



BRITISH-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

TIONÓL PARLAIMINTEACH NA BREATAINE-NA
hÉIREANN

REPORT

from

Committee D (Environment and Social)

on

The Irish Communities in Scotland

Doc No. 257

November 2015

Background to the inquiry

1. In 2007 and 2010 we undertook inquiries into the Irish Community in Britain. We considered matters such as:
 - recognition, support and financial assistance provided to the Irish Community in Britain by British and Irish authorities both at national and local levels;
 - the Irish Government's Emigrant Support Programme, cultural activities to help foster Irish Community contact and support, and capital projects;
 - passing on Irish cultural heritage to second and third generation immigrants, including Irish media in Britain and sport;
 - funding for and attention to the needs of the elderly Irish community, particularly the sense of isolation many experienced despite the appearance of success for the wider community; and
 - healthcare inequalities and specific health needs, particularly life expectancy, heart disease, suicide rates, mental health issues including emotional distress, drug and alcohol misuse.
2. These two inquiries did not take evidence from the Irish communities in Scotland and so we decided to visit Glasgow in November 2014 to follow up on our previous work and capture the Scottish perspective. At the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary meeting in February 2015, the Committee was invited to undertake further analysis of the issue. As a result, the Committee made a second visit to Glasgow in October 2015, meeting both with some of our previous witnesses and a number of other key stakeholders, including the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council and Police Scotland. We are most grateful to all those who spoke to us and helped us to reach our conclusions. A list of meetings held and participants is enclosed as an Annex to this Report.

The Irish communities in Scotland

3. Given the close historical and geographical ties between Ireland and Scotland, Irish communities in Scotland are both extensive and somewhat distinctive in character from those elsewhere in Britain. Indeed, it was this distinctiveness that prompted the Committee to undertake this inquiry. Yet it is difficult to define what is meant by "Irish communities" in Scotland with any precision. According to the 2011 Census, there were 53,000 people resident in Scotland who identified themselves as White Irish (using the terminology contained in the Census). This made up one per cent of the total resident population of Scotland. A further 2,200 people identified themselves as "Mixed Irish / Other White" and 300 other people wrote Irish under one of the non-White ethnic groups in that Census. Three quarters of the 54,100 identified themselves as being from

a Christian faith and two thirds identified themselves as Roman Catholic. The vast majority of these people were either born in the UK (61%) - 30% were born in Scotland, 26% in Northern Ireland and 5% in England - or in the Republic of Ireland (36%). The largest proportions of these self-identified groups lived in Glasgow (21%) and Edinburgh (16%).¹ We were told that 2% of Glasgow's population described themselves as Irish.

4. Yet Irishness means different things to different people. Some members of Irish communities were born and raised in Ireland, while others have historical family roots stretching back decades. For some, Irishness indicates an adherence to and support of Irish culture, music and sport. Some communities, such as the Orange Order in Scotland, have strong cultural links to Ireland, yet would not describe themselves as an "Irish minority group". In short, there is no such thing as a monolithic, homogeneous "Irish community". This is particularly true in geographical terms. While there is an historically strong Irish presence in Glasgow and the West of Scotland, Irish communities are today not confined to specific regions or neighbourhoods. For instance, while some 20,000 first generation migrants (from a cross-section of socio-economic groups) live in Glasgow and Edinburgh, a large proportion are spread throughout the rest of the country. We were told that Irish communities have successfully integrated into the wider Scottish community. For some of our witnesses, any attempt to describe Irish communities as a minority group was therefore either unhelpful or meaningless. On the other hand, many of our witnesses were at pains to stress the distinct and unique positive characteristics of Irish communities.
5. The experience of a number of people in the Irish communities in Scotland was historically one of discrimination, prejudice and disadvantage, ranging from limited job opportunities to restrictions to facilities they could avail themselves of. We were told that such problems have diminished significantly, although they have not been completely eradicated. We were given examples of public criticism of second generation Irish footballers who had opted to play for the Irish football team and racist jokes against the Irish, even in popular media. Furthermore, we learned that Irish people still have worse health indices (including shorter life expectancy and higher prevalence of heart disease) and were overrepresented in the prison population. Crime figures can be read in different ways. Police Scotland told us that there had been 763 cases of hate crime motivated by religious intolerance between October 2014 and October 2015. Of these, 299 (39%) were

¹ Analysis of the 2011 Census of Scotland undertaken by National Records Scotland.

motivated by anti-Catholic sentiment. On the other hand, of a total of 7423 cases of ethnically related hate crime in the same period, only 174 (2.3%) were perceived to be anti-Irish in nature. The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, Paul Wheelhouse MSP, told us that statistics on recorded offences overall were at their lowest level since 1974-5. Overall, the evidence we heard was that the experience of Irish communities had improved considerably in recent decades, and that such negative experiences were becoming rarer. Indeed, they stood in marked contrast with some of the success stories of recent times.

