

FMD
Action
Plan

From: Joan Cassells

cc Mr Haire
Mrs Flanagan
Mrs Godfrey
Mrs Birch
Ms Croot
Ms Dullaghan

Date: 16 may 2001

To: Mr Lavery
Mr May

FMD ACTION PLAN FOR TACKLING WIDER ECONOMIC ISSUES

1. Will Haire's paper to you yesterday about the handling of the announcement of the FMD hardship relief scheme referred to a written procedure paper to the Executive providing the wider context for the announcement (paragraph 4).
2. Attached is the draft written procedure paper seeking Executive approval for the action plan and text for an information leaflet to accompany the announcement of the FMD hardship scheme. Annex A is still the draft version as we are awaiting clearance from a couple of Departments, but expect to have it finalised by lunchtime today.
3. I would be grateful if you could arrange to have this paper cleared urgently. It needs to issue today to obtain Executive clearance by noon on Friday so that the information pamphlet can be printed over the weekend and made available as soon as the hardship scheme is announced.
4. Please contact Ann Birch directly when the paper has been cleared for issue.

[signed]

Joan Cassells

Ext 28166

DRAFT 11/05/01

**ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS
WIDER ECONOMIC IMPACT OF
FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE**

The outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Northern Ireland has been a real blow not just to the farming industry but to the wider economy. While we have seen some early signs of recovery, the impact locally of FMD has nevertheless been significant.

As an Executive, our first priority has had to be to focus on eradicating the disease here and to regain Foot & Mouth free status as quickly as possible. This has required us to take a range of measures to prevent the spread of the disease from other parts of the UK and from infected zones within Northern Ireland.

Eradication remains a key priority but, with stringent measures now in place to control FMD, our focus is shifting to ensuring that key sectors are able to get back in business quickly. We are also assessing and responding to the hardship caused by FMD.

Economic Issues Task Force

May 2001

Our long-term strategic goal is not simply to survive FMD and recover our export markets. We must use the crisis as an opportunity to identify a long term, sustainable vision for the future of our agri-food industry and other key sectors such as tourism.

This action plan sets out a wide range of measures which the Executive is already taking or plans to take to support farmers, businesses and communities who have been affected by FMD. It focuses on five main priorities:

- Support for Farmers
- Support for Business
- Support for Communities
- Promoting Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Northern Ireland has been a real blow not just to the farming industry but to the region as a whole. While we have seen comparatively fewer cases than in Great Britain, the impact locally of FMD has nevertheless been significant.

As an Executive, our first priority has had to be to focus on eradicating the disease here and to regain Foot & Mouth-free status as quickly as possible. This has required us to take a range of measures to prevent the spread of the disease from other parts of the UK and from infected zones within Northern Ireland.

Eradication remains a key priority but, with stringent measures now in place to control FMD, our focus is shifting to ensuring that key sectors are able to get back in business quickly. We are also assessing and responding to the hardship caused by FMD.

Our long-term strategic goal is not simply to survive FMD and recover existing markets. We must use the crisis as an opportunity to identify a long term, sustainable vision for the future of our agri-food industry and other key sectors such as tourism.

This action plan sets out a wide range of measures which the Executive is already taking or plans to take to support farmers, businesses and communities who have been affected by FMD. It focuses on five main priorities:

- Support for Farmers
- Support for Business
- Support for Communities
- Promoting Northern Ireland

- Economic intelligence

A FOCUS ON OUR PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

1. Support for Farmers

Compensation for those farmers whose livestock have had to be culled is already well documented as an established response to FMD. However, we recognise that there may be other action we can take to support those in farming who have been affected, directly or indirectly, as a result of FMD and to ensure the long-term sustainability of farm businesses and their role in the Northern Ireland economy.

2. Support for business

It is clear that FMD has had a significant impact on sectors other than farming. Under this priority we set out a range of measures to support businesses affected by FMD and encourage their long-term sustainability.

3. Support for communities

We recognise that FMD will have an impact not just on businesses but on individuals and communities, particularly in rural areas. Under this priority we set out the action we will take to respond to the needs of communities affected by FMD.

4. Promoting Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's clean, green image is one of its greatest assets when it comes to selling the region as a tourism destination and to marketing our food products. FMD has clearly damaged both sectors and we want to ensure not only that we recover our existing markets but that we can capture new ones and further develop our image as premier tourism destination and food exporter. Under this priority we set out the action we will take to do this. We also highlight the importance of planning: we need to be ready to recover our various marketing as soon as FMD-free status is regained.

A FOCUS ON OUR PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

1. **Support for Farmers**

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5. Economic Intelligence

The action plan begins with an acknowledgement that the economic impact of FMD is being felt not only by those in farming but by many other sectors, particularly those associated with food processing and tourism. There are of course difficulties in assessing accurately and in quantifiable terms the full extent of this impact – until now, much of the information available to us on the economic impact has been anecdotal. However, if we are to respond in a meaningful and effective way, both immediately and in the longer term, it is vital that we have in place arrangements to capture and interpret information about the full economic impact of FMD.

