



Cc. PS/SOFS (R&L)
PS/Lord Dubs (OOE&L)
Mr Spence
Mr Dillon
~~Mr Pearson~~

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BARNET

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Jim Aiken Esq
Aiken Promotions Ltd
Marlborough House
348 Lisburn Road
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BT9 6GH

Margaret
MA blague presentation
& Simply Red

1 March 1999

Dear Jim,

I refer to our recent exchange of correspondence and am now writing to let you know that it looks as if the Simply Red concert will go ahead at Stormont in May. The Assembly Commission have consulted local residents who have agreed to the event subject to there being only one concert held at Stormont each year and that the arrangements for the concert are at a level similar to the Elton John event.

Once again, I am sorry that you were not given an opportunity to bid for promoting the event. The offer to perform a concert came from Simply Red themselves and it was they who chose the promoter. I had no say in the matter.

I hope, nevertheless that you will take some satisfaction that the arrangements for last year's concert were of such a standard that they have become the benchmark for future events.

I look forward to seeing you on 10 March.

M

MARJORIE MOWLAM

SOS/AITKEN/BB

From: Barney McGuigan
Office Accommodation Branch

Tel: 540812

Date: March 1999

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

PS/PUS
PS/Mr Semple
PS/Secretary
Mr Kelly(B&L)
Mr Dillon (DOE)
Mrs Brown (DOE)
Ms Dodd
Mr Lappin
Mr Warner

ELTON JOHN PROFITS - PRESENTATION OF CHEQUE

Issue: The hand over of a £5356 cheque by Jim Aiken, being the profits from the 1998 Elton John Concert, and his expression of concern at not being involved with the 1999 concert.

Timescale : Immediate

Recommendation: That the Secretary of State uses the attached briefing to inform her discussions with Mr Aiken.

Background

1. The Secretary of State has agreed to receive a cheque from Jim Aiken at 9.00am on Wednesday 10 March 99. Mr Aiken may take this opportunity to discuss the Simply Red concert, which is being promoted by his competitor Eamon McCann.
2. In November 1998 the Secretary of State was approached by Mick Hucknall with the offer to stage a fee free concert within the Estate. Although no indication of acceptance or commitment was given, there is a tacit assumption that this offer should be pursued to a conclusion before other options should be considered.
3. The Shadow Assembly Commission has indicated that it is content that a concert is held in the Estate this year, and outline proposals from its promoter Eamon McCann are awaited. Lord Alderdice has agreed to attend for the hand over of the cheque.
4. The issues that are likely to be raised by Jim Aiken are appended in the attached question and answer brief.
5. I will attend the Secretary of State for the hand over.

Issues that Jim Aiken might raise with the SoS during their Cheque handover meeting on 10 March 1999.

Q. SoS may be asked to explain what she proposes to do with the profits from the Elton John concert.

A. It was agreed some time ago that any profits from the concert would be used to further enhance the Stormont Parklands e.g. upgrade the nature and jogging trails. However, should the proposal to site sculpture by Josefinia De Vasconcellos be approved by the Shadow Assembly Commission it might be appropriate to use these funds to finance the Landscaping and site works required for the sculpture.

Q. How was Simply Red/McCanns chosen for this years concert.

A. The suggestion came quite unexpectedly and without canvassing from Mick Hucknall. This was the first offer received and as such the Secretary of State was obliged to react to it. The choice of which promoter the artist uses in Northern Ireland is entirely up to him, and is something that we cannot influence. The Secretary of State had done nothing to encourage the idea of a second concert.

Q. Aikens may express grave disappointment that they were not given the opportunity to bid for this years concert, and feel that McCanns may benefit from the groundbreaking work undertaken by them last year.

A. Aikens played a pivotal role in the success of the Elton John Concert, and undoubtedly there was a certain amount of risk associated with opening up this new venue. Jim's personal contribution was invaluable in making the event a success and we are extremely grateful for this. We recognise that for any promoter and artist the Estate is an attractive venue; however in this case the first offer came from Mick Hucknall

Q. Is Simply Red sufficiently high quality for the prestigious Stormont venue. Will they attract a manageable audience?

A. Simply Red is an internationally respected band, with the status to attract the kind of audience that would be appropriate for the prestigious Stormont venue.

Q. Why not Pavarotti?

A. An offer had been received from Mick Hucknall of a fee free concert before the suggestion of a Pavarotti concert was made. We are obliged to follow the Hucknall offer through to its conclusion before considering other options.

Q. Are the residents content with Simply Red.

A. The Shadow Assembly Commission met with local elected representatives and Residents recently and the consensus was that the concert could go ahead providing it is as well managed as last year. Full consultations with the local residents group on issues that will affect the local community such as the traffic plan, tidying the site after the event etc will take place as the arrangements proceed.

Q. What are the financial arrangements.

A. Whilst McCanns financial arrangements are confidential, Mr Aiken can be assured that the Simply Red concert would have to stand on its own feet financially, with no prospect of any public funding. [At this stage of the discussions we are not in a position to discuss the question of profits although we understand that Simply Red may be willing to run the concert in aid of the Prince's Trust]

Q. Will the arrangements/requirements imposed on this promoter be the same as for the Elton John concert.

A. Yes. Full consultation with and implementation of plans from Fire Service, Ambulance Service, R.U.C., Health and Safety and entertainment licensing will be undertaken.

Q. Aikens may try to extract a promise to promote the next concert.

A. Future control of the Estate will fall to the Assembly, the Executive and the Assembly Commission, and any decisions on future events will fall to them. It is unlikely that they would support more than one major concert a year.

6. We will be addressing separately with Ministers whether the Department should be taking a reactive or proactive approach to future concerts.

B J McGuigan