

-----Original Message-----

From: HOWELL, Lord [<mailto:howelld@parliament.uk>]  
Sent: 12 June 2014 23:41  
To: Dominick Chilcott (Sensitive)  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Re: Dublin visit re Commonwealth

Dear Ambassador,

Many thanks, and I hope by now The Lord Mayor's office will have contacted you. I'd be delighted to have a talk with you about the general picture. My visit is quite a brief one - arriving about 11.30 and catching a 5pm Aer Lingus back to London. So perhaps if you are free we could have a talk after lunch and before I head back to the airport. Meanwhile, my kindest regards  
David Howell

Sent from my iPad

> On 9 juin 2014, at 10:49, "[Dominick.Chilcott@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Dominick.Chilcott@fco.gov.uk)" <[Dominick.Chilcott@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Dominick.Chilcott@fco.gov.uk)>  
> wrote:  
>  
> Dear Lord Howell,  
>  
> Thank you very much for your email. Peter Finnegan hasn't been in touch yet about the lunch on 27 June. So thank you for telling me about it. Obviously, I shall hope to be there.  
>  
> You are quite correct that there is no serious suggestion in political circles of Ireland's rejoining the Commonwealth. But some Irish organisations do wish to participate or be associated with initiatives that have a Commonwealth label. There is a lot of interest at present in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, for example.  
>  
> I believe this is very much to be welcomed and should be seen as part of the overall rapprochement between Britain and Ireland which was given such momentum by the Queen's visit here in 2011 and President Higgins' to Britain in April.  
>  
> I look forward to seeing you on 27 June at the lunch. If you would like separately to have a meeting with me to discuss developments here, I should be delighted (but equally would understand if you felt that lunch was enough!).  
>  
> Yours ever,  
> Dominick Chilcott  
>  
>  
>  
> -----Original Message-----  
> From: HOWELL, Lord [<mailto:howelld@parliament.uk>]

> Sent: 09 June 2014 07:13  
> To: Dominick Chilcott (Sensitive)  
> Subject: Dublin visit re Commonwealth

>

> Dear Ambassador,

> At the invitation of The Lord Mayor of Dublin and his chief official Peter Finnegan, I am visiting Dublin for a lunch on Friday June 27th to discuss Commonwealth matters.

> I understand that Mr.Finnegan is also going to invite you, or may already have done so. This is just to say that I hope very much you will be free to join us.

> Just as background there seems to be an Irish move re the Commonwealth not, I think, actually for Ireland to join, but for closer association with various non-governmental and voluntary 'wings' of the Commonwealth network. These include the Royal Commonwealth Society, of which I am President, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (which already has good links) and the Commonwealth Business Council.

> I hope very much we can meet up on the 27th.

> With best wishes

>

> David Howell

> Lord Howell of Guildford)

>

> Sent from my iPad

**From:** Dominick Chilcott (Sensitive)  
**Sent:** 19 June 2014 14:52  
**To:** 'HOWELL, Lord'  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (Sensitive)  
**Subject:** RE: Lunch 27th

Dear Lord Howell,

Thank you for your email. Peter Finnegan has now been in touch and I shall indeed be at the planned lunch on 27<sup>th</sup> June. I am looking forward to it.

As for the Commonwealth, the Taoiseach has, in the last few months, made it clear publicly that rejoining the organisation is not on the Irish government's agenda. The bulk of letters on the subject to the Irish Times are against too.

I would imagine, therefore, that engagement with the non-official and voluntary wings of the Commonwealth family would cause a lot less controversy and be of more interest to Ireland – particular if that would bring material benefits to Ireland - than any move that might look, however wrongly, as a first step towards rejoining the Commonwealth proper.

The profile of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is rising as Ireland acknowledges the thousands of its sons who fought and died in the First World War. On 31 July, the first CWGC cross of sacrifice will be unveiled at Glasnevin cemetery in the presence of the President of Ireland. The participation of athletes from Northern Ireland – some of whom may have competed for Ireland in the Olympics - at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow next month will be another reminder of what the organisation has to offer.

