



cc PS/Lady Mayhew
Mr Loughran
Mr Gibson
Mr Maccabe
Mr Thompson
Mrs Heron
Mrs McCloy
MC

4 August 1995

TO: PS/Baroness Denton

FROM: W D A Haire
Equality Division

MEETINGS TO DISCUSS THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

1. This submission provides briefing and details of arrangements for the series of five meetings with women which the Minister is holding across Northern Ireland. A list of the dates and venues is at Annex A.
2. The Minister has indicated that the format of the meeting should be fairly informal. She will open the meetings with a short speech of welcome and explain the purpose of the meetings. Draft Speaking Notes are at Annex B for the Minister's consideration. We will want to consider if the format need be refined as the meetings progress.

Publicity

3. Over 400 invitations have been issued to women's groups and voluntary and community groups within travelling distance of each venue. Invitations have also been displayed in T&EA local offices. In addition, invitations have also gone to the churches as well as to political parties and the headquarters organisations of women's groups. Local newspapers in each of the areas will carry advance publicity of the meetings using a Press Release already cleared by the Minister. Local journalists and photographers have been invited to come along.



4. As the meetings progress it might well be worth considering producing a Press Release on the meetings, the main points arising, and, if possible, preliminary thoughts on the way forward. I have also spoken to the Press Office in respect of the BBC's interest in doing a piece on the meetings and they will pursue this proposal.

Briefing

5. Bull point briefing on the main issues likely to come up is attached as follows:

Political Issues	Annex C
Ensuring Women's Views are Considered	Annex D
Childcare	Annex E
Employment and Training	Annex F
Rural Development	Annex G
Peace Package	Annex H
Beijing	Annex I
Domestic Violence	Annex J

6. I will provide further briefing prior to the Londonderry meeting on a DOE initiative currently underway in Londonderry aimed at producing a vision for the future. This will be topical at the time of the meeting as the partnership formed to take this forward has received a lot of publicity and will be entering a public consultative phase in the early autumn. Other additional briefing will be provided as necessary.



7. I will be happy to provide any further information which the Minister may require. Either Pauline McCloy or I will accompany the Minister at each meeting. Pauline will be at the first meeting in Ballymena. Representatives from T&EA, PAB, DANI and, perhaps, DOE will also attend the meetings and Mr Gibson also hopes to be present at one of the events.

W D A Haire

W D A HAIRE

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ANNEX A

The dates and venues for the meetings are as follows:-

10 August	The Adair Arms, Ballymena
14 August	The Abbey Lodge, Downpatrick
15 August	The Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen
12 September	The Everglades Hotel, Londonderry
14 September	The Europa Hotel, Belfast

Tea and coffee will be served to guests on arrival at 7.00pm. The meetings will start at approximately 7.15pm.

**DRAFT SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE MINISTER'S OPENING ADDRESS AT THE MEETINGS
FOR WOMEN TO DISCUSS THE ROLE OF WOMEN**

Welcome.

Thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules to come along to this meeting tonight.

In my invitation to you I said that I hope these meetings will allow me to hear the views and concerns which the women of Northern Ireland have about their role in the future of Northern Ireland.

This meeting is therefore your opportunity to express your concerns on the issues which you want Government to hear about and to consider. It is also a chance for me to hear what is happening in your area. I therefore do not intend to do all the talking tonight but instead to listen to what you have to say.

I do, however, think it might be useful if at the outset of our discussion I share with you what I hope these meetings can achieve.

Because of the ceasefires, Northern Ireland is at a crossroads and there is currently a lot of discussion going on about the future of the Province. I want to ensure that women have the opportunity to voice their concerns. For example, I would like to hear your views on a number of issues which impact on women, such as:

- How can we give you a greater say in our society?
- What are the barriers that prevent you from playing a bigger part in the economic and political life of Northern Ireland.

- What should be done to tackle these?
- What are the particular issues of concern to you and your friends?
What more do you think needs to be done and who should do it?