- 6. It is impossible to define with any precision what one means by “Irish communities” – after all, it means different things to different people. Yet a sizeable proportion of the Scottish population – most prominently in the West of Scotland but increasingly across the rest of the country – share an affinity with Ireland, whether by virtue of history, culture, geographical links or family ties. While the historical experience of discrimination and disadvantage must not be forgotten, and must be tackled wherever it remains, we are pleased to hear that such experiences are becoming rarer as time goes by. Irish communities, however they are defined, contribute greatly to the rich diversity of Scottish life in the 21st century, and will continue to do so in the future.**

The positive influence of Irish culture

7. This is particularly true when considering the increasingly positive impact of Irish culture on Scottish life. We were delighted to hear of numerous examples of the thriving work of sports, dancing, language and music groups. We also heard evidence that Irish sport and culture is playing a valuable role in promoting cross-cultural exchange. One noteworthy example of this was when the Irish Minister for Diaspora Affairs and former five-time winner of the All-Ireland Gaelic Football Championship, Jimmy Deenihan, recently visited the site of an exciting new partnership between Clydebank Sports/Rugby Centre and the Glasgow Gaels GAA club. Very few of the schoolboy-level Gaelic footballers he met were born in Ireland, but most had been born in Scotland, with some others from Eastern Europe and South Asia. Similarly, projects run by the Irish Heritage Foundation and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann promote Irish music for young people from all backgrounds in Glasgow. We learned about the work of The Irish Voice, a recently founded newspaper to report on issues of interest to the Irish communities and to

promote Irish culture. We were also told about events in universities, schools and libraries to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of WB Yeats, and the recent appointment of Fergus Linehan as the new Director of the Edinburgh International Festival. There were also growing ties between those seeking to cultivate the Irish and Scots Gaelic languages. This year's Edinburgh International Festival and Edinburgh Fringe Festival had featured a number of shows supported by Culture Ireland.

8. One exciting field of work concerns the commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising. We heard evidence from the 1916 Commemoration Committee (Scotland), which is planning a series of events with universities, historians and community organisations about the Scottish connections to the Rising. A book with contributions from over 30 authors is to be published, and a series of commemorative events are to be held both in Glasgow and Edinburgh during the first half of 2016. It is expected that the UK premiere of a new film about the life of Edinburgh-born James Connolly, "Twelve Days in May", may take place in Edinburgh as part of that city's International Film Festival programme. There are plans for academic conferences, lectures, poetry, music and language classes. There are also ongoing discussions about how to commemorate James Connolly in Edinburgh, recognising not only his leading role in the Rising but also his significant contribution to political thought. The centenary commemorations of the Battle of the Somme will also take place in 2016, and it is noted that the Abbey Theatre's new production of the play 'Observe the Sons of Ulster...' will have its UK premiere at the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow in July 2016.
9. A highly positive recent development was the Scottish Government's decision to light Edinburgh Castle in green as part of the 2015 St Patrick's Day 'Global Greening'. Edinburgh Airport, the Clyde Auditorium in Glasgow and the SSE Hydro venue were also part of the 'Greening'. Indeed, the numerous St Patrick's Day festivals across Scotland were cited as prominent examples of the growing and positive influence of Irish culture. The town of Coatbridge near Glasgow holds the largest festival in Scotland, and one of the largest festivals in the world. In Glasgow, a thriving St Patrick's Day festival takes place annually in Merchant Square. We were told that the 2015 event attracted 15-17,000 attendees. Our witnesses agreed that the Glasgow St Patrick's Day festival was an overwhelmingly positive event. The main challenge was finding the resources to plan, deliver and fund such large-scale events, which was one reason why there was little clamour for a St Patrick's Day Parade. We discuss the issue of resourcing further below.

10. We welcome the numerous signs of a thriving Irish cultural influence in Scotland, whether in music, dance, language, sport, history or film. The successful St Patrick's Day festivals held in Glasgow, Coatbridge and elsewhere are a shining example of the positive contribution that Irish culture can and does make to Scottish society as a whole.