Eradication of FMD

As recognised above, eradication of FMD remains our first priority. The steps that need to be taken to eradicate the disease are complex. They also change in response to what is a complex and fluid situation. They are not therefore covered in this action plan. However details of the latest situation, associated advice and information on measures being taken by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development are available on the DARD website:

www.dardni.gov [DN: DARD – is this correct?]

Timescales and Monitoring Arrangements

It is envisaged that most of the support measures outlined in this action plan will remain in place for as long as FMD cases continue to come to light and for some months afterwards. Those exercises aimed at taking a longer-term, strategic role will clearly take place over a much longer period.

We will be keeping the range of measures under review to ensure that they remain appropriate and proportionate to the level of impact of FMD on the economy here.

We will be putting in place arrangements to monitor progress on each of the actions set out in this plan. We will also be evaluating the effectiveness of the plan as a whole as our response to tackling the economic impact of FMD.

Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
(DARD)

Rationale: Secure long term sustainability of farming and its role in the NI economy.

Actions	Lead body
Provision of direct compensation for culled livestock. A special action has been set up by DARD to ensure that the 2012/13 budget allows for the provision of such compensation.	DARD
Advice on farm business sustainability will continue to be provided, mainly through Agricultural Development Service, Family Farm Development, a local enterprise support under Farming and Rural Development, and under Farming, supported by the provision of advice to local levels (DARD through NI).	DARD
Advice on animal health and welfare issues will continue to be regularly available at Regional Veterinary Offices and will be more widely available through the animal operation procedures advice.	DARD
Promotion and extension of Rural Stress Helpline to provide counselling and support for farmers and others affected by FMD.	DHSSPS
If evidence of gaps in support services emerges, this will be considered with DARD. The Young Farmers' Group and other groups may also identify issues of this nature.	DARD
Along with other departments, DARD will ensure that farmers and other customers are aware of the wider support (rates deferral, income tax deferral, VAT repayments, Small Firms Loan Guaranteed Scheme etc) that is available.	DARD/DETI

Priority: 1. **Support for farmers**

Lead Dept/Agency: Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (DARD)

Rationale: Secure long term sustainability of farming and its role in the NI economy.

Actions	Lead body
Provision of direct compensation for culled livestock. A special section has been set up in DARD to deal with FMD-related claims. It has a target of 5 days in which to pay legitimate claims.	DARD
Advice on farm business sustainability will continue to be provided, mainly through Agri-Food Development Service. Family Farm Development, a local organisation funded under Peace I and likely to receive support under Peace II, specialises in the provision of advice to small family firms throughout NI.	DARD
Advice on animal health and welfare issues will continue to be regularly available at Divisional Veterinary Offices and will be more easily accessible once the current operational pressures reduce.	DARD
Promotion and extension of Rural Stress Helpline to provide counselling and support for farmers and others affected by FMD.	DHSSPS
If evidence of gaps in support services emerges, this will be considered within DARD. The Vision Group sub-group may also identify issues of this nature.	DARD
Along with other departments, DARD will ensure that farmers and other customers are aware of the wider support (rates deferment, income tax deferment, VAT repayments, Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme etc) that is available	DARD/DETI

Priority: 2. Support for Businesses

Lead Dept/Agency: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)

Rationale: Provide support services to ensure the long-term sustainability of businesses affected by FMD.

Actions	Lead body
Liaison with Inland Revenue and Customs & Excise to seek their support to give publicity locally to current measures on deferral of tax/National Insurance Contributions and VAT payments and on the speeding up of VAT repayments to farmers.	OFMDFM
The Rating Collection Agency has offered a facility to defer payment of rates for a period of three months by those suffering hardship as a result of FMD	DFP
Provision of grant aid (in lieu of rates) to businesses where turnover/profit has been affected by FMD (DN: description of Victor's scheme to go here)	DFP
Liaison with banks place to encourage support for businesses facing financial difficulties as a result of FMD and further marketing of the extended Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme.	DETI
Development and distribution of a leaflet setting out the range of services available to businesses affected by FMD and offering contact points, telephone numbers and website	OFMDFM
Organisation of a series of customized events for business advisers in DETI agencies and in local enterprise networks in on a regional basis to ensure that businesses affected by FMD have access to advice and information on the support available and that there is consistency in the response given businesses	DETI

Priority: 2. **Support for Business**

Lead Dept/Agency: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)

Rationale: Provide support services to ensure the long-term sustainability of businesses affected by FMD.

