

## NI Assembly Transition Programme 24 September

### Illustrations for Talk by Professor Robert Hazell

#### Nordic Lessons for the British-Irish Council

##### Key dates in Nordic Co-operation

- 1952 Nordic Council founded between Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland
- 1954 Agreement on common labour market
- 1955 Agreement on equal treatment in social security
- 1957 Passport union established
- 1962 The Helsinki Treaty ratified in all the countries
- 1971 The Nordic Council of Ministers established
- 1974 Environmental policies added to the list of common policy areas
- 1995 Foreign and EU policy added to Nordic Council functions.

##### Similarities between British-Irish and Nordic Councils

- Both bodies contain a mix of independent nation states and autonomous territories
- Both include countries which were formerly united, but now are independent
- Both bodies rest on strong cultural and civic ties, with shared language, literature, culture, and close non-governmental links in civil society
- The Nordic Council has focused on low-level co-operation in citizen's rights, culture, education, research, environment. The British-Irish Council is likely to do the same.

## Differences between the British-Irish and Nordic Councils

- Five of the members of the British-Irish Council will be dependent territories of the UK. In the Nordic Council the balance is reversed, with five sovereign states instead of just two, and three dependent territories.
- The inter-parliamentary body in the Nordic Council is still the primary body and the source of most initiatives
- The members of the Nordic Council wished to cooperate and have developed institutions, bottom up, for that purpose. The British-Irish Council is more top down. In particular the dependent territories were not consulted: it was imposed upon them.
- The British-Irish Council risks being dominated by the UK. In the Nordic Council there is much nearer equivalence in size between the major partners
- The British-Irish Council will enter a crowded field, and have to find a role alongside the North-South Ministerial Council, the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, and the Joint Ministerial Committee on Devolution

## Intergovernmental machinery under the Belfast Agreement

**North-South Ministerial Council.** Govts of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland. Plenary meetings of Prime Ministers; sectoral meetings with relevant Ministers. Agriculture, education, transport, environment, health etc.

**British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.** British and Irish govts. Security matters, rights, justice, prisons, policing.

**Joint Ministerial Committee on Devolution.** British govt with devolved govts in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Summit meetings and sectoral meetings.

**British-Irish Council.** British and Irish govts, devolved govts in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Isle of Man and Channel Islands. 'Transport, agriculture, environment, culture, health, education, EU issues'.