, providing a baseline for future development.

Internal consultations will also provide an opportunity to seek the views of relevant officials on whether there are specific new opportunities for Irish-Scottish cooperation in the policy areas for which they have responsibility that should be prioritised for further development. Consideration of this area should be guided by the summaries of current, emerging and future cooperation drafted by each Government in June 2019.

External Consultations

A process of stakeholder consultation will be undertaken in both Ireland and Scotland to seek external views on how Ireland and Scotland currently work together and to identify opportunities for new areas of cooperation. To guide the process, five specific areas of consultation are proposed for initial consideration by the steering group. In all cases, relevant Government Departments and

agencies in both countries will be asked to participate in the process. It is envisaged that stakeholder consultation will take the form of one workshop in each country involving relevant stakeholder groups, convened by the Consulate/Hub with the support of the host Government.

1. Business and economic

Stakeholders may include Causeway Ireland Scotland Business Exchange; the Scottish Irish Finance Initiative; the British-Irish Chamber of Commerce; Ibec; CBI Scotland; Chambers Ireland; Chambers Scotland; as well as relevant businesses with operations across both countries. Relevant government agencies (Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Scottish Enterprise/Scottish Development International, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Highland and Island Enterprise) may also be invited to participate.

Suggested questions to be addressed:

- What are the factors which encourage or inhibit investment by Irish businesses in the Scottish market, and vice versa?
- What can both Governments do to support and to drive growth in the bilateral economic relationship?

2. Community and diaspora

Stakeholder groups may include the GAA, Conradh na Gaeilge, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, St Patrick's Festival Committees in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Coatbridge; BEMIS Scotland; Scottish community organisations in Ireland.

Suggested questions to be addressed:

- How can governments engage effectively with their own diaspora communities?
- Are there appropriate channels for Irish and Scottish diaspora communities to engage with the governments and public authorities of their host country?

3. Culture

Stakeholders may include national cultural institutions in both countries; Culture Ireland; Creative Scotland; Irish and Scottish Gaelic language bodies.

Suggested questions to be addressed:

- Can Ireland and Scotland cooperate more effectively in the promotion and preservation of aspects of our shared cultural traditions?
- Is there scope for joint work on the promotion of contemporary Irish and Scottish culture in the context of events such as the Edinburgh Festivals and Galway2020?

4. Rural, coastal and island communities

Stakeholders may include Údarás na Gaeltachta; Highland and Island Enterprise; relevant local authorities.

Suggested questions to be addressed:

- Can Ireland and Scotland work together more effectively to address common challenges in developing rural economies and providing public services to dispersed populations?
- Is there scope for sharing of good practices in public investment to address the needs of rural and coastal communities?

5. Academic and research links

Stakeholders may include Universities Ireland; Universities Scotland; Science Foundation Ireland; the Higher Education Authority; the Irish Research Council; the Scottish Funding Council; and individual academic and research institutions with an interest in the Irish-Scottish relationship.

Suggested questions to be addressed:

- What are the main factors influencing academic, researcher and student mobility between Ireland and Scotland?
- Can research priorities in Ireland and Scotland be better aligned to take advantage of expertise and research infrastructure available in the other country?

Questionnaire

The steering group will consider the option of designing an online questionnaire, accessible to the public and promoted by both Governments, addressing questions such as the visibility and perception of Ireland in Scotland and Scotland in Ireland; the extent of diaspora and community engagement; attitudes to Irish and Scottish culture in each country; and perceptions of the economic relationship.

Proposed Outputs

The results of the internal mapping exercise, external consultations and questionnaire process will inform the formulation by the steering group of a final report, outlining the scale and value of current Irish-Scottish cooperation, making recommendations addressed to both Governments on priorities for future cooperation, and making recommendations on any structures required to provide an appropriate framework for regular government-to-government dialogue on aspects of the bilateral relationship.

Timelines

It is envisaged that internal and external consultation processes will be undertaken in the second half of 2019, with a view to the publication of a final report, agreed by both Governments, early in the second quarter of 2020.