I am fairly free on the morning of 27 June. If you would welcome it, we could rendezvous 30 or so minutes ahead of the lunch, perhaps in the Shelbourne hotel which is just round the corner from the Mansion House. Please do let me know if you would like and have time for a private talk too.

Best wishes,  
Dominick Chilcott

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**From:** HOWELL, Lord [<mailto:howelld@parliament.uk>]  
**Sent:** 19 June 2014 12:03  
**To:** Dominick Chilcott (Sensitive)  
**Subject:** Lunch 27th

Dear Ambassador,

I hope that by now Peter Finnegan in the Lord Mayor's office, will have invited you to our planned lunch on 27<sup>th</sup> June – and that you are free to come.

I think our main emphasis will be on the non-official and voluntary wings of the Commonwealth 'family', and that these are probably the areas of interest for Ireland – especially the Commonwealth Business Council which under Lord Marland is now gaining great vigour and relevance. . But do let me know if you think there are other aspects to raise.

[REDACTED]

I look forward to meeting you.

Best wishes

David Howell

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] (Sensitive)

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 10 March 2014 13:57  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** FW: Update to Supps by 12pm 10 March: COMMONWEALTH DEBATE [UNCLASSIFIED]

**Security Label:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Apologies that we have not collectively been back in touch sooner. Just to confirm that your lines on Ireland look fine (quite complicated to work out if/ when Ireland was in the Commonwealth, but these read fine and are factually accurate).

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 06 March 2014 13:57  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** Update to Supps by 12pm 10 March: COMMONWEALTH DEBATE

Hi [REDACTED],

There is a Commonwealth debate in Westminster Hall which Sir Alan Haselhurst MP has called on 13 March and we are updating our master pack of supplementary Q&A on a range of issues which could come up.

I'd welcome any updates / amendments / new top lines to the current points below we have by **12pm Monday 10 March**. Many thanks!

## Ireland

### **What discussions has the UK had on Ireland joining the Commonwealth?**

- The Republic of Ireland's interest in rejoining the Commonwealth is a matter for the Irish Government and the wider Commonwealth membership. The UK Government has had no discussions with the Irish Government on this issue.

[REDACTED] | Desk Officer | Commonwealth Team | International Organisations Department | Room WH3.419  
| Foreign and Commonwealth Office | King Charles Street | London SW1A 2AH |

2. Lobbying of the UK by NGOs in non-Commonwealth member states in last 5 years

Country/entity	Status	Justification	UK view	Risks	Action (if any)
<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> </ul>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p>Ireland</p>	<p>The Reform Group, an Irish NGO and think tank, has raised the issue of Ireland's membership of the Commonwealth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a former UK colony, Ireland would meet the criteria.</li> <li>It would benefit from economic links with other Commonwealth countries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That this is a matter for the Irish government.</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taking any action on this would upset the Irish Government.</li> </ul>	<p>None unless the Irish Government</p>

[REDACTED] (Sensitive)

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 27 June 2011 12:34  
**To:** PS Minister Howell - Action (Restricted); PQ (Restricted); [REDACTED]  
office.x.gsi.gov.uk'  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** FW: [REDACTED] Lords Oral Question: 30 June 2011 at 1100 - Republic of  
Ireland/Commonwealth  
**Attachments:** HoL starred - Lord Rana - Ireland and the CW.DOC; UBS Steering Minute - Lords Starred PQ  
- Lord Rana.doc; UNCL Lord Rana PQ Index.doc; Lords PQ - Lord Rana - Supps.doc; UNCL  
Lord Rana Background.doc  
**Importance:** High  
**Security Label:** [REDACTED]

All,

Apologies – please see updated briefing pack - just one minor amendment to the supplementary on India's role in the Commonwealth.

