

FROM: LINDA DEVLIN

DATE: 11 NOVEMBER 1997

MRS BROWN

STORMONT CASTLE

1. McCusker 18/11

A mfg. has been arranged with DDB, who  
ourselves in the near future + we  
can make these points then.

2. Kavanagh

did it

ASST SEC 12 NOV 1997  
CENT SEC

Do you want this turned into  
a memo?

C

14/11

1. We have not had the chance yet to discuss Tony McCusker's minute of 28 October about the future of Stormont Castle, so I thought I would put some comments on paper (well, e-mail) in light of PUS' minute of 3 November.
2. After the condition report was produced in March 1995, there was some debate as to the future of the Castle, the need for complete refurbishment and, particularly, the practicality of carrying out the refurbishment with occupants still in residence. A submission was put to the then Secretary of State and Ministers, based on a draft from Dick Mackenzie, which basically said that the Castle was in an advanced state of disrepair, major refurbishment work was needed and that all the Castle's occupants would have to move out while this was done. The submission went on to say that a full economic appraisal would be carried out, covering all the options available. The Ministerial team were asked to sign up to this, largely to reinforce the idea that there would have to be a decant from the Castle.
3. The economic appraisal was eventually produced - after we had moved in to Parliament Buildings - and a long time after we had pointed out some serious deficiencies, such as the lack of any costs for security provision. The six options set out in Mr McCusker's minute are those dealt with in the appraisal and they clearly show that only the decant and refurbish options are viable. So far, so good. However, the final two paragraphs of Mr McCusker's minute seem to suggest that the decision to refurbish the Castle has not been taken. This is puzzling, given that I have been closely involved with the Project Team set up to take the refurbishment forward. This has already reached the stage of provisional room allocations for our return to the building, liaison with PANI about the possible refurbishment of the RUC station, the incorporation of an additional toilet for the Head of the NICS, plans for disabled access etc., etc. In other words a considerable amount of work has been done, although it has been suspiciously quiet for a while now.
4. If Mr McCusker's minute is intended simply to alert the system to the need for formal approval for the Castle refurbishment, then I would suggest a submission to the Secretary of State and Ministers, PUS, HOCS etc.
5. If Mr McCusker's minute is intended to stimulate a discussion of the possible future uses for the Castle, then the timing is a bit strange. We did not move out of Stormont Castle because we wanted to be in Parliament Buildings, we moved out because the Castle needed refurbishment and a considerable amount of preparatory work has been

done to that end. I am not aware that it was ever intended we should stay in Parliament Buildings. It was always recognised that it was impossible to be precise about the numbers and composition of those who would return to the Castle and thus plans were drawn up on the basis of what was known, i.e. the then current occupancy.

6. That uncertainty remains, and is reflected in both John Steele's and PUS' minutes. x  
However, given the scale of the work required on the Castle and the length of time it would take to complete, there seems little point waiting until we know what the Castle will be used for before starting any refurbishment. Whether it is eventually used by the SofS, Ministers etc. as before, or by some new devolved administration, or first one, then the other, seems irrelevant. The most logical thing to do would be to carry on with the refurbishment as planned. If necessary, adjustments could be made at a future date to accommodate any changes.
7. Of course, if one had a paranoid disposition, one might suspect that DOE were possibly trying to wriggle out of the cost of the refurbishment by getting us to say we were happy here and didn't want to move back, or, indeed, had other plans for the Castle - as a museum, perhaps, or a Conference centre, or an art gallery, or .....
8. On balance, I think DOE need to do a straightforward submission to the Secretary of State seeking formal approval for the refurbishment, with a draft widely circulated in advance for NIO and Central Secretariat to see.

Linda Devlin

FROM: J M STEELE  
SENIOR DIRECTOR, BELFAST  
31 October 1997

Ref: 5713/

cc PS/PUS (B&L)  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Lindsay



MR BLACKWELL

*1. to be Ferguson  
2. to be Brown*

STORMONT CASTLE

Thank you for letting me see Tony McCusker's minute of 28 October.

2. I agree with the RUC advice that the Castle staff and functions should not be located outside the Stormont Estate. I also believe that the Castle is a very suitable location for the Secretary of State and that this would continue to be the case when a devolved administration is established. By extension I consider that the Ministers of State, senior officials and the core Information Service should also be located there. It would be possible to place Central Secretariat elsewhere (in proximity to the Head of the NICS if he is not in the Castle) but in my opinion that would be a retrograde step.

3. My conclusion therefore is that the former residents should be returned to a fully refurbished Castle as soon as possible. I would hope, however, that the refurbishment would include some rationalisation of the way in which the available space is used to create a more efficient working environment.

Signed JMS

J M STEELE

Ext 28138

FROM: PUS  
3 NOVEMBER 1997

1. cc Mr Watkins  
Mr McCusker - DOE

275a

For info bearing in our meeting on 5 December.

2. BF 5/12(B)

UNDER SEC  
CENT SEC  
22/10/11  
7 NOV 1997

ASST SEC 10 NOV 1997  
CENT SEC  
08 20/11

cc: PS/Secretary of State -  
Mr Lindsay - personal  
Mr Steele  
Mr Hassall

MR BLACKWELL

10/11  
to cc Mr Brown  
2. M. D/F 4 sec.

### STORMONT CASTLE

M. D/F 4 sec.  
10/11

Many thanks for copying to me Tony McCusker's minute of 28 October about the future of Stormont Castle.

