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15 FEB 2002

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THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

*David Trimble, First Minister and
Mark Durkan, Deputy First Minister*

*Parliament Buildings,
Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX*

Mr Nigel Dodds MP MLA
Minister for Social Development
Churchill House
Victoria Square
BELFAST

15 February 2002

Dear *Nigel*

NORTH BELFAST

Thank you for your note of 6 February concerning the situation in Ardoyne and in particular the proposed realignment of the Ardoyne Road.

At the outset, we wish to emphasise that in accordance with the commitments given in our letter to interested parties of 23 November, we are fully committed to ensuring that all of the measures included in the package are progressed as speedily as possible. Substantial progress has already been made on a range of measures in the package, and we welcome the timely and very helpful efforts of your officials and those in other Departments in taking these forward.

With regard to the proposed road realignment, you will be aware that the original idea for this came from this Department. In our letter to interested parties of 23 November we set out the proposal for changes at the Alliance Avenue/ Ardoyne Road intersection. We also undertook to consult on the design and set the target date for completion of the project, provided there were no delays, as the end of January. We also undertook to commission the preparation of a detailed design for the regeneration and improvement of the Alliance Avenue intersection

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including possible road realignment at the intersection. The letter stated that the design would 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 ready by mid-January and since then consultation has been taking place. The Glenbryn community in particular was very closely engaged on this and a design has now been prepared reflecting that community's wishes.

You will recall that on 9 January there was rioting outside Holy Cross School, subsequent damage to cars at the Convent of Mercy Secondary School, the murder of Daniel McColgan and threats to teachers and postal workers. These events led to a setback in attitudes in both communities. Subsequent threats to members of the Concerned Residents of Upper Ardoyne (CRUA) added a further unhelpful dimension.

During the middle of January, the lower Ardoyne community were unenthusiastic about the proposal, particularly in the absence of any move to bring about the Community Forum, and said that agreement was required. This led to a negative reaction from the Glenbryn community who, in a public statement on 4 February, indicated that lack of progress on the road realignment plan was undermining their commitment to dialogue.

Last Monday, our officials met with North Belfast MLAs and since then they have been in touch with Ardoyne community interests in an effort to try to break the logjam. We are aware that the lower Ardoyne community has indicated that they wish to meet with the planning consultant and the landscape architect who have been working with Derek Wheeler on this project and that following this a meeting will take place with Ardoyne community interests. They have also indicated that following this consultation within their own community, they may wish to meet with representatives of Glenbryn residents to discuss the proposal. The first meeting is planned for this week, but since a number of key community representatives are on holiday it is likely that the meeting will be towards the end of the week.

In your note to us, you indicate that the Department for Regional Development stands ready to implement the Scheme, but requires clearance to proceed from this Department. This reflects the understanding between our two Departments on this matter. * [While we would have preferred that the final design would have been cleared by now] and that we would have been in a position to forward this to your Department so that the work could begin, [the completion of the design has required careful and sensitive handling.] In line with our letter of 23 November, we are committed to a process of consultation and agreement with both communities and

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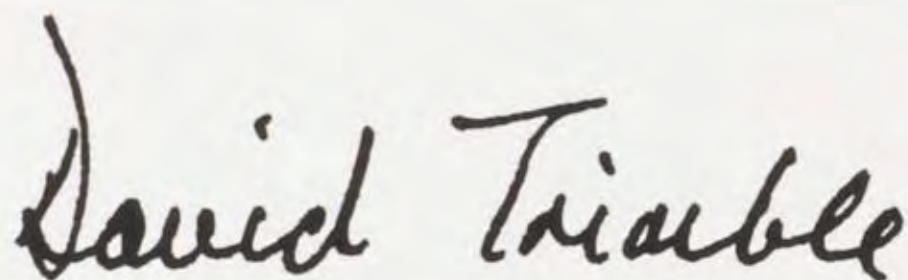
to a policy of 'no surprises'. Thus on this specific measure, some more time will be needed.

We recognise that community safety is a key issue for both the Glenbryn community and the Ardoyne community. We understand that work has begun on the installation of a temporary CCTV camera at the junction of Alliance Avenue and Ardoyne Road and that this should be in operation by the end of the week. This will provide additional security to both communities and a 'watchful eye' on the route to Holy Cross Primary School.

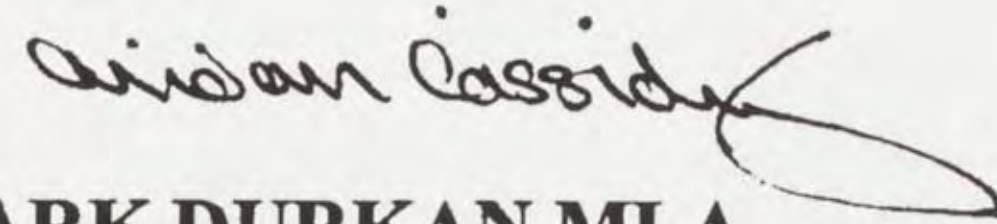
We are aware that you have personally devoted considerable time and effort to resolving the situation in this area. We welcome this, and hope that you will continue to help us in our efforts to encourage a calm environment. This is essential to obtaining a resolution to this very difficult situation and to healing the divisions that exist between these two communities.

Finally, we would like to assure you that we share your sense of urgency. [We understand that the community representatives have acknowledged that there is no linkage between the establishment of a community forum and the proposed road realignment.] We are also clear that if agreement cannot be reached, despite our efforts, neither community will be permitted to veto developments which we consider essential to the successful implementation of the agreed package.]

Yours sincerely



RT HON DAVID TRIMBLE MP MLA



re/MARK DURKAN MLA

(Approved by the Minister
and Signed in his absence)

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