



Internal Memo

From: R B Spence
Permanent Secretary

Tel: (5)41175/6

Date: 22 July 1998

To: PS/Secretary of State (B&L)



Your
Our

S&S spoke
John McKerrill PA
Give inter again
to R Spence. Thanks
for the loan of
these papers.
J Brown 30/7

DEVELOPMENT OF STORMONT

Summary

Issue: Involving the Assembly in plans to reimage Stormont.

Timing: Routine.

Recommendation: The Secretary of State should write to Lord Alderdice.

1. This minute follows up the Secretary of State's recent conversation with Trevor Pearson about continuing progress on reimagining Stormont and ensuring that this work continues after devolution.
2. The Assembly will itself wish to exercise control over future developments in Parliament Buildings and will have a close interest in developments in the Stormont Parklands. The Minister in the NI Administration with responsibility for DOE will have the lead role in what happens in the Parklands.
3. There is a risk that the progress which has been made in the last year could falter in the coming months unless agreement can be reached on what projects and activities can continue to be developed. Helpfully, Lord Alderdice has

I've talked to Preen
about this —



already agreed informally that some events in Parliament Buildings can proceed.

4. The Secretary of State is, therefore, recommended to write to Lord Alderdice with copies to Mr Trimble and Mr Mallon, outlining what has already been initiated and seeking discussion on how best to keep up the momentum.

R B SPENCE

PS/Mr Murphy (DFP,B&L)
PS/Lord Dubs (DOE,DANI&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Mr Semple
Mr Carvill
Mr Dillon
Mr McCusker
Mrs D Brown
Mr Kelly
Mrs L Brown
Mr Pearson

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE:

FILE NUMBER:

S&S blue M

TO:	The Lord Alderdice Presiding Officer Northern Ireland Assembly Parliament Buildings Stormont BELFAST	ENCLOSURES:	COPIES TO BE SENT TO: hcc: PS/Mr Murphy (DFP,B&L) PS/Lord Dubs (DOE,DANI&L) PS/PUS (B&L) PS/Mr Semple Mr Carvill Mr Dillon Mr McCusker Mrs D Brown Mr Kelly Mrs L Brown Mr Pearson
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THE DEVELOPMENT OF STORMONT

You will be aware that I have been working over the past year to develop a more relaxed, attractive, and inclusive image for both Parliament Buildings and the Parklands at Stormont. The refurbishment of Parliament Buildings, including restoration of the fire-damaged former Commons Chamber, was a substantial investment in an outstanding public asset in a spectacular setting. Parliament Buildings and the Stormont Parklands are an important part of Northern Ireland's heritage which, I hope, can become increasingly more accessible and acceptable to all sections of the community.

My thinking for re-imaging Parliament Buildings includes permanent history and art exhibitions which would attract the general public, (particularly school children) and tourists. Some preliminary work has been undertaken. However, in view of the likely occupation of the whole building by the Assembly and its support services, further

work on these exhibitions now depends upon the views of Members and I would like your advice on how best to take forward consideration of these matters.

Arrangements had been made for Bus Tours to include Parliament Buildings in their itineraries but, in view of the difficulties of access due to occupation by the Assembly, these have now been suspended. I hope again that, in agreement with Members, acceptable ways can be found of enabling visitors (including tourists) to view Parliament Buildings. School tours of Parliament Buildings were a vitally important part of my plans for Stormont and I am sure that the cross-community educational value of such tours is something which you would also wish to support.

Special events in Parliament Buildings have been very successful over the past year in opening up the premises to members of the public. These have included charitable events, a fashion show and various receptions held by reputable organisations. I hope that these events can continue to be encouraged, though I recognise that, in the main, they may have to be restricted largely to weekends because of Assembly sittings. I would also hope that the Main Hall can be used for the display of the work of charities, which would mirror similar displays at Westminster.

Plans are well advanced for further development of the Parklands, including a children's play area, resource centre, jogging and nature trails, car parking and a coffee shop. The aim is to widen the appeal of the area to the whole community without spoiling the special character of the grounds. The views of residents in the neighbourhood and other users of the grounds are being sought in order to achieve as harmonious an outcome as possible. Subject to these discussions, I intend over the next few months to press ahead with these projects. After devolution, these matters would fall to the Minister with responsibility for the Department of the Environment.