Processions and parades

11. Glasgow City Council stressed to us the importance, in terms of its statutory responsibility, of differentiating between static events such as the St Patrick's Day festival and processions and parades. The Council, as with all local authorities, has a legal responsibility with regard to proposals for public processions and parades, including a requirement to consult the police on the impact on the local community and public safety, as well as policing implications. It has published its Policy and Code of Conduct on Public Processions, which sets out such requirements in detail.² The Police's powers under the Public Order Act relate to preventing violence and disorder rather than any requirement for it to grant permission. Likewise, local authorities do not have the power to ban a parade, but can require an organisation to amend the route or increase the number of stewards, as well as make traffic orders. Local authorities play a more limited role in relation to static events in that their permission is required if Council land is to be used.

12. Minister Wheelhouse told us that the Scottish Government did receive comments on the frequency of parades. We were told that the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland staged more marches every year than any other group or organisation, although marches associated with the Irish Republican community, including an annual Bloody Sunday march, also took place. We asked the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland about the impact of its parades on the local community. They told us that they had regular dialogue with the police, and stressed that the number of parades held in Glasgow had been reduced in recent years from 55 to 11. Glasgow City Council told us that there had been no arrests on Orange parades in recent years, and problems that had been encountered were of the nature of drunken behaviour by individual bystanders.

13. While we acknowledge that some concerns remain about such events, we were encouraged to hear from a number of witnesses about the concerted effort being made to promote inter-community dialogue, such as attendance at respective events organised

² <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2808&p=0>

by the Irish and Orange communities. Organisations in both communities were at pains to stress their open-door policy – something we wish to encourage.

- 14. We welcome signs of increasing inter-community dialogue, and encourage individuals and organisations in all communities to maintain and strengthen such cross-community links in the future. The responsibility is on all sides to ensure that such positive steps are built on in the coming years.**

Strengthening Irish-Scottish relations

15. We were also struck by the increasingly strong political relationship between Scotland and Ireland – described by one witness as a “new chapter” in these bilateral links. A number of our witnesses stressed the important contribution of the Irish Consulate General in Scotland, as well as the strategic and symbolic role in representing Irish communities played by the Irish Consul General in Scotland, augmented by the recent appointment of a Vice Consul General at its office in Edinburgh. The recent announcement by the Scottish Government of the establishment of a Scottish Hub, with two Scottish Government officials based in the British Embassy in Dublin, is another positive step. We heard about reciprocal visits by Government Ministers and co-operation on issues of common interest such as renewable energy. There are a number of joint initiatives involving the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government and the Scottish Government, supported by EU funding, to promote cross-border and regional co-operation in areas such as energy, health, food exports and on the promotion of minority languages. Trade links between Ireland and Scotland were also growing. The role of the British-Irish Council in cultivating these ties was recognised. We trust that the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly itself plays a role in building friendship and cooperation between parliamentarians not only in Scotland and Ireland, but throughout these islands.

- 16. We welcome the strengthening political ties between Ireland and Scotland and are confident that they are an indicator of harmonious and cooperative relationships in the years to come.**

Strengthening ties with the Irish diaspora

17. It was suggested to us that Irish communities in Scotland had in the past felt somewhat isolated from other Irish diaspora communities, whether elsewhere in Britain or across the world. We were therefore pleased to hear about the progress that had been made in recent times in cultivating these links. The inaugural Irish Global Civic Forum was held in

Dublin in June 2015, with over 200 participants from 17 countries, representing 140 organisations dedicated to supporting the Irish diaspora around the world. Irish community organisations in Scotland, including the Irish Heritage Foundation, were represented at the Forum and reported back positively on the productive links that had been formed with equivalent organisations in places with large Irish communities such as Liverpool. This not only enabled contacts to be established, but best practice to be shared on such issues as festival planning and funding. We were also encouraged to hear that Irish community groups in Scotland were active in the Irish in Britain Network.

- 18. We welcome the positive steps that have been taken to ensure that Irish communities in Scotland are linked to the wider Irish diaspora community, both elsewhere in Britain and across the world. The inaugural Global Civic Forum event in Dublin was a successful innovation, and we welcome the work to cultivate links being undertaken by such groups as the Global Irish Network.**

