



51st British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Conference Report



I. PROGRAMME

The 51st British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Conference ‘Impactful Scrutiny’ was hosted by the Isle of Man Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association from 23rd – 25th March 2022, with an optional cultural day on Saturday 26th March.¹

The opening plenary session provided the opportunity for each region to present a five-minute SWOT style evaluation of their own scrutiny systems. The remaining sessions then allowed all delegates to learn from each other about scrutiny through a range of presentations and discussions including:

- 15 minute round table discussions, with delegates switching tables between topics:
 - effective preparation for new scrutiny members;
 - preparing for inquiries and evidence sessions;
 - effective media engagement;
 - how to turn recommendations into results.
- A whole conference session on the theme of high impact scrutiny beginning with three case studies presented by delegates from the UK, Scotland and Guernsey; the session concluded with a Q&A.

¹ Appendix – Full conference programme

- Breakout session where delegates chose to attend sessions on effective scrutiny of two of the following topics:
 - Population and Demographics
 - Legislation
 - Engagement and Outreach
 - Finance matters
 - Climate Change actions
 - Diversity in legislatures

The BIMR Annual General Meeting was held on the first afternoon of the conference and following the election of a new chair at the AGM the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee had a breakfast meeting the following morning.

Delegates also had the opportunity for networking during the breaks and on the optional cultural day which saw them visit; the Old House of Keys, the former meeting place of the popularly elected House; Castle Rushen, one of the best preserved medieval castles in the world; and taking a tour back stage at the Gaiety Theatre: built in 1899 to designs by Frank Matcham it contains the world's only surviving example of a 'Corsican trap'.

II. FEEDBACK ON LEARNING

During the closing session delegates were invited to share their reflections on the conference, focusing on lessons learned and ambitions for the future. A selection of these comments were:

We had some nascent ideas about how to improve our scrutiny process which the conference has brought into focus. In particular we will now be considering using experts to support the scrutiny process.

This was a fantastic and inspirational conference. I found the scrutiny sessions very helpful and they served to highlight our weaknesses. Despite their size, the Falkland Islands share the same issues as other regions and I found the climate change emergency session extremely stimulating. The many opportunities we had to share information were very useful, as were discussions about engagement and outreach and, in this, I will be taking away how we can improve our processes.

The scrutiny sessions highlighted the incredible diversity of how regions were approaching the process and helped us all to see how we can improve. As for the climate change emergency workshop the message was clear: the planet cannot wait and we cannot wait. I also found it interesting to hear how different legislatures had managed the impact of Covid. I thoroughly enjoyed the conference. We all got to learn, share and network - and to make new friends for life.

This was my first conference and I was approaching it with some trepidation but I felt instantly able to engage with attendees who began as delegates, became colleagues and by the end, were friends; that illustrates the true spirit of the conference. I learned that no matter the size of the legislature, the challenges are the same. I found the scrutiny sessions very useful and learned how scrutiny starts from within. It was interesting to see how different legislatures embraced technology in different ways to manage the impact of Covid and one particular finding I will take away is how we need to enable inclusion in all areas, be that gender or marginalised or vulnerable communities.

There was a good mix of delegates, including newer Members of Tynwald. The conference offered superb opportunities to network, hear other concepts and approaches and learn more about other parliaments. Not only were we able to share our differences and challenges but also our successes.

I was impressed by some of the novel ideas surrounding scrutiny processes and I found the outreach sessions very interesting. We have to accept that social media is here to stay so we'll need training to manage it. I listened with interest about climate change actions and ambitions and found the initial impact of climate change being felt in the Falkland Islands, as outlined by Leona, very worrying. It was lovely to come back to the Isle of Man and thanks are due to our hosts for such a well-organised conference.

At the start of the conference, I had a blank sheet of paper. Now it's full of notes. Witnessing the scrutiny committee in action was extremely interesting and the way it teased out information was incredible; for me that was the highlight of the conference. St Helena is such a small place so it was great to be part of the "real world" for a few days.

