

Parliamentary Bureau – British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

Issue

1. The Bureau is invited to agree the Party designation of the Scottish Parliament's delegation to the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA). The membership of MSPs appointed to the BIPA for Session 6 lapsed at dissolution. The Scottish Parliament is now due to make its nominations for Session 7 in accordance with Rule 1(c) of the BIPA Rules for the Conduct of Business which state:

'Members of the participating institutions shall be nominated to the Assembly in accordance with procedures to be determined by those institutions themselves and should, as far as possible, be representative of the political groupings represented in those institutions'.

Background

2. The Scottish Parliament was admitted to the BIPA in February 2001 and is entitled to five full members and four associate members on the Assembly. As in previous Sessions, the Presiding Officer has nominated a Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson MSP) to act as delegation lead and represent the Scottish Parliament on the BIPA Steering Committee. The remaining four full members and four associates are decided by the Bureau.

3. The BIPA is a deliberative forum that promotes co-operation and understanding between political representatives from across Britain and Ireland. It brings together elected members from the UK Parliament, the Oireachtas (Irish parliament), and the devolved legislatures of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as the Crown Dependencies (Jersey, Guernsey, and the Isle of Man).

4. In addition to bi-annual plenary meetings, there are four sub-committees which meet semi-regularly throughout the year: Committee A (Committee on Security, Justice and Global Issues); Committees B (Committee on Climate, Energy, Science and Technology); Committee C (Committee on Growth, Trade and Investment); and Committee D (Committee on Peoples and Cultures). MSPs sit on BIPA's Steering Committee (via the delegation lead) and on these 4 subject committees. The Parliament's International Relations Office acts as the secretariat to the Scottish delegation and support MSPs in their work.

5. There is an expectation from the BIPA Co-Chairs and Steering Committee members that members from all participating institutions attend, in person, meetings of the BIPA subject committees as well as the full, bi-annual plenary sessions (Sunday through Tuesday, inclusive).

Scottish delegation Sessions 1 - 6

6. In 2001 the then Bureau agreed that one of the five full places should be filled by a Deputy Presiding Officer who would act as head of the Scottish delegation and represent the Parliament on BIPA's Steering Committee. The nomination of a Deputy

Presiding Officer to fill this position has been made by the Presiding Officers, and endorsed by the Bureau, in all previous Sessions (Patricia Ferguson MSP (Session 1), Murray Tosh MSP (Sessions 1 and 2), Alasdair Morgan MSP (Session 3), John Scott MSP (Session 4) Linda Fabiani MSP (Session 5) and Annabelle Ewing MSP (Session 6)).

7. During all previous Sessions, the Bureau agreed that the remaining four full Scottish delegation places were to be held by one MSP each from the four largest parties represented on the Bureau. In Session 6, for example, the delegation was made up of one Member from the Scottish National Party, the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Green Party.

8. In all previous Sessions, the Bureau also agreed that the remaining four associate places were allocated on a proportional basis. During Session 6, for example, there were two Scottish National Party associate members, one Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party associate member and one Scottish Labour Party associate member.

Appointment of Members for Session 7

9. Following the convention established for the appointment of a Deputy Presiding Officer to lead the Scottish delegation, the Presiding Officer has proposed that a Deputy Presiding Officer is again nominated to fill this position in Session 7.

10. However, the Bureau is invited to agree the Party composition of the remaining four full members and four associate members on the BIPA. Annexed are three options for consideration. Upon agreement of Party composition, Business Managers are requested to forward their nominated delegate(s) to the International Relations Office at iro@parliament.scot at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation

11. The Bureau is invited to:

- note the proposal of the Presiding Officer that a Deputy Presiding Officer be a full member of the BIPA and act as head of the delegation. representing the Scottish Parliament on the Steering Committee; and
- agree the Party designation of the four full members and four associate members of the BIPA.

International Relations Office
June 2026

ANNEX

Session 7 BIPA membership options

Option 1: Deputy Presiding Officer led delegation. The four full members to consist of one member each from the four largest parties represented on the Parliamentary Bureau and the four associate members allocated under D'Hont.

Full Members
Deputy Presiding Officer
Scottish National Party
Reform UK
Scottish Labour
Scottish Green Party
Associate Members
Scottish National Party
Scottish National Party
Scottish National Party
Reform UK or Scottish Labour

Option 2: Deputy Presiding Officer led delegation. The full and associate membership all allocated under D'Hont

Full Members
Deputy Presiding Officer
Scottish National Party
Scottish National Party
Scottish National Party
Reform UK or Scottish Labour
Associate Members
Scottish Labour
Scottish Green Party
Scottish National Party
Scottish Conservatives

Option 3: Deputy Presiding Officer led delegation. The four full members to consist of one member each from the four largest parties represented on the Parliamentary Bureau. The four associate members to consist of one member from each of the four largest parties represented on the Bureau.

Full Members
Deputy Presiding Officer
Scottish National Party
Reform UK
Scottish Labour
Scottish Green Party

Associate Members
Scottish National Party
Reform UK
Scottish Labour
Scottish Green Party