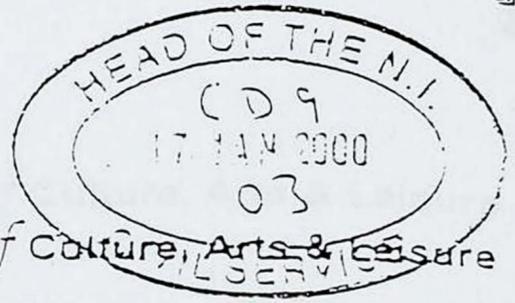


from the Minister:



Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure

The Rt Hon David Trimble MP MLA and
 Mr Seamus Mallon MP MLA
 Parliament Buildings
 STORMONT

14th January 2000

Dear David and Seamus,

PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT

You wrote to Ministers on 22 December 1999 asking for priority issues which might be included in a Programme of Government.

I have attached a list of issues which I consider, at this point in time, are worthy of inclusion. I should, however, make clear the context in which I am submitting these. I have just begun a Departmental strategic planning exercise to consider the strategic direction, aims and objectives of the Department over the next two to three years. Given that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is new and that it offers an opportunity to take a fresh look at the services which are delivered in this area, I am reluctant to simply assume that rolling forward existing plans is the right approach. My clear preference is that we should take a strategic look at what we are doing, formulate proposals, consult widely among the many bodies with which the Department interacts and with the public before coming to the firm conclusions about what we should be delivering and how we should be delivering it. Inevitably such exercises cannot be undertaken as quickly as one would like and in an ideal world it would be preferable to have more of the process completed before submitting proposals which will contribute to a Programme of Government. Nevertheless, I am well aware of the need to start putting the programme together within a reasonable timescale.

Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure

The contribution which I have attached is, therefore, very much a first shot. It is not intended to be exhaustive; I might wish to add to it or change it as the Programme of Government process proceeds. The proposals have not yet been costed. It is worth noting that many of these proposals are, by their nature, cross-cutting.

I am, as requested, copying this letter to Mark Durkan and John Semple.

Yours sincerely

Michael McGimpsey

MICHAEL MCGIMPSEY MLA
Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure

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PRIORITY ISSUES:

A. Social and Cultural

- To create, through the library system, and in conjunction with the Lifelong Learning agenda, a Community Information Network.
- The development of an integrated policy to promote the educational contribution of aspects of the Department's responsibilities.
- The creation of a UK Sports Institute Network Centre under the auspices of the Sports Council to promote sporting excellence.
- Investigation of the feasibility and affordability of a national sports stadium.
- Delivering the commitment in the Agreement to promote respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity.

B. Enhancing Northern Ireland's Image

- Completion of the review of second tier museum, heritage and visitor amenities, and creation and implementation of a strategy to promote their effective integration.
- Ensuring the effective launch and operation of the Odyssey Project as a major visitor attraction.
- To lead (as appropriate) and participate in examination of potential developments which can support the development of Northern Ireland as a destination, including the examination of e-commerce.
- To promote events and festivals which can increase visitor numbers and widen the availability of cultural, sporting and recreational provision.
- Creating a museums, libraries and archives co-ordinating body so as to increase accessibility to the full range of the cultural heritage.
- Developing our Inland Waterways and Fisheries to contribute to the attractiveness of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination and to enhance their enjoyment by the people of Northern Ireland.
- To attract at least 2 major world class events to Northern Ireland each year.

C. Developing Creative Industries

- To create a Creative Industries Taskforce to spearhead action on this front.
- To map the contribution made by the creative industries and to produce a strategy for the development of the sector.