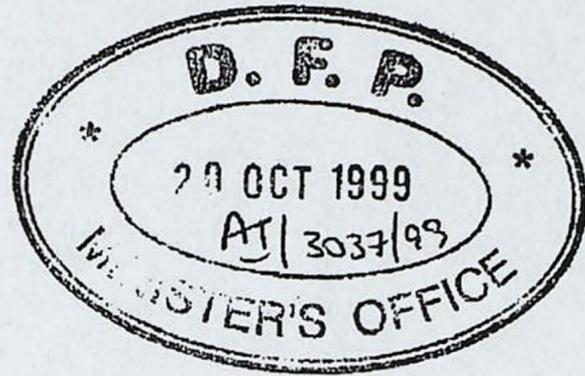




Minister of State  
Cabinet Office

c. PS/Mr Ingram  
PS/Mr Pilling (B'sL)  
PS/Mr Semple  
Mr Carill  
Mr Smyth  
\* Mr Clements  
Mr Watson.



The Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP  
President of the Council and  
Leader of the House of Commons  
2 Carlton Gardens  
LONDON  
SW1Y 5AA

14 October 1999

**CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE: CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR THE DOME  
OPENING CELEBRATIONS**

The Civil Contingencies Committee agreed at its meeting on 6 July that it had a role to play in the operational decisions about the opening of the Millennium Dome.

The attached paper outlines the responsibilities of the Civil Contingencies Committee and other main players if the opening ceremony at the Dome on 31 December or the first day of operation on 1 January have to be cancelled because of emergency, or other significant problems, irrespective of whether they are related to the date change issue.

We had intended to submit this paper, for information only, to our meeting on 7 October, but some issues took longer to resolve than expected. The paper does not cover the legal or financial issues involved with a cancellation, which will need to be resolved separately.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of the Civil Contingencies Committee and Sir Richard Wilson.

CHARLES FALCONER

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CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE

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CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR THE DOME OPENING CELEBRATIONS

Memorandum by the Minister of State, Cabinet Office.

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### Summary

1. This paper outlines the responsibilities of CCC and other main players in the event that the opening ceremony at the Dome on 31 December or the first day of operation on 1 January have to be cancelled because of emergency, or other significant identifiable problems, irrespective of whether they are related to the date change issue.
2. Ultimate responsibility to cancel the Dome celebrations will fall into two main areas:
  - I Lord Falconer (the sole shareholder of New Millennium Experience Company), as advised by the Chief Executive of the Company and liaising with Number 10 and DCMS, will decide whether to cancel because of on site public safety reasons or operational difficulties at the Dome; and
  - II CCC, following consultation with Lord Falconer and liaising with CEO NMEC, Number 10 and DCMS, will decide whether the Dome celebrations should be cancelled in the case of wider public safety or for other overriding reasons .
3. The paper does not address the urgent evacuation plans for the Dome, which are the operational responsibility of NMEC and have already been agreed with the emergency services.
4. The Committee is invited to note the arrangements in place to support a decision to cancel the opening ceremony or the first day of operation.

### Background

5. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has lead responsibility for co-ordinating the Government's interest in the Millennium celebrations throughout the UK, and is also Chairman of the Millennium Commission. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is the sponsor Department for the Millennium Commission and for the New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC), which receives funds from the Millennium Commission to construct and operate the Dome at Greenwich and the associated national programme. Lord Falconer, Minister of State Cabinet Office, is the sole shareholder of NMEC on behalf of the Government and DCMS officials support him in this role. Lord Falconer is a member of CCC.
6. The Minister for London (who is also a member of CCC) has responsibility for London's preparations for and handling of the Millennium. Under him the Government Office for London (GoL) established the London Readiness 2000 Team to assist with London's planning for the Millennium change. A Pan-

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London Steering Group, chaired by the Minister for London, was set up to bring together the main bodies responsible for public services: the emergency services (fire, police and ambulance); local and health authorities; transport operators and regulators; utilities (electricity, gas, water); telecommunications; and others, such as the Port of London Authority.

7. A multi-agency team, Gold control, will be based at Scotland Yard and will support Ministers and provide information.
8. At its meeting on 6 July, CCC agreed that it had a role to play in the operational decisions about the opening of the Millennium Dome.

