

05 JUN 2002

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05/06/02 10:44

To: <Derek.Wheeler@ofmdfmni.gov.uk>,
<mary.bunting@ofmdfmni.gov.uk>
cc:
Subject: The Ardoyne initiative

Greetings - I do hope that you had a decent break from the vicissitudes of North Belfast!!!

I have attached a very downbeat personal analysis of the Ardoyne situation - please read with a cup of coffee to hand. I'm happy to discuss if that would be helpful.

Best wishes

Norman

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personal assessment of the Ardoyne initiative – 5 June 2002

1. My assessment of the bottom line on the initiative is that it is now completely dead, and cannot be resurrected in any orderly way.
2. There is a good deal of anger in both communities at the deafening silence from the political end of OFMDFM. It is close to a fiasco that nearly two weeks have now elapsed since the suggested day for responses to the proposal, and no relational / information call has been made to CRUA to keep them on board. I will not comment on relationships with other groups, but my understanding is that it is little different. Every day of prevarication simply does more damage to OFMDFM credibility.
3. Ministers will presumably be aware that they have now gone well past their own suggested timetable.
4. CRUA has been seriously destabilised by this process, and cannot deliver anything more. The very future of CRUA itself is now a real question.
5. All that the two communities have to show for 6 months of OFMDFM consultation are some humps on the road, and an even greater lack of communication between them.
6. I see no prospect of any Orange / Green dialogue in the foreseeable future on any matter.
7. Orange Ardoyne has little or no interest in some minor / cosmetic works around the scheme. My advice would be not to try that route.
8. Crucially, and ominously, there is a wide perception in Orange Ardoyne that politics has failed.
9. Equally sadly, there is now little obvious confidence on either side that there is either the political will or even competence within OFMDFM to handle the Dunlop / CAP report properly.
10. In my view Ministers should acknowledge that the initiative has failed, and restrain themselves from
 - passing blame to others
 - dragging the initiative out any longer
 - trying to suggest that the initiative ever was 'tantalisingly close' to reaching agreement. That statement was never accurate.
11. I can find no one in either community, or statutory agency, the media or an MLA who has any supportive view of how the initiative was handled.

12. We are now approaching the anniversary of the outbreak of the protest, the marching season is under way, and early September will see the world's press back to look at the situation a year on. Very little progress can be reported.
13. My advice is that the initiative should have as soft a landing as possible, failure acknowledged, and prayers offered for a not too bumpy summer. The mood music is not conducive to any further 'initiatives'.
14. [However, if there was a decision to build the wall – then we are into a different set of problems.....
15. I do have some thoughts on how to restart things, but those are dependent on a clear determination from ministers, and would not currently involve OFMDFM, given the credibility problems that the department now has.
16. I am content for you to use this note in any (reasonable) way you think appropriate.

Norman Hamilton
5 June 2002