Thanks,  
[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 27 June 2011 10:15  
**To:** PS Minister Howell - Action (Restricted); PQ (Restricted); [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** DL IOD Commonwealth Unit (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** [REDACTED] Lords Oral Question: 30 June 2011 at 1100 - Republic of Ireland/Commonwealth  
**Importance:** High

Dear All,

Please see attached briefing pack for Lord Howell to answer Lord Rana's question about the Republic of Ireland and the Commonwealth on Thursday 30 June.

Kind Regards,  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Assistant Desk Officer | Commonwealth Unit  
International Organisations Department | Room E3.309 | Foreign and Commonwealth Office | King Charles Street | London | SW1A  
2AH |  
[REDACTED] | Fax: [REDACTED] | Email: [REDACTED]

CHOGM 2011: 28 - 30 October, Perth, Australia

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 15 June 2011 13:53  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** FW: Briefing Request: Lords Oral Question: 30 June 2011 at 1100 - Republic of Ireland/Commonwealth  
**Importance:** High

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 13 June 2011 13:37  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** Briefing Request: Lords Oral Question: 30 June 2011 at 1100 - Republic of Ireland/Commonwealth  
**Importance:** High

[REDACTED]

Further to [REDACTED]'s e-mail below, could I please ask for a briefing pack prepared for Lord Howell, answering Lord Rana's question on Thursday, 30 June on what plans HMG has to encourage the Republic of Ireland to rejoin the Commonwealth, in the light of HM The Queen's recent visit to the Republic.

I would appreciate to receive two hard copies (1 x flagged, punched suitably for a 2-hole ring binder and 1 x unflagged) of briefs by 1600 hrs on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011. Please ensure that electronic copies of the briefing are sent to PS Minister Howell (Action), PRT to PQ (Restricted) and to Katherine Horrocks in House of Lords ([Katherine.horrocks@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Katherine.horrocks@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk)).

On how to prepare the brief you will find a guidance under [http://www.fconet.fco.gov.uk/About+the+FCO/FCO+Structure/Ministers/MinFive/LH\\_Oral.htm](http://www.fconet.fco.gov.uk/About+the+FCO/FCO+Structure/Ministers/MinFive/LH_Oral.htm). Please bear in mind that there is 8 minutes allocated to each question. Lord Howell will deliver the answer to the main question and then will respond to approx. 5-8 supplementary questions within his 8 minutes.

If you require further information on how the briefing should look like/contain please contact me (ext. 2429).

It is recommended that officials attend the Oral Question. Please liaise with Steven New (ext. 2236), in PRT to arrange necessary passes for the day. N.B. Oral Questions will take place between 1100-1130 hrs. Lord Rana's is Question No. 3.

I would also like to set up an oral briefing for 1045 hrs on Wednesday, 29 June, in Lord Howell's office (K110). Please confirm, in due course, who would be attending the oral briefing.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Lord Howell's Office | Room K109A King Charles Street | Foreign & Commonwealth Office | London | SW1A 2AH | Phone: [REDACTED] | E-Mail: [REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 09 June 2011 09:32  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** FW: Lords Oral Question: 30 June 2011 at 1100 - Republic of Ireland

Question will now be answered by [REDACTED], not [REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 08 June 2011 14:25  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** RE: Lords Oral Question: 30 June 2011 at 1100 - Republic of Ireland

Dear [REDACTED]



Further to our telephone conversation, here are details of the Oral Question which you will be providing briefing for.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 08 June 2011 10:30  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** Lords Oral Question: 30 June 2011 at 1100 - Republic of Ireland

Dear [REDACTED]

We have received notification of an Oral Question in the House of Lords:

**Thursday 30 June at 11.00am**

†\*Lord Rana to ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the recent visit by Her Majesty The Queen to the Republic of Ireland, what plans they have to encourage the Republic to rejoin the Commonwealth. FCO

Lord Howell's Office will advise you of Lord Howell's availability and deadlines for briefing.