**Reasons for Cancelling the Opening Celebrations at the Dome**

9. A decision to close the Dome could be the result of difficulties at the site itself that could threaten the health and safety of staff and visitors; due to operational problems (eg staff shortages); because of wider public safety problems within the capital's infrastructure, (eg because of the risk of flooding or transport failure); or because a decision taken in respect of public mood (eg the death of a VIP, or emerging disasters elsewhere in the world as countries move into 2000).

Cancellation on the grounds of on site staff and visitor safety at the Dome

10. A decision to cancel the opening celebrations on the grounds of visitor and staff safety at the site will be the ultimate responsibility of the shareholder, as advised by CEO NMEC and Gold control at New Scotland Yard. NMEC already has clear lines of communication with the emergency services.
11. If a decision to cancel the Dome is taken once guests are assembled on site, NMEC will be responsible for carrying out its evacuation procedures, liaising with local emergency services and Gold control.
12. If sufficient NMEC staff are unable to get to work (eg because of transport problems or severe weather), there is a possibility that NMEC would be unable to open a safe site. The risk of this problem will have passed by around mid-afternoon on 31 December, by when most staff should be on site. The shareholder, as advised by CEO NMEC, will take the final decision whether to cancel the Dome celebrations because of staff shortages or other operational/technical reasons.

Cancellation for reasons other than on site staff and visitor safety

13. A decision to cancel (or to change the programme) may be made for reasons of political sensitivity, to reflect the national mood, or for wider London-based public safety reasons.
14. The Dome is the centrepiece of the nation's Millennium celebrations. The sudden death of a VIP, or developing national or international catastrophes, may mean that a decision is taken to curtail or close the Dome. CCC will be receiving information on what is happening around the UK from a variety of sources, including the Information Management Centre at Cabinet Office. The centre will receive information about the UK infrastructure and international developments from the relevant Government Departments.
15. The decision to cancel the Dome celebrations, or curtail the activities taking

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place, for wider public safety or for other overriding reasons will be made by CCC, following consultation with the shareholder, CEO NMEC, Number 10 and DCMS.

16. CCC, consulting with the shareholder and CEO NMEC, may decide that the celebrations at the Dome can go ahead in a modified form. For example, if there were a major disaster elsewhere in the world on 31 December a decision could be made to go ahead to open the Dome without VIPs in attendance. The content of the opening ceremony could be amended to include suitably sombre elements, but there is only limited scope to change the tone of the whole event, and this becomes increasingly difficult the closer one is to the start of the ceremony.
17. Changes to the content of the opening ceremony would be NMEC's responsibility to execute, consulting the shareholder.
18. Any decision to cancel or change the programme of the Dome celebrations on 31 December will be communicated to the Royal Household and Lambeth Palace by DCMS officials.

### January 1

19. The need to close the Dome on the first day for non-public safety reasons is less likely because it will not act as the focus for the Millennium celebrations in the way the night of 31 December will. Nevertheless the procedures outlined above will apply in the same way to 1 January.

### Handling of Cancellation and Media Interest

20. The handling of cancellation depends on the time of the decision. Guests will be travelling throughout the day and are not likely to be contactable. Any announcement, therefore, to cancel would need to be made by public broadcast.
21. Arrivals at the Dome will be staggered. From about 7pm, guests will be arriving at assembly points and shortly after will be transferred to the Dome. If a decision is taken to cancel before the early evening, it will be possible to disperse guests before they reach the site. However, once guests are on site, the presumption is that it will be inadvisable to cancel the event, other than for public safety reasons.
22. Staff will be arriving throughout the day, with the majority in place by mid-afternoon. Most will be contactable at home.
23. In the event of a cancellation or programme change, it will be important that clear messages are sent to the media and the public. NMEC's Press Office, in close liaison with Cabinet Office's Media Co-ordination Unit (MCU) and DCMS, will be responsible for media handling in the event of cancellation or a change in the programme. Where a decision to alter or cancel the event, the shareholder will determine the line to be taken, consulting closely with CEO NMEC, DCMS, MCU and CCC.

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**Recommendation**

24. The Committee is invited:

- I to note the arrangements in place to support a decision to cancel the Dome celebrations and the opening ceremony on 31 December; and
- II to agree to convene a meeting of a reduced CCC - Home Secretary, Lord Falconer, Nick Raynsford and Janet Anderson- to consider its responses to a cancellation of the Dome Opening Ceremony for non-operational/health and safety reasons: eg the death of a major VIP; a major disaster elsewhere in the UK; catastrophic event in a friendly foreign power; military action by the UK abroad.

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