One particular issue on which discussions with residents will take place is the possibility of further major outdoor events at Stormont. The success of the Elton John concert this year brought international acclaim to Northern Ireland. There is interest in a number of other major outdoor events and I have asked officials to pursue these possibilities further, including the prospects for another prestigious outdoor concert in June 1999 for 15,000 plus people and the idea of a fireworks display at Stormont to mark the opening of the 1998 Belfast Festival at Queens.

Work on these issues is being carried forward by a small team of officials led by the DOE(NI). Clearly, with the Assembly taking over Parliament Buildings, its members will inherit the plans for the building and will wish to decide for themselves if and how these are to be progressed. Whatever happens, there will be a need to ensure that developments in Parliament Buildings under the control of the Assembly and the Parklands under the control of DOE are well co-ordinated, both in their execution and their promotion. It would be sensible to examine now how best to achieve this result.

I would be very happy to have an early discussion about these matters. A copy of this letter goes to the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister as they will also have a keen interest.

~~Yours sincerely~~

MARJORIE MOWLAM

Memo

From: Felix Dillon
Deputy Secretary

Tel: 01232 (5)41179

Date: 14 October 1998

To: PS/Secretary of State (B&L) (L - Annex F only)

cc: See copy distribution below

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STORMONT ESTATE

Issue: The Secretary of State has asked for:

- work to be stopped/deferred on a number of projects until consultation has taken place with the Assembly:
- sight of plans for the proposed car park and toilet block; and
- further details on the art exhibition equipment and history exhibition.

Timescale: Immediate.

Recommendations: The Secretary of State is asked to note the summary of recommendations and issue the attached letter to Lord Alderdice.

Introduction

1. This submission reports the current state of play on the projects to develop the Stormont estate, following your minute of 28 September, and provides the additional detail requested by the Secretary of State.
2. On a general point, I am a little concerned from your note and our recent telephone conversation that the Secretary of State may feel that the proposals submitted go beyond the few projects to which she feels committed. There is a need for some clarification here. All the projects currently being pursued flow from the September 1997 feasibility study which was the basis for the Ministerial agreement to allocate a budget of £1m this year for development of the Estate. We are, of course, willing to put together whatever package of projects the Secretary of State deems appropriate and leave others for future consideration by the Assembly. However, this may risk the balance of the budget not used this year and there are some interdependencies

between projects which need to be taken into account. I believe all this could best be clarified in a discussion with the Secretary of State.

Work Stopped

3. The contractor has been instructed to cease, forthwith, work at the Massey Avenue Gate Lodge which was being prepared to replace the security hut.
4. In order to provide for an orderly wind down of the project, roof repairs and cleaning will be completed and exposed areas reinstated. Any materials ordered by the contractor and unused on cessation will have to be paid for and placed in safe storage. Unless the original project goes ahead as planned some nugatory expenditure may be anticipated.
5. Work for the replacement of Prince of Wales security hut has ceased and the contractor has been instructed to make safe the site. Subject to a direction on the project the site may eventually have to be reinstated in grass. Unused materials, which have been ordered by the contractors, will be paid for and removed to store for safe keeping.
6. No work has yet started on the erection of new directional signs.
7. With the exception of a track to the east of Prince of Wales Avenue, which was to serve both as walk/trail and an access road for vehicles involved in routine maintenance, further work on walks and trails, other than maintenance, has ceased.

Schemes Deferred

8. The Prince of Wales Gate Lodge is a listed building which has suffered in recent years from the ingress of water and damp. The Department's architects advise that the essential repairs costing £53K are irreducible if the Department is to properly discharge its responsibilities in preservation of this heritage asset.
9. The Department has examined a number of options for the use of the former Ministry of Defence Bunker as an educational resource centre with costs ranging from £120K to £420K. The building, which has no windows or adequate toilets or catering facilities, lacks appeal. In order to create a resource centre which schools, teachers and pupils would find interesting and attractive some work is required. £120K is judged to be the least sum necessary to create the

facilities and ambience, although the budget could be limited to any figure provided minimum health and safety requirements are met.

