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 11/06/2007
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No shrine to 1981 hunger strikers vows minister

A Stormont minister today moved to allay unionist concerns that a plan to retain one of the H-Blocks on the Maze Prison site could offend the victims of paramilitary violence.

Culture Minister Edwin Poots (DUP, Lagan Valley) sought to reassure colleagues in the Assembly as he revealed over £870,000 had been spent by his officials at the end of the financial year on preparing proposals for a 35,000-seater multi-sports stadium on the site.

Sammy Wilson (DUP, East Antrim) warned the proposal to retain a part of the old prison could be used to create a shrine for 10 republicans who died during the 1981 hunger strike.

"I thank the minister for the assurance that no money has been spent by his department on the promotion of what many people see as a shrine to those who committed suicide in the Maze Prison during the 1980s," the East Antrim MP said.

"Would he also give an assurance that in the future no such money would be made available to that project, nor indeed would his department be lobbying the Office of First and Deputy First Minister for monies for such a project which I believe would be obnoxious to most people in Northern Ireland?"

Mr Poots told Mr Wilson his department`s responsibility was for developing the stadium proposal and not anything else.

"Any other issues will fall within the remit of the Office of First and Deputy First Minister," he confirmed.

"I have every confidence that the office will not wish to establish a shrine at the Maze site, that they will not wish to establish something that will be offensive to victims or that it would be the desire to do something which would rub the noses of those who suffered during the Troubles in any particular proposal."

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The minister confirmed his officials was currently working up a full business case with the Strategic Investment Board for the new stadium.

This would not be ready until this autumn.

He assured Roy Beggs (UUP, East Antrim) the information would be available to MLAs and members of the public once the departments had time to analyse the plan.

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good on Mr Poots , hopefully the stadium at the Maze is built soon

On 11 Jun at 23:28 - [JONNY from Salou](#) said:

Stick the maze, the IFA should listen to the fans and put the national stadium in our capital and the birth place of George Best. No N.I supporter would want to watch the green and white army with a memorial to the hunger strikers right beside the stadium.

On 12 Jun at 12:59 - [tony cassidy from Connecticut USA](#) said:

The past is gone, I'am exited about the future, Iam coming home after 21 years

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DIRECTOR: Rolf De Heer.

STARRING: Crusoe Kurddal, Richard Birrinbirrin, Jamie Gulpillil, Peter Djigirr.

DETAILS: Australia / 90mins (PG)

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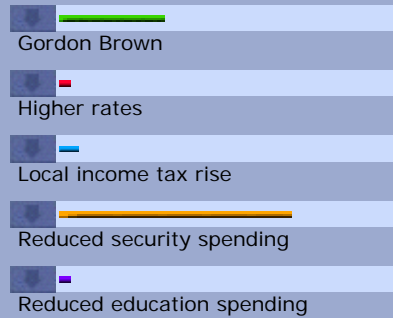
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