

Minister for Culture and External Affairs
Ministear airson Cultair agus Chùisean Taoibh A-muigh
Fiona Hyslop MSP/BPA



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Rt Hon Lord Cope of Berkeley
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*Forwarded
by John Cope*

17 March 2011

Dear Lord Cope

Thank you for sending a copy of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly's resolution and follow up report on the Irish Community in Britain to the First Minister. I am responding because I have portfolio responsibility for External Affairs and I welcome the opportunity to offer comments.

My officials recently met with representatives from the Scots/Irish Community in Glasgow to discuss various topics including possible support of an Irish centre in Glasgow and the upcoming 2011 census. Prior to that I took part in a Members' business debate in January on motion S3M-7353 in the name of Bob Doris MSP which paid tribute to Scotland's Irish Diaspora and highlighted the ongoing contribution they made to Scotland; so it was with interest that I read BIPA's report.

I agree with many of the recommendations that the BIPA's report makes, in particular the gathering of robust data on the Irish population is key to our understanding of the community's needs. I noted that the description of the Census suggests that there is only one in the UK and is the responsibility of the Office of National Statistics. In fact, there are 3 Censuses, one in Scotland, one in England and Wales and one in Northern Ireland, although outputs are also produced across all three. The Census for Scotland is run by the General Register Office Scotland with the Office of the Chief Statistician playing the equivalent role to ONS for England and Wales.

The Scottish Census in 2011 will contain an Irish ethnicity tick box, which I hope will provide a baseline for the number of Irish in Scotland. I would encourage those with an Irish identity (ethnicity, national identity and/or language) to reflect this in the Census.

I hope you find these comments helpful.

*Kind regards
Fiona*

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