Actions	Lead body
Liaison with Inland Revenue and Customs & Excise to seek their support to give publicity locally to current measures on deferment of tax/National Insurance Contributions and VAT payments and on the speeding up of VAT repayments to farmers.	OFMDFM
The Rates Collection Agency has offered a facility to defer payment of rates for a period of three months by those suffering hardship as a result of FMD	DFP
Provision of grant aid (in lieu of rates) to businesses where turnover/profit has been affected by FMD [DN: description of Victor's scheme to go here]	DFP
Liaison with banks place to encourage support for businesses facing financial difficulties as a result of FMD and further marketing of the extended Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme.	DETI
Development and distribution of a leaflet setting out the range of services available to businesses affected by FMD and offering contact points, telephone numbers and website	OFMDFM
Organisation of a series of customised events for business advisers in DETI agencies and in local enterprise networks in on a regional basis to ensure that businesses affected by FMD have access to advice and information on the support available and that there is consistency in the response given businesses	DETI

Priority: 3. **Support for communities**

Lead Dept/Agency: Department for Social Development (DSD) and
Department for Agriculture & Rural Development (DARD)

Rationale: Provision of support and advice to encourage long-term sustainability of communities affected by FMD.

Actions	Lead body
Continued promotion of Rural Stress helpline and other services to provide support to those whose physical, mental or emotional health has been affected by FMD.	DHSSPS
Provision of advice and support on benefit eligibility for those individuals and families whose incomes have been effected by FMD.	DSD
Provision of advice and support on employment opportunities for those whose employment status has changed as a result of FMD or who are seeking retraining or upskilling.	DHFETE
Introduction of arrangements to match fund voluntary donations made specifically to alleviate problems caused by FMD in line with GB arrangements	DFP/DARD
Ensuring that ongoing work on community regeneration and capacity building responds to and reflects the needs of communities affected by FMD.	DSD and DARD
DARD will continue, through its Rural Development Programme, to work closely with rural communities throughout Northern Ireland.	
Departments will examine, in conjunction with local councils, the scope for local plans to reflect and respond to the FMD situation	All depts as appropriate
Targeting support towards communities in those tourist areas most affected by FMD will take place through initiatives such as Natural Resource Rural Tourism (which will specifically target a number of	DARD & DETI

areas including the Sperrins, South Armagh and the Glens of Antrim)

DARD and DETI will also consider a possible relaunch of Rural Cottage Holidays in June to stimulate interest in rural tourism.

Rationale: Ensure long-term and sustainable recovery of region's tourism sector following tourism disruption and subsequent high-quality food production.

Actions	Lead body
Implementing a Tourism Recovery Plan targeting both domestic and overseas markets	DETI
Developing a marketing strategy for the region's food and tourism products, including a focus on the Sperrins, South Armagh and the Glens of Antrim	OFMD/DETI
Provision of advice and support for the food sector following the cancellation of the Farm Holiday	DETI UCAL
Developing longer term plans for an "All-Weather" tourism marketing programme once PMD situation has ended	DETI
Ensuring that smaller tourism businesses are aware of the range of initiatives available to support those most affected (rates, income tax relief etc)	DETI
Provision of support for sub-regional marketing through RTO's	DETI
Establishment of export marketing drives to promote Northern Ireland food products	DETI

Priority: 4. **Promoting Northern Ireland**

Lead Dept/Agency: Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment

Rationale: Ensure long-term and sustainable recovery of region's image as premier tourism destination and producer of high quality food products.

Actions	Lead body
Implementing a Tourism Recovery Plan targeting both domestic and overseas markets.	DETI
Continued promotion locally of key messages about Northern Ireland being open for business and encouraging people to visit local attractions	OFMDFM/ DETI
Provision of advice and support for the North West Fest following the cancellation of the North West 200	DETI DCAL
Developing longer term plans for an "All Clear" tourism marketing programme once FMD situation has ended.	DETI
Ensuring that smaller tourism businesses are aware of the range of initiatives available to support those most affected (rates, income tax deferment etc)	DETI
Provision of support for sub-regional marketing through RTO's	DETI
Enhancement of export marketing drives to promote Northern Ireland food products	DETI

Priority: 5. **Economic Intelligence**

Lead Department/Agency: Economic Policy Unit, Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)

Rationale: Assess economic impact of FMD on the local economy to provide effective basis for action in the immediate and longer term.

Actions	Lead body
Departments will continue to gather information/intelligence on the economic impact of FMD from among their own contacts/client companies and from business organisations, consultants, research bodies and others. Regular updates will be provided to the Executive.	OFMDFM (also DETI DARD DCAL DHFETE DSD}
Consideration will be given to the need to commission additional research or survey work to fill gaps in information.	OFMDFM
Regular updates of intelligence and overview of latest impact on NI economy will be provided on a regular basis to the Executive.	OFMDFM