2. The following points seem to me important:
- (1) RUC advice that the Office of the Secretary of State and those functions closely connected to it should not be located outside the Stormont Estate (I assume for the foreseeable future).
  - (2) That seems to me to rule out the non Stormont Estate options, and PFI possibilities attaching to them. I think the RUC advice is realistic.
  - (3) We simply cannot know what the role and staffing needs of the Office of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be in the event of a political settlement. What is clear is that there will continue to be at least for a substantial period a Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and therefore a Northern Ireland Office. How big its senior staff/headquarters will be, however, very hard to estimate in scale, or in probability of any particular outcome.
  - (4) I cannot see the Secretary of State and the post-evolution NIO co-habiting with the new devolved administration whose headquarters will inevitably be in Parliament Buildings.
  - (5) I can see a strong bid from the first Minister of a new devolved administration to take over the Castle as a personal headquarters, echoing the old Stormont Prime Ministers' (and Cabinets') use of the Castle. There could of course be other views about that from the Northern Ireland parties.

10/11

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3. Given the uncertainties and cross-currents, my own view is that it would make sense to pursue at least in the short to medium term a minimalist refurbishment programme at the Castle for re-occupation by the Secretary of State and elements of the NIO (together with the Head of NICS/Secretariat unless and until devolution is accomplished).

4. The other realistic possibility, it seems to me, on reading Tony McCusker's note is a decamp to Block B of Castle Buildings, offering efficient if unattractive accommodation. I think we need to take Minister's minds on that option, quite apart from the cost benefit aspects, given the political symbolism of a devolved administration in Parliament Buildings (and potentially in the Parliament) and a "residual" Secretary of State tucked away in a soulless office block somewhere down the hill.

**(SIGNED)**

**JOHN CHILCOT**

**3 NOVEMBER 1997**

ASST  
SEC 30 OCT 1997  
CENT SEC



Department of the Environment  
for Northern Ireland

Accommodation, Construction  
and Fire Division

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Mr Watkins  
Mr Blackwell

UNDER/EC  
1150/10  
29 OCT 1997  
CENT SEC

1. in the Ferguson  
2. has been 23/10  
Wanted for info. we find  
certainly discuss with DSE + NIO  
but my line inclusion towards  
refurbishment + re-occupation of  
the Castle. 22.0

PS/Secretary  
Mr Quinn, DFP  
Mrs Brown  
Mr Pearson

LD4/11  
Handwritten signatures and notes

**STORMONT CASTLE**

1. The purpose of this note is to seek your thoughts on the future role of Stormont Castle now that all the moves to Parliament Buildings have taken place.

**BACKGROUND**

2. The Castle had, until the recent transfer of staff to Parliament Buildings, served as the headquarters for the Secretary of State, Ministers, NIO, the Head of the Civil Service, together with supporting staff, and the Information Service. It was originally designed as a medium sized private residence but was converted to office use some years ago. In order to meet the needs of the occupants the building was extended by the addition of portacabin constructions. Modern office services, such as IT cabling, were installed by the expedient of surface mounting. The building interior and exterior has a Grade B listing.
3. The building is not ideally suited for office use as the accommodation is spread over a relatively wide area and the circulation routes, both horizontally and vertically, are lengthy and tortuous with numerous changes in levels, which are not conducive to disabled access. Office sizes are limited by the loadbearing masonry structure and timber floors. A condition report in March 1995 identified major problems associated with the building fabric and services. Continual work is required to maintain the functionality of the building, to prevent water penetration at the roof and windows and to preserve the fabric of the building.
4. An economic appraisal was commissioned recently to examine the various options in relation to the accommodation needs of the occupants. The objective of the appraisal was to examine the cost of providing suitable cost effective accommodation (taking into account occupation by Ministers), in order to maintain the existing services and meet the needs of clients. The accommodation needs of the occupants were assessed at 22,000 square feet/2,044 square metres. Based on advice, it was assumed that the staff requirement would not expand or contract in either the medium or long term.

only because it was impossible to predict changes.

HD97G092/ACF0

5. Six possible options were examined and the net present cost of each with associated comments are as set out below.
- a do minimum option was costed at £3.47m. This provides a baseline for the comparison of other options but is not considered a suitable solution, as the frequency of maintenance and remedial work, which is disruptive to occupants, is expected to increase significantly over the coming years.
  - Two refurbishment options based on either decant to Block B, Castle Buildings or Parliament Buildings were costed at £7.8m and £7.76m respectively.
  - build new premises in Belfast city centre - £22.8m,
  - lease a suitable city centre property; if one could be found - £21.04m; and
  - build in West Belfast £20.46m. These costs take account of all the security measures which would be recommended by the RUC should any such solution be pursued [apparently a standard inclusion in Accommodation Appraisals]. *eventually!!*
6. A PFI solution is theoretically possible. The Stormont Regulations and Government Property Act (Northern Ireland) 1933, however, prohibit the sale, lease or surrender of any property within the Estate. A PFI solution would require an amendment to the legislation and would be publicly contentious. The additional security costs associated with the 3 non Stormont Estate options are likely to render any other PFI option non-viable. In any event the RUC have categorically stated that it is their advice that the Castle staff and functions should not be located outside the Estate.
7. Decant and refurbishment of the building therefore represent the most cost effective solution for the accommodation needs of the occupants, though the costs are still significant in the context of the budget available for office accommodation and which, like many others, is currently under threat.
8. We need to decide quickly how to progress this. Mothballing, without a determined future use for the building would result in its rapid deterioration and departmental resources could not be applied to preserve the building unless there was a realistic and foreseeable prospect of it being returned to office accommodation. I recognise however that failure to preserve the building would have political consequences.
9. I should welcome, therefore, an early discussion about the future use of Stormont Castle, the scale of restoration and provision and the impact on the office accommodation programme.



TONY McCUSKER

28 October 1997