I loved being in the Isle of Man. This conference was an opportunity to stand back and reflect on the immense diversity within the CPA. I found the women's parliamentarians steering committee session very enjoyable, while the scrutiny sessions made me think about the importance of "doing your homework". I also thoroughly enjoyed the climate change workshop which articulated delegates' ambitions, challenges and solutions. Outcomes from that session will strengthen our climate change sub-committee. The conference also highlighted differences between urban, rural and island legislatures and I found the community engagement sessions very useful. The overriding message I will be taking away is that we need to be communicating better with the electorate. It was a privilege to have attended the conference.

For me what emerged from the conference was how it's not the size of the legislature that matters, it's the quality. All member nations speak the same language, are working to the same goals and are faced with the same, often fluid, problems and challenges in a world that's a dangerous place right now. I found the sessions eye-

opening, especially the different ways in which the impact of Covid was being managed. I'll be taking away how it's vitally important that we keep talking and communicating within the Commonwealth family.

This was a brilliant conference where friendships were made and which stripped back the CPA to its very foundations of why we're parliamentarians. What I'll be taking away is that there's no perfect way of "doing scrutiny" and that we can always improve.

III. CONFERENCE IN NUMBERS

Delegates

There were a total of 44 attendees (15 women and 29 men) from 11 of the 13 BIMR regions.²

Financial Summary

Accommodation	12821.19
Travel (coaches and taxi)	1350.60
Meals and refreshments	6360.23
Venue hire and costs	1379.50
Catering equipment and items for stock	387.95
Entertainment and heritage	394.80
Delegates literature and mementos	800.94
Staff extra hours	941.95
Miscellaneous	66.78
Less subvention	-9630.00
Total	14873.94

The Hon. Juan Watterson SHK
Chair of the CPA Branch Executive Committee

Jonathan King
Clerk of Tynwald

² Jersey and Malta were unable to send delegations.

Appendix – Conference Programme



51st British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Conference

Programme

Arrivals – Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd March 2022

All day Arrival of CPA BIMR Conference delegates
Met by staff from the Office of the Clerk of Tynwald at Ronaldsway Airport or the Sea Terminal

Arrival Day – Wednesday 23rd March 2022

All day Arrival of CPA BIMR Conference delegates and registration
Met by staff from the Office of the Clerk of Tynwald at Ronaldsway Airport or the Sea Terminal.

1830 Informal Welcome Reception
Venue: The Harris Room, The Sefton Hotel

2000 Free evening for delegates

Conference Day One – Thursday 24th March 2022

0835 Assemble in hotel foyer for transport to Legislative Buildings.
Option to walk to Legislative Buildings (10 minute walk).

0900 Official Opening
Welcome address by The Hon Juan Watterson SHK
Venue: Barrool Suite, Legislative Buildings

0930-1100 **Plenary - Scrutiny Systems SWOT**
Venue: Barrool Suite, Legislative Buildings

Chair and opening presentation on IOM Scrutiny System including high-level SWOT analysis (20 min): *The Hon Juan Watterson, Speaker of the House of Keys and Chair of the Tynwald Public Accounts Committee*

Each jurisdiction will be invited to give a five-minute overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to their scrutiny system

1100-1130 Refreshments
Venue: Welcome Area, Legislative Buildings

1130-1245 Round Table Discussions
Venue: Barrool Suite, Legislative Buildings
Chair: *The Hon Juan Watterson SHK*

15-20 mins on each discussion topic:

- effective preparation for new scrutiny members;
- preparing for inquiries and evidence sessions;
- effective media engagement;
- how to turn recommendations into results.

