



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2018/28/2200
Creation Dates:	16 May 1988
Extent and medium:	4 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Handwritten signature

West Belfast

Confidential

West Belfast Initiative

After the meeting over dinner last night (16 May) on the approach to the EEC for a contribution to the International Fund, Mr. Ronnie Spence gave the following details of the proposed West Belfast initiative.

The initiative will be co-ordinated by a Special Action Group headed by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield and on which all Government Departments will be represented. The membership of the group will include John Semple (DFP), Gerry Loughran (DoE) and Julian Crozier (DED). This group will act as a board of directors for the Belfast Special Action Unit which will have executive responsibility for the implementation of the initiative.

The Belfast Special Action Unit will be full-time and will be headed by an Assistant Secretary, Nigel Hamilton, from the Central Secretariat. In this financial year, it will have a budget of between £5-£10m, probably closer to £10m. Its remit will be very wide and will cover the following general areas:

1. Improvement of the Environment: Funds will be invested in environmental improvement schemes. Where possible, ownership of these will be vested in the local community. For example, where trees are planted, they will by agreement be planted in people's front gardens where they can be looked after rather than on the footpath. Where gable-ends are improved by the removal of graffiti, they will, where possible, be handed over to the care of the occupier of the house by enclosing an area around the gable end as part of the occupant's garden. Improvements will also be made to roadways and footpaths and lighting. It is also intended that derelict sites should be cleared.
2. Creation of short term jobs through the ACE Programme: The intention is to create 400-500 ACE jobs by making available

additional resources to reputable ACE schemes in West Belfast.

3. Improvement of the climate for enterprise: The Special Action Unit will work with groups such as the West Belfast Enterprise Board (WBEB) and others to improve the climate for enterprise in West Belfast. It will be prepared to back initiatives of the WBEB and to take risks in funding enterprise projects.
4. Expert input on urban regeneration: The Special Action Group has retained Victor Hausner from Cambridge to act as consultant in the task of urban regeneration in West Belfast. Hausner has advised both the US Administration (under Carter) and the British Government on inner city renewal. The Phoenix Trust may also include Hausner among those with whom it will work on the execution of its study into urban regeneration outside Ireland.
5. Enterprise Awareness Campaign: Resources will be devoted to increasing among people from West Belfast an awareness of the possibilities of organising themselves to establish small businesses rather than considering themselves only as potential employees.
6. Involvement of Voluntary Groups: It is likely that Voluntary Groups such as the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action will receive resources to enable them to further their Community employment programmes.
7. Further Education and Training: The Special Action Group will put resources into the training of people in West Belfast for jobs, particularly in the retail sector, in the city centre. When St. Thomas' becomes free (during the summer) further education courses will be concentrated there. In addition, a Compact will be operated between

schools in West Belfast and businesses in the city centre with a view to improving employment links between the two.

8. Expansion of BAT Teams: The Belfast Action teams which operate in four areas at present will be expanded within the year to operate in eight areas of Belfast.
9. Expansion of LEDU Activities: The Local Enterprise Development Unit will be given additional resources to work with community groups in West Belfast in order to create viable jobs in small industry.

Ronnie Spence said that the details of the package had not yet been finalised and that financing was not yet secured from the Treasury. However, he thought that sufficient indications of possible financing would be available in time to allow the Secretary of State to make an announcement before the summer. Discussions would be held with Dr. Daly and with Joe Hendron on the best way to announce the proposals. He saw disadvantages in announcing a special large package for West Belfast and seemed to be tending towards announcing measures individually. However, a statement giving the broad thrust of the package would probably be issued by the Secretary of State and a draft had already been prepared.

He said that the Secretary of State and Sir Ken Bloomfield were strongly committed personally to implementing the initiative. Sir Ken Bloomfield had recently circulated Bishop Daly's recent sermon on West Belfast to all senior civil servants. In a covering note he commented that while all might not necessarily agree with everything in the sermon, it represented the perception in West Belfast and he urged all his officers to read it.

Mr. Spence said that an early meeting in the Secretariat would be useful to enable them to hear Irish views and proposals on the West Belfast initiative.

National Programme of Community Action

The proposals for West Belfast would dovetail with the ideas which were being worked on for the National Programme of Community Action which would draw down European Community monies from the Structural Funds. The National Programme of Community Action would include training and education (including integrated education), action for disadvantaged areas both urban and rural, community reconciliation programmes and job creation initiatives. It was expected that a package would be ready for presentation to the Commission on 16 June.

Conway Street Mill

Spence said that their information was that the Committee which now owned the Conway Street Mill was, in many respects, no better than the former owners. It included several people about whom they had the most severe reservations, including some relatives of Gerry Adams. Accordingly, he did not see any change in British Government attitudes to funding projects located in the Mill.



Brendan J. Lyons

May 17, 1988

c. c. Mr. Gallagher
Counsellors