Thank you.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Parliamentary Relations Department

[REDACTED]

**HOUSE OF LORDS STARRED QUESTION**

Question From: Lord Rana,

To ask Her Majesty's Government,

In the light of the recent visit by Her Majesty The Queen to the Republic of Ireland, what plans they have to encourage the Republic to rejoin the Commonwealth.

Minister responsible: Lord Howell

Minister answering: Lord Howell

**The Republic of Ireland's interest in rejoining the Commonwealth is a matter for the Irish Government.**

Drafted by:

████████████████████

████████████████████

Authorised by:

████████████████████

████████████████████

## STEERING MINUTE

**Lord Rana** will ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the recent visit by Her Majesty The Queen to the Republic of Ireland, what plans they have to encourage the Republic to rejoin the Commonwealth.

The Minister has not previously spoken in the House of Lords on this subject, and we are not aware of any correspondence with the Questioner nor any other recent written Lords PQs on this issue.

### Main issues

1. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Any application for re-admission would best emerge from debate within the Republic.
2. Ireland formally withdrew from the Commonwealth in 1949. This withdrawal followed the 1948 election in which an interparty Government took office that repealed the External Relations Act. This included secession from the Commonwealth. Since then no Irish government has formally shown interest in rejoining.
3. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
4. Ireland's membership of the Commonwealth is being proposed by the Reform Group, an Irish non-governmental organisation. This issue currently appears to have no Irish Government support.

### KEY MESSAGES

- The Republic of Ireland's interest in rejoining the Commonwealth is a matter for the Irish Government.
- Membership of the Commonwealth is a matter for the Commonwealth Secretariat, and decisions are made by consensus of the Heads of all member states.

## **BEAR TRAPS/DEFENSIVE LINES**

### **Why is the UK not actively encouraging the Republic of Ireland to rejoin the Commonwealth?**

- This is a matter for Irish Government. The Irish Government has made no statement on rejoining the Commonwealth.
- We are aware that a number of countries are interested in joining the Commonwealth, and there is an established process for this. The UK would consider supporting any country that meets the criteria, particularly those relating to the core values of democracy, human rights and rule of law.
- Not just a matter for the British Government. Membership rightly requires agreement from all 54 member states following careful consideration by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

### **Background**

#### **1. Criteria for joining the Commonwealth**

The 2007 Kampala Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) agreed on the following Commonwealth membership criteria:

"(a) an applicant country should, as a general rule, have had a historic constitutional association with an existing Commonwealth member, save in exceptional circumstances;

(b) in exceptional circumstances, applications should be considered on a case-by-case basis;

(c) an applicant country should accept and comply with Commonwealth fundamental values, principles, and priorities as set out in the 1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles and contained in other subsequent Declarations;

(d) an applicant country must demonstrate commitment to: democracy and democratic processes, including free and fair elections and representative legislatures; the rule of law and independence of the judiciary; good governance, including a well-trained public service and transparent public accounts; and protection of human rights, freedom of expression, and equality of opportunity;

(e) an applicant country should accept Commonwealth norms and conventions, such as the use of the English language as the medium of inter-Commonwealth relations, and acknowledge Queen Elizabeth II as the Head of the Commonwealth;

(f) new members should be encouraged to join the Commonwealth Foundation, and to promote vigorous civil society and business organisations within their countries, and to foster participatory democracy through regular civil society consultations."

## 2. Membership Process

The Kampala CHOGM also agreed a formal process for considering new membership applications:

- **Step 1. Informal assessment by the Secretary-General:** Following any informed expression of interest from an independent and sovereign non-member state to the Secretariat, the Secretary-General should carry out an informal assessment of the ability of the country concerned to meet the membership criteria. At the same time, the Secretary-General should informally advise member governments that such an assessment was being undertaken.
- **Step 2. Consultation with existing member governments:** After the informal assessment has been made and if the Secretary-General is satisfied that the applicant country is likely to meet the criteria and enjoys broad-based domestic support for membership of the Commonwealth, the Secretary-General will inform member countries in writing about the results of *the* assessment and seek their comments.
- **Step 3. Invitation to make a formal application.** If there is no objection from existing members to the expression of interest by a non-member country wishing to join the Commonwealth, the Secretary-General will request the country concerned to make a formal application to the Commonwealth Secretariat for submission to Heads of Government for their consideration.
- **Step 4. Evidence of democratic processes and popular support.** While a joint resolution of the legislature is not a requirement for submitting a formal application for the membership, after the initial consultations between the Secretariat and the applicant country have been completed successfully, such a resolution may be used as evidence of the functioning of the democratic process and popular support in that country for joining the Commonwealth. Heads of Government would consider the application of a prospective member at the next CHOGM, and, if they reach consensus about accepting the application, that country would then join the Commonwealth and be invited to subsequent meetings."

[REDACTED] (Sensitive)

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Sensitive)  
**Sent:** 19 June 2014 12:18  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Sensitive)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] (Sensitive); [REDACTED] (Sensitive); [REDACTED] (Sensitive); [REDACTED] (Sensitive)  
**Subject:** O/S Royal Commonwealth Society - Dublin branch [REDACTED]  
**Attachments:** [REDACTED] RCS Dublin Press Lines.docx  
  
**Security Label:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1. [REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED] it may prompt speculation the UK is encouraging Ireland to join the Commonwealth, particularly after the recent State Visits. If Ireland wished to become a member, it would need to express its interest to the Secretary-General, and the matter would be decided by Commonwealth Heads of Government collectively. We have not approached the Irish government to encourage an application.

We have prepared the attached press lines in consultation and agreement of BE Dublin, desk and press office to be deployed on an if raised basis.

Regards

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] | **Commonwealth Team**  
International Organisations Department | Multilateral Policy Directorate | Room WH1.209 | Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
| King Charles Street | London | SW1A 2AH | [REDACTED] | Email: [REDACTED] | [www.gov.uk/fco](http://www.gov.uk/fco)

*Multilateral Policy Directorate - securing UK interests and values in international systems*

[REDACTED] (Sensitive)

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**Sent:** 23 May 2011 15:52  
**Subject:** FW: Ireland and the Commonwealth

[REDACTED]

You will see from the email exchange below that I have been tasked with writing a paper on Ireland and the Commonwealth. It isn't urgent – probably for the summer when it's a bit quieter – but thought I would give you some advance warning as I will be calling on your services. We may fold this into a paper on wider membership issues.

[REDACTED] – it would be particularly helpful if post could get some clarification on the Irish Government's views on the Commonwealth and potential membership.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Commonwealth Unit | E3.307 | Foreign and Commonwealth Office | King Charles Street | London SW1A 2AH

✉ Email: [REDACTED] ☎ Telephone: [REDACTED] 📠 Fax: [REDACTED] 🌐 URL: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 20 May 2011 15:06  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** RE: Ireland and the Commonwealth

Thanks. I think a paper on the issue would be timely, even if Lord H doesn't spark. You might draw on [REDACTED] too to take a strategic look at how this would fit with our wider CW objectives?

n

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Sent:** 20 May 2011 14:59  
**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)  
**Subject:** RE: Ireland and the Commonwealth

[REDACTED]

We haven't seen anything in the reporting on the Commonwealth, but the Desk Officer will double check with post if there was any mention of the Commonwealth in any of the meetings with the Queen.

Lord Howell asked about this issue earlier in the week, and I attach my email to [REDACTED] which includes some background provided by [REDACTED]. Our response when asked about Commonwealth membership for any country

is that it is a matter for the government of that country. To my knowledge the push for Ireland to join the Commonwealth comes from a pressure group called the Reform Group. We are not aware of any recent interest by the Irish Government in the Commonwealth.

I have offered to work up a paper on the subject for Lord Howell, but haven't yet received a response.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)

**Sent:** 20 May 2011 14:45

**To:** [REDACTED] (Restricted)

**Cc:** [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted); [REDACTED] (Restricted)

**Subject:** Ireland and the Commonwealth

G

[REDACTED]

N