Glasgow famine memorial

19. A longstanding issue of concern for some groups within the Irish communities in Scotland has been the question of a famine memorial. Sympathetic memorials have been constructed in cities such as New York, and there was a strong sense that Glasgow ought to follow suit given its sizeable Irish communities and the number of people who emigrated to or through that city during the time of the famine.
20. In 2012, Glasgow City Council announced plans to develop a permanent memorial to those who settled in the city during the famine. Glasgow City Council told us that the motion had been approved unanimously, and had been adapted to include not only Irish victims of the famine, but also those who suffered in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. They conceded that the process had been “agonisingly slow” at times, but stressed that it was important to get right sensitive questions over the design and location of the memorial. They also emphasised the cross-community nature of the working group planning the memorial, as well as the positive contribution of young people to its design. The Council said that there would be a web consultation on the proposed design, with further steps expected to be outlined shortly. They also confirmed that the memorial would be situated in a garden in Glasgow Green, near the People’s Palace.
21. We were saddened to hear of frustration on the part of some members of the Irish communities, not only at the slow rate of progress, but also at the apparent lack of priority given to the memorial. There was particular concern at the proposed location. Some

witnesses felt that a site on the banks of the River Clyde (a point of arrival or embarkation for many famine victims) would have far greater resonance than the proposed location in Glasgow Green. We were also told that the original design (since abandoned) of a maze was seen by some as contentious. We wait to see what the response of community groups to the final design, once announced, will be.

- 22. We welcome the initiative to create a famine memorial in Glasgow as an important acknowledgement of this tragic chapter in Irish history (as well as elsewhere in these islands), as well as of the significant contribution made to the history of Glasgow (and of Scotland as a whole) by famine migrants. We also welcome the unanimous support on Glasgow City Council for this proposal. While we acknowledge the Council's emphasis on getting right the details of such a sensitive project, we regret the frustration that has been engendered in the wider community by delays in delivering the memorial. We encourage all parties to maintain dialogue in the coming months over such issues as the design and location of the memorial, to ensure that a fitting memorial to those affected by the famine is constructed as quickly as possible.**

Sectarianism

23. The history of sectarianism in Scotland is a vexed and complex issue. The Report of the Independent Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland, chaired by Duncan Morrow and published in December 2013, described how “in the 19th Century, mass migration from Ireland brought the deep divisions of Ulster into ... [an] already complex and conflictual mix. Sectarianism became an integral part of the industrial history of Scotland, fused in complicated but inextricable ways with issues of class and ethnic anti-Irish sentiment”. That report sought to challenge three major assumptions about sectarianism which the working group felt had helped entrench an “us” and “them” mentality: “that sectarianism can simply be equated with overtly aggressive bigotry; that it is entirely the same as anti-Catholicism; and that it is entirely the same as anti-Irish racism”. The Report advocated a more nuanced view of sectarianism and developed the following working definition:

“A complex of perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, actions and structures, at personal and communal levels, which originate in religious difference and can involve a negative mixing of religion with politics, sporting allegiance and national identifications. It arises from a distorted expression of identity and

belonging. It is expressed in destructive patterns of relating which segregate, exclude, discriminate against or are violent towards a specified religious other, with significant personal and social consequences”.³

24. We asked our witnesses to reflect on the extent to which sectarianism was an issue in Scotland in 2015. The consensus view was that, while sectarianism should not be ignored, nor should its impact be overstated. We were told that there were no “no go areas” in Scotland, and people lived normal lives.
25. There was also recognition of the important work being undertaken to combat sectarianism, in particular amongst young people. The Sense over Sectarianism educational project sought to bring denominational and non-denominational schools together, and a majority of primary and secondary schools in Glasgow were actively involved in anti-sectarian work at various stages of the school curriculum. The biggest intervention was amongst older primary school children, where denominational and non-denominational schools worked together for a term. Nil by Mouth were also active in schools. We were told about successful schemes under the Scottish Government’s Tackling Sectarianism Fund, such as a joint Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic Church project to regenerate North Motherwell. We also learned about the educational work undertaken by various organisations to promote understanding of the communities which they represented.
26. On the other hand, some expressed pessimism that the £3 million available from the Scottish Government each year in terms of anti-sectarian funding had much practical effect, while others had concerns about the criteria which projects needed to fulfil in order to be eligible for anti-sectarianism funding. There were concerns that the perceived narrow anti-sectarian focus of such funding meant that it was difficult for community organisations to secure financial recognition and support for the positive effect they were having in their local community. The Scottish Government conceded that some of the negative language used, for instance in references to its efforts to “tackle” sectarianism, was unhelpful in terms of promoting positive engagement. Minister Wheelhouse told us that the key was for communities to define themselves positively in terms of what they were for, rather than what they were against. We explore concerns about funding more broadly below.

³ Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland, 2013:
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00440386.pdf>

27. It is not within the scope of this report to explore every aspect of the complex question of sectarianism in Scotland. We commend the Report of the Independent Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland chaired by Duncan Morrow as a balanced and insightful piece of work which both identifies many of the problems and proposes sensible ways forward. For our own part, we observe that, while sectarian tensions have diminished, there is no room for complacency. We welcome the important work undertaken to combat sectarianism, in particular in schools, and the projects that have been undertaken that have helped build cross-community relationships. Nevertheless, we acknowledge some concerns both about the direction and efficacy of anti-sectarian funding.

