

JMC Annual Report 2011-2012

Introduction

The Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) comprises the UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive and is at the centre of formal relations between these administrations. The JMC meets in Plenary, Domestic and European formats. Procedures for the operation of the Joint Ministerial Committee are set out in the Memorandum of Understanding, which can be found at <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/devolution-memorandum-understanding-and-supplementary-agreement>.

This document outlines the activities of the JMC since the last meeting of JMC in plenary format in June 2011 and will be published on the websites of the four administrations.

JMC Plenary

The Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) met in plenary format on 8 June 2011. A discussion took place on the priorities of the Devolved Administrations following the elections to their respective legislatures on 5 May 2011 and on the state of the economy and public finances. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of working closely together on matters of mutual interest. Amendments to the Memorandum of Understanding to provide for the commissioning of independent third party analysis in relation to disagreements and disputes were agreed. Ministers also agreed to examine options to progress the resolution of the Olympic funding dispute.

Domestic policy discussions

The JMC met in Domestic format on two occasions during the year.

On 20 February 2012 it discussed:

- The importance of co-operation on Electricity Market Reform
- Co-ordination between administrations on Inward Investment
- Progress on updating the Memorandum of Understanding.

On 23 May 2012 it discussed:

- The implementation of the UK Government's Welfare Reform Programme
- Maximising the benefits of the London 2012 Olympics.

It also agreed that a revised Memorandum of Understanding should be presented to the next Plenary meeting for approval.

Discussion of European issues

The JMC met in European format on five occasions during the year to discuss current European Union (EU) business in which the Devolved Administrations have an interest; and to facilitate their input to the UK Government's negotiating stance prior to European Councils.

On 13 June 2011 it discussed:

Priorities for the June European Council:

- UK/Devolved Administration Co-ordination and Horizon Scan
- Devolved Administration European priorities
- EU Financial Perspectives.

On 13 October 2011 it discussed:

Priorities for the October European Council:

- UK/Devolved Administration Co-ordination and Horizon Scan
- Multi-Annual Financial Framework, including Common Agricultural Policy and Structural and Cohesion Funds.

On 21 November 2011 it discussed:

Priorities for the December European Council:

- UK/Devolved Administration Co-ordination and Horizon Scan
- Direct actions and preliminary references before the European Court of Justice involving the Devolved Administrations;
- Upstream engagement
- Connecting Europe Facility – Transport, Energy and Telecommunications networks
- Update on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework.

On 2 February 2012 it discussed:

Priorities for the spring European Council:

- UK/Devolved Administration Co-ordination and Horizon Scan covering a
- Read out of January Informal Council and Intergovernmental Treaty and
- Technical amendments to the Concordat on the co-ordination of EU policy
- Upstream engagement

- Horizon 2020
- Update on Multi-Annual Financial Framework.

On 11 June 2012 it discussed:

Priorities for the June European Council:

- UK/Devolved Administration Co-ordination and Horizon Scan covering the
- technical refresh to the Concordat on the co-ordination of EU policy
- EU Growth
- EU Transport Strategy
- Update on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework.

Resolution of Issues

During the course of the year, two inter-administration disagreements/disputes were considered under the dispute avoidance and resolution protocol. A dispute concerning Barnett consequential allocations to the devolved administrations arising from a 2012 Olympics funding package (UK Government/Northern Ireland Executive/Scottish Government/Welsh Government) was resolved in December 2011. A disagreement on the £18 billion capital expenditure commitment to Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Executive/UK Government) has been the subject of discussion between the two administrations. The administrations have exchanged letters and agreed that the disagreement should be reviewed at an appropriate future date.

Discussions on the Economy and Public Finances

The key forum for consideration of financial and economic matters is the Finance Ministers' Quadrilateral which met twice during the period.

On 14 July 2011 it discussed:

- A general economic overview
- Access to End of Year Flexibility (EYF);
- Pensions Reform
- Banking / Access to Finance
- Welfare Reform

On 5 March 2012 it discussed:

- A general economic overview
- Employment
- Regional Pay
- Pensions Reform

- Infrastructure investment
- Spending Controls.