



1. combined work, mutual assistance
2. cooperation, partnership

Irish in Britain: Policy Bulletin – February 2020

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Policy consultations

Irish in Britain sent a survey to members and friends about your organisation's policy priorities ahead of our regional consultations in the coming months.

Please complete the survey by **Monday 2 March**. Click [here](#) to begin the survey.

As a membership body and Irish community network, we welcome input from our members and stakeholders to inform us about their policy priorities. Your responses will help shape our regional meetings and we look forward to your ideas and suggestions.

Irish general election – diaspora policies

It is not yet clear which parties will form the next Irish government after Saturday's vote, but is very likely that there will be a change in governing party or a new coalition. Sinn Féin topped the poll for first preference votes at 24.5 percent, with Fianna Fáil next at 22.2 percent and the governing party before the election, Fine Gael, at 20.9 percent.

Their manifesto pledges on diaspora policy include:

- **Sinn Féin** say it is a party priority to extend voting rights to Irish citizens abroad and in Northern Ireland.
- **Fianna Fáil** pledge to increase funding for the Emigrant Support Programme by €2.5m
- **Fine Gael** commit to holding a referendum on Irish citizens abroad voting in presidential elections and to publishing a new diaspora policy in 2020 – Irish in Britain [responded](#) to the diaspora policy consultation in July 2019.

New UK government

You can read our analysis of what the UK general election result in December means for the Irish community in Britain [here](#).

The existing rights enjoyed by Irish and British citizens in Ireland and Britain under the Common Travel Area were guaranteed to continue in all Brexit scenarios in a Memorandum of Understanding agreed in May 2019. This agreement means that Irish citizens should not be affected by any



upcoming changes to the UK's immigration laws. There is no indication that the new government under Boris Johnson will seek to move away from the Memorandum of Understanding.

The next budget will likely be in early March and will give greater clarity about the government's intentions about social care, health and local government investment.

Northern Ireland

Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) reconvened in Stormont last month, three years since the executive collapsed. The new deal includes new funding commitments and reforms to health, education and justice, as well as a series of revisions about how the Assembly and the Executive will operate. New commissioners will also be created for the Irish language and the Ulster Scots/Ulster British tradition.

Same-sex marriage and opposite-sex civil partnerships were legalised last year after a vote by Westminster MPs. On 14 February the first same-sex couples will get married in Northern Ireland.

You can read our update on developments in Northern Ireland [here](#).

Traveller consultation

The Home Office is currently considering increasing police powers to close unauthorised encampments and has started a public consultation. This has been criticised by Traveller organisations and Irish in Britain has also voiced its concerns through the consultation platform. Our members at Friends, Families and Travelers (FFT) highlighted that most police forces have actually opposed increasing powers and many argued that a lack of site provision as a more pressing problem.

Check out the FFT website and respond to the consultation [here](#).

APPG on Ireland and the Irish in Britain

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Ireland and the Irish in Britain was reconstituted in February. Labour MP Conor McGinn remains the chair and the grouping has evolved in its diversity to now include representatives from Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, SNP and Alliance. Irish in Britain works closely with the APPG and we updated the MPs and peers present about our work.

Mapping the Irish

In the lead up to the General Election, we published our [Mapping the Irish](#) series to highlight where Irish-born people lived in Britain. We also compiled the [Top 100](#) constituencies by the Irish born.

Check out the links above to see how many Irish-born live in your area.

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