Sectarianism and sport

28. The issue of sectarianism has long been most visible in the sporting arena, and in particular in the context of longstanding rivalries between some football clubs in Scotland (most notably, but not exclusively, that between Celtic and Rangers). Minister Wheelhouse stressed that football was not the cause of sectarian tensions. Nevertheless, it was arguably the most high-profile forum in which these issues manifested themselves. Police Scotland agreed that football matches were the most obvious forum of cross-community tension where the differences between communities became more evident than what they had in common. We were also told that football rivalries created a misleading perception of the nature of everyday inter-community relations. While we have not had the opportunity to hear evidence from football clubs, we heard views from organisations representing different communities that the football clubs need to do more to tackle this issue. The Morrow Report came to similar conclusions.

29. Given the prominent role they play as representatives of different communities in Scotland, football clubs have a responsibility to take the lead in tackling sectarianism and developing sensible dialogue between groups to promote further understanding and mutual respect of cultural identities, and foster tolerance.

Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012

30. There has been particular focus recently on the effect of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012. This legislation was introduced after problems during the 2010-11 football season, when there was tension at Celtic v Rangers matches and high-profile figures from Celtic Football Club were targeted with parcel bombs and death threats. Section 1 of the Act created the offence of “offensive behaviour at regulated football matches” which criminalised behaviour which causes, or is likely to cause, public disorder associated with regulated football matches in Scotland as well as behaviour which is threatening; which expresses hatred towards other people based on their religious affiliation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability; and other behaviours that a reasonable person would be likely to consider offensive such as celebrating or mocking events involving the loss of life or serious injury, or behaviour expressing support for proscribed terrorist organisations. Section 6 created the offence of “threatening communications” if a person communicates material, to another person, which contains or implies a threat to carry out a seriously violent act; the material is communicated with the intention of causing a reasonable person to suffer fear or alarm (or the sender is reckless as to whether the material could cause fear or alarm); or if the material is communicated with the intent of stirring up religiously motivated hatred.
31. This legislation has been contentious for a number of people in the Irish communities and beyond. Some argued that the law had not been applied proportionately or consistently, with the suggestion that it discriminated against Celtic fans. Others suggested that the law was not necessary as existing legislation was sufficient to deal with hate crime. We were also told that arrests relied solely on the evidence of police officers who witnessed alleged offensive behaviour at football grounds. Other witnesses questioned the timing of the legislation, arguing that it had set back perceptions of Irish communities when problems at football grounds were far worse thirty or forty years ago.
32. Minister Wheelhouse defended the legislation. He told us that the Act sought to tackle inflammatory behaviour rather than restrict freedom of expression. The Scottish Government’s 2015 review of the legislation demonstrated that the majority of offences had been committed by supporters of Rangers or other clubs as opposed to Celtic fans. It had not just been applied to Celtic and Rangers fans, but there had also been arrests at

matches between other teams. He also asserted that the legislation had had a positive effect on behaviour at football grounds, with a significant decline in offences committed both at Celtic Park and Ibrox (the home ground of Rangers). The majority of fans were now aware of the Act, and he cited opinion poll evidence that suggested that the legislation enjoyed widespread public support.

33. The Minister did however concede that there had been teething issues in terms of the implementation and policing of the legislation, in particular as it took time for case law to build up, and that it had proved difficult to move beyond the controversy surrounding the Act. The Scottish Government also acknowledged that disorderly and offensive behaviour at football matches could, in certain circumstances, be prosecuted under existing legislation, although they argued that police and prosecutors were concerned that a substantial proportion of offensive behaviour was not explicitly caught by existing laws. Police Scotland acknowledged that witnesses were usually police officers, using the criteria of whether a reasonable person would judge things said or sung to be offensive, taking into account the culture and interpretation of what was said. They told us that they were working with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and with fans' groups to provide greater clarity on how they sought to apply the Act.
34. **We welcome the Scottish Government's review of the impact of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012. We acknowledge its findings that the majority of offences have been committed by fans of clubs other than Celtic, and that there has been a significant decline in offences committed at football grounds. Yet while the Scottish Government cites evidence of public support for the Act, it remains highly contentious in the eyes of a number of supporters' groups. We urge the Scottish Government, Police Scotland and fans' groups to ensure that dialogue continues to enable any concerns about the application of the legislation to be investigated and dealt with.**

Funding

35. The other significant issue of contention that came to our attention related to the funding of Irish community groups. The Irish Government's Emigrant Support Programme (ESP) provides funding to many cultural organisations in Britain. Grants made worldwide totalled €10.5 million in 2013, with approximately two-thirds of that funding going to organisations

based in England, Scotland and Wales. The following table shows the amount of ESP funding received by Scottish cultural organisations.