1245 Assemble in foyer of Legislative Buildings for transport to the Manx Museum

1300-1400 Buffet Lunch
Venue: Art Gallery, Manx Museum

1400 Transport from the Manx Museum to Legislative Buildings.
Option to walk to Legislative Buildings (10 minute walk).

1415-1615 **BIMR Annual General Meeting**
Venue: Barrool Suite, Legislative Buildings or attendance remotely

1615 Official Photograph on the steps of Legislative Buildings or Tynwald Chamber

1630 Optional Tour of Chambers

1630/1730 Depart Legislative Buildings on foot for hotel (10 minute walk)

1910 Delegates assemble in foyer of hotel for transport to Woodbourne House

1930 Official Dinner hosted by the Joint Presidents of the IOM Branch
Venue: Woodbourne House
Dress: Lounge Suits

2230 Transport from Woodbourne House to hotel

Conference Day Two – Friday 25th March 2022

0740 Transport by taxi for members of the CWP Steering Committee who are on the Island from the hotel to Legislative Buildings
Option to walk to Legislative Buildings (10 minute walk)

0800-0900 **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee Breakfast Meeting**
Venue: Millennium Room or attendance remotely

0900 Assemble in hotel foyer for transport to Legislative Buildings
Option to walk to Legislative Buildings (10 minute walk)

0930-1030 What work has the highest impact and why?
Venue: Barrool Suite

Chair: *TBC*

The following case studies, followed by time for whole group discussion:

CASE Study Committee Effectiveness
Presenter: Ms Julie Elliott MP

CASE Study (Delegated Powers During Covid)
Presenter: Mr Stuart McMillan MSP

CASE Study Presented by Deputy Heidi Soulsby MBE

1030-1100	Refreshments Venue: Welcome Area
1100-1200	Breakout Sessions Venues: Barrool Suite, Members' Room, Committee Rooms
	Effective Scrutiny of:
	1. Finance matters (Members' Room) Chair: <i>Deputy Heidi Soulsby MBE (Guernsey)</i>
	2. Climate Change actions (Barrool Suite) Chair: <i>Sarah Boyack MSP (Scotland)</i>
	3. Diversity in legislatures (Committee Rooms) Chair: <i>Jeremy Balfour MSP (Scotland)</i>
1200	Assemble in foyer of Legislative Buildings for transport to the Villa Marina
1215-1315	Buffet Lunch Venue: Colonnade Suite, Villa Marina
1315	Transport from the Villa Marina to Legislative Buildings. Option to walk to Legislative Buildings (10 minute walk)
1330-1430	Breakout Sessions Venues: Barrool Suite, Members' Room, Committee Rooms
	Effective Scrutiny of:
	1. Population and Demographics (Members' Room) Chair: <i>The Hon Edwin Reyes MP (Gibraltar)</i>
	2. Legislation (Committee Rooms) Chair: <i>Peter Greenhill MLC (Isle of Man)</i>
	3. Engagement and Outreach (Barrool Suite) Chair: <i>Hon Leona Roberts MLA</i>
1430-1445	Refreshments Venue: Barrool Suite
1445-1600	Report back Venue: Barrool Suite Chaired by <i>The Hon Laurence Skelly MLC, President of Tynwald, Joint President Isle of Man Branch</i>
	Share lessons to take home, or personal development activities as a result of conference
1600-1615	Conference Closing Remarks Venue: Barrool Suite <i>Closing remarks by The Hon Laurence Skelly MLC</i>
1615	Depart Legislative Buildings on foot for hotel (10 minute walk)
1740	Assemble in hotel reception for transfer to Government House

- 1800 Drinks Reception at Government House hosted by the Deputy Lieutenant Governor, His Honour Deemster Andrew Corlett and Lady Lorimer.
- 1930 Delegates depart Government House with hosting Members of Tynwald for dinner.
- 2230 Depart for hotel (transport provided).

Optional Tour Day – Saturday 26th March 2022

- 0920 Assemble in hotel foyer for transport to Douglas Train Station
- 0950 Heritage Steam Train to Castletown Station
- 1025 Coach to Castletown Town
- 1040 Visit to the Old House of Keys
- 1215 Depart Castletown by coach
- 1230 Lunch at The Abbey Restaurant, Ballasalla
- 1345 Depart The Abbey for Douglas by coach
- 1415 Tour of the Gaiety Theatre
- 1530 End of Tour/Free time.

