

9. Statement by the Chief Minister regarding the British-Irish Council Summit Meeting to be held in Jersey in 2009

9.1 Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):

The British-Irish Council was established under the agreement reached in Belfast on Good Friday, 10th April 1998. The Members are the British and Irish Governments, the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the Crown dependencies of Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of the Mann. It aims to promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of our relationships among the peoples of our Islands. Jersey has been fully committed to participation in the British-Irish Council since its inception. This is the only international organisation in which Jersey has a presence in its own right and where the Chief Minister and other Ministers meet on an equal standing with heads of government of other countries. In June 2002 Jersey hosted the third summit which was attended by the Prime Minister, the Taoiseach and first Ministers and Chief Ministers of all the member governments. This provided an important occasion for one-to-one dialogue at the highest level of government and was extremely valuable in promoting Jersey's relations with our neighbours in a positive way. Jersey delegations have attended every summit meeting held in turn by each of the member administrations and our officials have continued to contribute actively to all of the current work streams, including leading on the knowledge economy projects in relation to the digital divide and business continuity and disaster recovery. The benefits have included a fruitful exchange of ideas and best practice and a shared commitment to tackling common issues. Most notably the British-Irish Council has facilitated the peace process in Northern Ireland and re-engagement of their democratic institutions. I would like to inform Members of the States that at the last summit, which I attended in Scotland in September together with Senator Le Sueur, I made an offer for Jersey in due turn to host the summit meeting in the autumn of 2009. I am delighted to say the offer was gladly, indeed enthusiastically, accepted by the council. This will be a great opportunity to once again invite the Prime Minister, the Taoiseach, the first Ministers and Chief Ministers to meet in our Island, to promote our international identity in this key forum and to present Jersey at its very best. I am sure Members will wish to support this initiative and the Chief Minister's Department will keep Members informed as the plans for this important occasion are developed.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Does any Member wish to ask any questions on that statement?

9.1.1 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

I would just like to ask the Chief Minister what the budget is.

Senator F.H. Walker:

There is no fixed budget at this stage but it is likely to be circa £250,000. The reason it is so high is that, as I am sure Members will appreciate, there are significant security issues relating to such a high level meeting.

9.1.2 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Would the Chief Minister also confirm that if an additional amount is required then he or the Minister for Treasury and Resources will need to bring forward a proposition to the States to allow that additional resource to be made available to ensure that the Chief Minister's Department or Treasury is not yet able to discharge other matters that they need to?

Senator F.H. Walker:

It will not be me but I am sure I can give that assurance on behalf of a future Chief Minister and/or Minister for Treasury and Resources.