TABLE ONE: Organisations receiving ESP funding in 2013 and 2014

| Organisation | 2013 Funding | 2014 Funding |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Conradh na Gaeilge Glaschú | £36,500 | £36,500 |
| Edinburgh Cyrenians | £8,000 | £8,000 |
| Edinburgh's Festival of Ireland | - | £3,000 |
| Irish Heritage Foundation, Glasgow | £40,000 | £40,000 |
| Irish Professional Network, Scotland | £1,000 | - |
| Streetwork UK, Edinburgh | £30,000 | £27,500 |
| Total: | £115,500 | £115,000 |

Note: In addition, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the GAA both receive ESP funding and operate in Scotland; however these organisations' funding are managed centrally in Dublin and a breakdown of the amounts allocated for activities in Scotland is not readily available.

36. The ESP also supports, for example, the Irish Professional Business Network. Although one could theoretically argue that the Irish in Scotland might be entitled to more given the size of that population, we heard clear recognition from Irish community organisations that they were getting an appropriate level of funding from the Irish Government (we note, for instance, the €20,000 grant from the Irish Government to the 1916 Rising Centenary Committee (Scotland) from the separate fund established to support the Global and Diaspora Programme of the overall 1916 Commemorations). Indeed, for some of them it was their sole means of external funding.
37. Unfortunately we heard of greater discontent with regard to local authority and central government funding. Most channels operate at local authority level. Yet we were told that some Irish community groups had struggled to secure funding to support Irish sport, music, dance and language through improved facilities or teaching resources. Aside from support provided by the Irish Government, we were told that such groups were often reliant on the generosity of their supporters. Some groups were concerned that there was not a level playing field, and suggested that there may be some nervousness about supporting Irish cultural and community organisations because of the risk that their activities could be perceived as divisive.

38. Glasgow City Council stressed that all applications for funding were assessed according to published criteria. They also emphasised that there were limited resources available: there were local area grants available up to a maximum pot of £2.5 million as well as city-wide grants. The City Council stressed that there was a requirement that any projects supported in this way should benefit the city as a whole. This did not exclude celebration of an individual culture, and the Council was able to cite various examples of Irish dance, music and educational projects which had gained local authority funding in recent years. Yet they told us that in order to gain funding, such projects needed to promote inclusiveness and bring the whole city together. They also pointed to growing minority communities including those from east and west Africa, Poland and the Roma community, and stated that Glasgow was looking to celebrate its growing diversity. Although one could argue that this increased competition for funding, we were told that it also provided an opportunity for community groups to work together to promote multiculturalism. Indeed, it was argued that the Irish communities had much to teach these groups in terms of successful integration.
39. As we have seen, Irish community groups were at pains to stress their open-doors policy, citing examples of working with the Romanian and Slovakian communities and making their facilities available to others. We have highlighted how GAA clubs in Glasgow have successfully engaged with other communities. There are also helpful models to follow elsewhere. The Irish Community Centre in Camden, London, for instance, has taken steps to make facilities available for Polish groups to meet and generally made efforts to reach out to other migrant populations.
40. There were also concerns at access to funding at central government level. We were told that cultural funding was available via Creative Scotland, an arm's length body. As we have seen, £3 million in anti-sectarian funding was also available on an annual basis. Yet we were told that community organisations had not been able to access anti-sectarian funding unless they could demonstrate how they were working across communities.
41. Minister Wheelhouse suggested that Irish communities had been victims of their own success in funding terms because they had integrated so successfully. He conceded that anti-sectarian funding was focussed on cross-community projects, and that there was a lack of a roadmap to support those who wished to celebrate the positive aspects of their individual culture. The Minister acknowledged that more needed to be done to raise the visibility of funding sources and to help community groups understand what funding

opportunities were available, what steps might need to be taken to fulfil any criteria and to advise groups on how bids could be improved. There may also be a case for promoting cross-community collaborative bids. The Scottish Government informed us that it would explore the options for a funding roadmap with the Voluntary Action Fund (VAF), which currently manages all of the projects working on tackling sectarianism.