10. I attach (Annex A) a copy of the architects' report on the options. Option 3 is costed at £100K and a further £20K has been set aside for external works to improve the buildings visual appearance. £100k was also the estimate included in the September 1997 feasibility study.
11. Creation of an educational resource centre will bring with it substantial annual running costs, principally in the form of salaries for guides and leaders, which would need to be recognised in deciding to proceed.

Copy Plans

12. As requested I attach (Annex B) a copy of the plans for the proposed car park which is to be sited adjacent to the Bunker and will serve the children's play area. The cost, £85K to £90K, includes the upgrade of the access road to the play area, which will initially serve as the contractors entrance, for use by pedestrians and emergency vehicles. Additional car parking is a condition of the planning approval for the play area and the proposed car park at the Bunker meets that requirement.
13. It has been a recent recommendation of ROSPA, which is vetting plans for the children's play area, that a toilet block be provided in close proximity to the area. A block similar to those erected elsewhere on the Estate would cost £90K. A copy of the plan is attached (Annex C) as requested.

Art and History Exhibition

14. In order to facilitate the display of works of art it was planned to purchase display boards for the Central Hall and install brackets above the marble on the first floor gallery above the Central Hall. No detailed specification or costings have been developed.
15. The purpose of the history exhibition was to provide a neutral and balanced view of the history of Northern Ireland and to put on public display some of the more interesting artefacts. A copy of the draft brief for a consultant historian and photographs of some of the artefacts around which the exhibition would be constructed are at Annexes D and E respectively. Informal consultation with Roy Empey and Seamus Mallon in February of this year elicited a hostile

response. Clearly consultation with the Assembly will be required to determine if this project can proceed. Its planned location (around the Senate area) may need to be reconsidered should the Senate Chamber be proposed as the meeting place for the Civic Forum.

Concert

16. Efforts to find a personal contact with Pavarotti have proved fruitless. Moreover the advice from Jim Aiken, conveyed in Trevor Pearson's submission of 18 September, about the fee requirements of any international artist make a second concert problematic without a significant increase in the size of the concert site. A feasibility study would be necessary to establish if this is possible. The Secretary of State will wish to consider how she presents any intention to hold a further concert and, in particular, any reference to Pavarotti.

Fireworks Display

17. The Secretary of State will wish to note that the proposed fireworks display in connection with the Belfast Festival at Queen's has been cancelled by the organisers because of cost. It is not yet clear if it will proceed at another venue.

Consultation

18. The Secretary of State has asked that the Assembly be consulted about a number of the projects. No doubt the Assembly will itself wish to exercise control over developments in Parliament Building and will have a close interest in all developments in the Stormont Parklands, particularly the children's play area, car park, educational resource centre and coffee shop/visitors centre, which are significant departures from its former nature and character.
19. The Secretary of State is therefore recommended to write to the Assembly through Lord Alderdice outlining what is planned on the basis of a revise of the draft letter previously submitted (Annex F). Unless the Secretary of State feels otherwise, no work will proceed on any of the projects until the outcome is known. It is not clear if the Secretary of State wishes to consult on the costs as well as the principle of the projects and no details have been included in the draft. These can be included if the Secretary of State wishes although, since the costs are within the budget held by DOE, she may prefer to await any point on costs raised by the Assembly.

Summary

20. (a) As directed work has ceased pending consultation with the Assembly. However the Secretary of State should note that the Department will incur some nugatory expenditure should this work not ultimately proceed, this would raise accountability of issues.
- (b) It is recommended that work to the Prince of Wales Gate Lodge should proceed in order to preserve this listed building. This is part of the Department's ongoing responsibility for the management and maintenance of the Estate.
- (c) Copy plans for the resource centre are attached. Operation of the centre will be expensive and there is limited scope to reduce the capital cost.
- (d) Copy plans for car park attached. The Secretary of State is asked to note that it is a requirement of Planning Service that the children's play area should not open until additional car parking is provided in the Estate.
- (e) The Secretary of State is asked to note the current position in relation to the art and history exhibitions and the prospects for a further concert.
- (f) The Secretary of State is recommended to issue the attached letter to Lord Alderdice which covers all these issues as well as including a reference to a sculptural exhibition. Whatever the case officials would find a discussion with the Secretary of State useful.

Felix Dillon

FELIX DILLON

Tel: (5)41179

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