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02/07/02 08:50 PM

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Subject: Letter from Nigel Dodds-Sub/111/2001

Ministers Dodds' note was received yesterday. I understand that the First Minister wishes to deal with this urgently on his return from the US tomorrow.

A note proposing lines which might be taken in a reply to Minister Dodds is attached. If Ministers are content with these proposed lines, I will draft a reply tomorrow.

I have just seen another note received late today from Minister Robinson. At a first glance, this appears to reflect the understanding between this Department and DRD on how this measure would be taken forward. I will wish to check the detail with Derek Wheeler in the morning and will provide advice to Ministers as soon as possible tomorrow.



7.02 Note to Ministers - note from Nigel Dodds

FROM: MARY BUNTING
7 FEBRUARY 2002

TO: BILL SMITH
WESLEY SHANNON

see copy distribution below

**Notes from Nigel Dodds MP MLA, Minister for Social Development
concerning the proposed re-alignment of Ardoyne Road.**

1. Minister Dodds has written expressing concern at recent developments regarding the proposed re-alignment of the Ardoyne Road. In addition the Minister refers to the progress which has been made on other measures including security measures for private sector housing at the interface and the Community Action Project. The Minister refers to his meeting this week with Reverend Dunlop and the Project team at which he encouraged them to focus on the community infra structure element of their terms of reference.
2. He states that
 - the road re-alignment plan was an integral part of the package agreed last year between the two communities and that continuing discussions between them were only intended to agree the final design, not to re-open the issue or to impose preconditions;
 - he considers it imperative that all parties involved in the implementation of this package understand that there is no link formal or otherwise between the establishment of a community forum and proposals to realign the Ardoyne Road.
3. The Minister refers to his understanding that DRD stands ready to implement the scheme, but requires clearance to proceed from OFMDFM. He seeks an early indication of progress in obtaining a satisfactory resolution to this matter.
4. Ministers will be aware of developments on the road re-alignment plan during this week including the planned meeting of Ardoyne community interests to discuss this tomorrow (see my note of earlier this evening concerning this).
5. It is likely that Minister Dodds will also be aware of this development very soon – Derek Wheeler will be speaking to Mark Coulter this evening.

Recommendation

6. Ministers may wish to respond quickly to Minister Dodds sharing his concerns about this matter, reassuring him that they are fully committed to progressing this measure and stressing that every effort is being made to do so in accordance with the commitments in Ministers' letter to interested parties of 23 November.
7. Ministers may wish to indicate that
 - the original proposal for environmental change at this interface came from this Department. In late October/early November, it was proposed as an 'environmental challenge' by officials at meetings with North Belfast MLAs and Glenbryn/Ardoyne community interests. The proposal was put forward as a positive measure that might engage both communities in dialogue.
 - In their letter to interested parties of 23 November, Ministers gave a commitment to commission the preparation of a detailed design for the regeneration and improvement of the Alliance Avenue intersection including possible road realignment at the intersection. The letter states that the design will be conducted urgently and in full consultation with local communities.
 - The target date for completion of the design was mid January. A first design was completed by that date and since then, consultation has been taking place. The Glenbryn community in particular was very closely engaged in this last week and a design had now been prepared reflecting that community's wishes.
 - Last week there was evidence that the Ardoyne community wished to link the road development with the development of a Community Forum. This had been negatively received by the Glenbryn community who, in a public statement on Monday last, indicated that lack of progress on the road re-alignment plan was undermining their commitment to dialogue.
 - On Monday, officials met with North Belfast MLAs and since then with Ardoyne community interests in an effort to try to break the logjam and that latest indications are that the Ardoyne community now wishes to engage in the consultation process. They have sought an urgent meeting and that following this a meeting will take place with Ardoyne community interests. A meeting with Glenbryn residents may then be sought to discuss the plan.
8. Ministers may also wish to
 - stress that they appreciate the commitment of other Ministers in progressing this very difficult and sensitive matter and welcome in particular the support and prompt action that has been taken on this

and other measures in the 'package' by the Department for Social Development

- indicate that they also appreciate that the Department for Regional Development stands ready to move on this matter once a final design has been forwarded to the Department from OFMDFM and that while they wish that this matter might have been cleared by now, Ministers are committed to a process of engagement with both communities and this will require some more time.

8. Finally, Ministers may wish to encourage Minister Dodds to maintain his efforts to encourage a calm environment and community dialogue to seek a resolution of this very difficult situation and to heal the divisions that exist between these two communities.

(sgd) Mary Bunting

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