42. **We have heard evidence of some dissatisfaction at the access that Irish community organisations enjoy to funding streams, whether at local authority or central government level. In response, both Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government have set out the criteria behind existing funding streams and have cited cases where funding was made available. It would not be appropriate for us to comment on individual funding applications. Even so, the root causes of such discontent (and, in particular, the perception that there is not a level playing field) need to be understood, and, if possible, resolved.**
43. **We agree with the Minister that a roadmap is needed to help community groups who wish to celebrate the positive aspects of their communities in order to maximise their chances of securing funding. We urge the Scottish Government and local authorities to engage in dialogue with such community groups to ensure that:**
- **The visibility of funding opportunities is raised;**
 - **Community groups are aware of what funding opportunities are available and what criteria need to be fulfilled;**
 - **Advice is provided on why funding bids are unsuccessful, and how future bids can be improved.**
44. **At the same time, we encourage community groups to investigate the potential for undertaking cross-community collaborative bids that may stand a greater chance of securing funding. It is important to ensure that Irish community resources are open to all, and we welcome the positive signs that this is already happening. It is also important to ensure that community groups have sufficient capacity to make effective use of any funding that is secured.**

Conclusion

45. **Irish communities have made a significant contribution to Scottish society for many decades and more. Historically these communities have faced issues of**

discrimination and disadvantage, although we were pleased to hear that such concerns are diminishing as time goes by. The story of the Irish communities in modern day Scotland is an overwhelmingly positive tale to tell. Irish culture – whether in music, language, dance, literature or sport – is thriving, and Irish communities are held up as a shining example of successful integration. This is underpinned by increasingly close political and economic ties between Scotland and Ireland. While challenges remain, in particular ensuring that the activities of community groups are adequately resourced, we are confident that the Irish communities in Scotland will make an increasingly forceful and positive contribution to Scottish society in the years to come.

Summary of conclusions and recommendations

46. It is impossible to define with any precision what one means by “Irish communities” – after all, it means different things to different people. Yet a sizeable proportion of the Scottish population – most prominently in the West of Scotland but increasingly across the rest of the country – share an affinity with Ireland, whether by virtue of history, culture, geographical links or family ties. While the historical experience of discrimination and disadvantage must not be forgotten, and must be tackled wherever it remains, we are pleased to hear that such experiences are becoming rarer as time goes by. Irish communities, however they are defined, contribute greatly to the rich diversity of Scottish life in the 21st century, and will continue to do so in the future.
47. We welcome the numerous signs of a thriving Irish cultural influence in Scotland, whether in music, dance, language, sport, history or film. The successful St Patrick’s Day festivals held in Glasgow, Coatbridge and elsewhere are a shining example of the positive contribution that Irish culture can and does make to Scottish society as a whole.
48. We welcome signs of increasing inter-community dialogue, and encourage individuals and organisations in all communities to maintain and strengthen such cross-community links in the future. The responsibility is on all sides to ensure that such positive steps are built on in the coming years.

49. **We welcome the strengthening political ties between Ireland and Scotland and are confident that they are an indicator of harmonious and cooperative relationships in the years to come.**
50. **We welcome the positive steps that have been taken to ensure that Irish communities in Scotland are linked to the wider Irish diaspora community, both elsewhere in Britain and across the world. The inaugural Global Civic Forum event in Dublin was a successful innovation, and we welcome the work to cultivate links being undertaken by such groups as the Global Irish Network.**
51. **We welcome the initiative to create a famine memorial in Glasgow as an important acknowledgement of this tragic chapter in Irish history (as well as elsewhere in these islands), as well as of the significant contribution made to the history of Glasgow (and of Scotland as a whole) by famine migrants. We also welcome the unanimous support on Glasgow City Council for this proposal. While we acknowledge the Council's emphasis on getting right the details of such a sensitive project, we regret the frustration that has been engendered in the wider community by delays in delivering the memorial. We encourage all parties to maintain dialogue in the coming months over such issues as the design and location of the memorial, to ensure that a fitting memorial to those affected by the famine is constructed as quickly as possible.**
52. **It is not within the scope of this report to explore every aspect of the complex question of sectarianism in Scotland. We commend the Report of the Independent Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland chaired by Duncan Morrow as a balanced and insightful piece of work which both identifies many of the problems and proposes sensible ways forward. For our own part, we observe that, while sectarian tensions have diminished, there is no room for complacency. We welcome the important work undertaken to combat sectarianism, in particular in schools, and the projects that have been undertaken that have helped build cross-community relationships. Nevertheless, we acknowledge some concerns both about the direction and efficacy of anti-sectarian funding.**
53. **Given the prominent role they play as representatives of different communities in Scotland, football clubs have a responsibility to take the lead in tackling sectarianism and developing sensible dialogue between groups to**

promote further understanding and mutual respect of cultural identities, and foster tolerance.

