

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Tony McCusker cc Mr Loughran

Date: 23 June 2000

To: PS/Mrs Rodgers
PS/Mr McGimpsey
PS/Mr McGuinness

FLAGS

1. Following our second meeting on this topic, I agreed to provide a short report to issue to the Executive Committee. I attach a draft report together with the minutes of proceedings which, with your agreement, the Executive Secretariat would put before the Executive Committee at its meeting on 29 June.
2. I also indicated that Mr Loughran would welcome a further opportunity to discuss the outcome with members of the sub-committee before finalising the paper for the Executive Committee. If Ministers are content I shall try and set that up some time next week.
3. In the meantime, however, I would be grateful for any comments about either the minutes of proceedings or the short report to the Executive Committee as now proposed.

Tony McCusker

TONY McCUSKER
Ext 28102

CONFIDENTIAL

C:\TEAMLINK\STAGING\~PRN0003.DOC

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT

From: Executive Secretariat

Date: June 2000

To: Executive Committee

FLAGS

1. At the Executive Committee meeting on 8 June it was agreed that a small sub-committee should be established to consider the question of flags and report back at a future meeting of the Committee.
Subsequently the Minister of Education, Minister of Culture Arts and Leisure and the Minister of Agriculture were nominated to the sub-committee.
2. The sub-committee met twice and the minutes of each meeting are attached as an annex.
3. The first meeting established the range of possible options in relation to the flying of flags on government buildings and these were then considered at the second meeting.
4. There was no consensus around any of the four options. There was further discussion about whether further meetings should be held to

CONFIDENTIAL

C:\TEAMLINK\STAGING~PRN0003.DOC

CONFIDENTIAL

consider the possibility of agreement, particularly around option 4, but again there was no consensus on this proposal.

5. In the circumstances it was agreed that the Executive Committee should be advised of the position.
6. The Executive Committee is invited to note the proceedings of the sub-committee established to consider the flying of flags on public buildings, and that there was no consensus on a particular approach to the issue.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

CONFIDENTIAL

C:\TEAMLINK\STAGING\~PRN0003.DOC

CONFIDENTIAL

NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FLAGS

MINUTES OF MEETING ON 22 JUNE 2000

Those present: **Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development**
 Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Minister of Education

In attendance: **Mr McCusker**
 Mrs Cassells

1. The sub-committee agreed the minutes of the meeting on 13 June.
2. It was noted that there is an expectation that the sub-committee will report back to the Executive Committee at its next meeting, scheduled for 29 June.
3. The sub-committee considered each of the four options outlined in the minutes of the last meeting, but failed to reach agreement on any.
4. It was suggested that there might be merit in a further meeting of the sub-committee, prior to the Executive Committee meeting, to finalise the report to the Executive. Mr Loughran has indicated that he would like to be involved in such a meeting. While there was no consensus that such a meeting would be worthwhile, Ministers indicated that they would be receptive to an invitation to the meet again.
5. It was agreed that Mr McCusker would circulate a draft report to the Executive for Ministers to consider, and he would arrange a further meeting to discuss the report prior to the Executive meeting if that would be considered helpful.

CONFIDENTIAL

Minutes
of
meeting
22/6/00

NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FLAGS

MINUTES OF MEETING ON 13 JUNE 2000

Those present: Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
 Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Minister of Education

In Attendance: Mr McCusker
 Mrs Flanagan

1. The Sub-Committee agreed that on the question of flag flying at Government buildings in Northern Ireland there were three potential outcomes.
 - an agreed outcome by the Executive Committee
 - failure by the Executive Committee to reach agreement on the matter leading to regulation by the Secretary of State
 - agreement in the Executive Committee on arrangements to 'narrow the gap' between differing views
2. The Sub-Committee agreed that it would be preferable for the Executive Committee to reach some form of agreement on the matter. The range of possible options was identified as follows:-
 - (i) maintain the status quo ante, with Ministers agreeing to continue to fly the Union flag on their buildings on the 20 days designated by the Secretary of State;
 - (ii) maintain the status quo as at present, with Ministers determining individually whether or not the flag should fly on each of the 20 days designated by the Secretary of State;

(iii) Ministers agree that on designated flag flying days both the Union flag and Tricolour should be flown at headquarters buildings;

(iv) Ministers agree on a package of arrangements for flag flying which might include:

- an agreed list of designated days;
- agreement on designated buildings for flag flying;
- only one flag for all buildings with more than one Department; and
- arrangements for flag flying at plenary meetings of the North/South Ministerial Council, both in the North and the South.

Variations on options (i) and (ii) around designated days and designated buildings could also be incorporated.

3. The Sub-Committee agreed to consider these options and any others which emerge and discuss them at a further meeting at the beginning of the following week.
4. The Sub-Committee agreed that it would report to the next Executive Committee meeting on 15 June that options were being reviewed and that a report would be brought to a subsequent meeting of the Committee.