54. **We welcome the Scottish Government’s review of the impact of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012. We acknowledge its findings that the majority of offences have been committed by fans of clubs other than Celtic, and that there has been a significant decline in offences committed at football grounds. Yet while the Scottish Government cites evidence of public support for the Act, it remains highly contentious in the eyes of a number of supporters’ groups. We urge the Scottish Government, Police Scotland and fans’ groups to ensure that dialogue continues to enable any concerns about the application of the legislation to be investigated and dealt with.**
55. **We have heard evidence of some dissatisfaction at the access that Irish community organisations enjoy to funding streams, whether at local authority or central government level. In response, both Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government have set out the criteria behind existing funding streams and have cited cases where funding was made available. It would not be appropriate for us to comment on individual funding applications. Even so, the root causes of such discontent (and, in particular, the perception that there is not a level playing field) need to be understood, and, if possible, resolved.**
56. **We agree with the Minister that a roadmap is needed to help community groups who wish to celebrate the positive aspects of their communities in order to maximise their chances of securing funding. We urge the Scottish Government and local authorities to engage in dialogue with such community groups to ensure that:**
- **The visibility of funding opportunities is raised;**
 - **Community groups are aware of what funding opportunities are available and what criteria need to be fulfilled;**
 - **Advice is provided on why funding bids are unsuccessful, and how future bids can be improved.**
57. **At the same time, we encourage community groups to investigate the potential for undertaking cross-community collaborative bids that may stand a greater chance of securing funding. It is important to ensure that Irish**

community resources are open to all, and we welcome the positive signs that this is already happening. It is also important to ensure that community groups have sufficient capacity to make effective use of any funding that is secured.

58. Irish communities have made a significant contribution to Scottish society for many decades and more. Historically these communities have faced issues of discrimination and disadvantage, although we were pleased to hear that such concerns are diminishing as time goes by. The story of the Irish communities in modern day Scotland is an overwhelmingly positive tale to tell. Irish culture – whether in music, language, dance, literature or sport – is thriving, and Irish communities are held up as a shining example of successful integration. This is underpinned by increasingly close political and economic ties between Scotland and Ireland. While challenges remain, in particular ensuring that the activities of community groups are adequately resourced, we are confident that the Irish communities in Scotland will make an increasingly forceful and positive contribution to Scottish society in the years to come.

Annex A: Witness lists for evidence sessions

Glasgow witnesses – 23-24 November 2014

Pat Bourne, Consul General of Ireland to Scotland

Danny Boyle, BEMIS (Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and Cultural Minority Communities)

Paddy Callaghan, Development Officer, Comhaltas in Britain

Michael Carberry, Housing Director for Blochairn Housing Association

Niall Considine, Chairperson, GAA Scotland

Evin Downey, Irish Language and Development Officer - The Gaelic League, Glasgow

Professor Tom Gallagher, Emeritus Professor of the Study of Ethnic Conflict and Peace, University of Bradford

Isabelle Gray, Development Manager, Irish Heritage Foundation

Dr John Kelly, University of Edinburgh

Dan McGinty, The Irish Voice

Kevin McKenna, journalist

Rachel Thain-Gray, Development Worker, 'Mixing The Colours' Project, Glasgow Women's Library

Harry Young, Project Co-ordinator, Royston Youth Action

Glasgow witnesses – 11-12 October 2015

Pat Bourne, Consul General of Ireland to Scotland

Superintendent Ross Aitken and Chief Superintendent Elaine Ferguson, Police Scotland

Councillor Jim Coleman, Councillor Matthew Kerr, Jim Gray, Head of Democratic Services, and Alison Logan, Sense over Sectarianism project, Glasgow City Council

Isabelle Gray, Development Manager, Irish Heritage Foundation

Kirsty Lusk, 1916 Rising Centenary Committee (Scotland)

Henry Dunbar, Grand Master and Robert McLean, Executive Officer, Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, and David Bell, Head of the Tackling Antisocial Behaviour and Sectarianism Policy Team, Scottish Government

Bernadette Monaghan, Irish Business Community in Scotland

Annex B - Attendance

Glasgow, 23-24 November 2014

Lord Dubs (Chairman)
Senator Cáit Keane
Michael McMahon MSP
Senator Mary Moran
Chris Ruane MP

Glasgow, 11-12 October 2015

Lord Dubs (Chairman)
Senator Maurice Cummins (Vice-Chairman)
Senator Cáit Keane
John Lyons TD
Michael McMahon MSP
Senator Mary Moran
Lord Shutt of Greetland
Lord Skelmersdale
Joyce Watson AM