These are the very broad sorts of issues which I would like you to consider. What I hope you can do here tonight is to give me your thoughts on what you think needs to be done on these issues or any others which you think also need to be considered. Many issues will involve Government. And I am not going to duck what are properly Government's responsibilities. But Government can only be effective in certain areas. Often it is the voluntary and the private sectors which are better placed to act, with or without Government involvement. I want to hear your views on what the voluntary sector and businesses can do as well.

Finally, I can't guarantee that all of your views will be acted on but I can promise they will be seriously considered. I will also ensure that any issues raised which fall outside of my direct responsibility of Agriculture and the Economy will be fed back to Departments concerned.

I will try to answer any questions you might have tonight, or promise to get an answer to you, but primarily tonight is about you expressing your opinions. It is your opportunity to tell me what you want. I am here to listen.

POLITICAL TALKS: BULL POINTS

Both the British and Irish Governments recognise that Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom will not change without the consent of the majority of the people who live there. The constitutional guarantee is unaffected. Joint authority is not proposed.

HMG remains fully committed to seeking, through a process of political dialogue, a widely acceptable and comprehensive political accommodation encompassing all the relevant relationships: those within Northern Ireland, those within the island of Ireland and those between the British and Irish Governments.

The "Frameworks for the Future" document represents a fair and balanced package of proposals. It is not a blueprint to be imposed but is intended to stimulate discussion and negotiation in the Talks process.

Since the Framework documents were published the Secretary of State has met the Ulster Unionist Party and the Alliance Party. These were the first in a series of separate bilateral meetings with the main parties. The purpose is to discuss the issues on which agreement must be found if a settlement is to be achieved to which all sections of the community could subscribe.

Hope that through these initial bilateral discussions, we can carry forward into another stage the process of developing understanding and consolidating areas of common ground. All ideas, from whichever quarter, will be welcome; no points of view can or should be excluded.

There is no twin-track approach. This is a single-track towards inclusive talks; Sinn Fein are free to join inclusive dialogue if they successfully convince others that they are wholly committed to democratic methods.

On 10 May and 24 May, Michael Ancram joined a delegation from Sinn Fein in exploratory dialogue discussions. Hope that, depending on progress in these discussions, Sinn Fein can become involved in the round of bilateral meetings with the other constitutional parties.

HMG is happy to discuss the Frameworks with the Loyalists in exploratory dialogue.

HMG want all parties in Northern Ireland to be full participants in a democratic, political and exclusively peaceful process.

No deadlines set for the bilateral phase or a subsequent move to inclusive talks. Important to keep up the momentum of political dialogue.

Final outcome of 3-stranded Talks process will be put to the electorate in Northern Ireland for approval in a referendum.

FRAMEWORKS FOR THE FUTURE: BULL POINTS

- The Framework Documents contain proposals which both challenge and offer opportunities to both traditions.
- HMG believes that the proposals are a sound basis for negotiations with the Northern Ireland parties. They build on the three-stranded approach agreed by the parties involved in the 1991/92 talks and take account of subsequent discussion with the parties.
- If the parties and the people decide only to accept some of the proposals or reject them in their entirety they are free to do so. The purpose of the documents is to stimulate discussion and carry the talks with the parties forward.
- HMG is not working towards a hidden goal. There is no hidden agenda, nor do the proposals amount to a back door route to a united Ireland.

AMNESTY/EARLY RELEASE OF PARAMILITARY PRISONERS

Lines to Take

- There will be no amnesty for those convicted of terrorist offences.
- HMG has made it clear that the possibility of movement on prison issues, including release issues, in parallel with progress in other areas, is not excluded - any such parallel progress, however, would be governed by an objective assessment of the paramilitary threat.

RESPONSE OF SECURITY FORCES TO CESSATION OF VIOLENCE

DE-ESCALATORY MEASURES

Lines to Take

- The Government has always made clear that it would respond positively to a cessation of violence. The de-escalatory measures taken since the ceasefires are evidence of that.
- The impact of these steps on the population in Northern Ireland has been significant and has been widely welcomed. In large parts of the Province the RUC can, for the first time in many years, operate effectively and respond quickly to public need without direct Army support. Military patrolling levels in support of the RUC have now dropped by 75% compared with pre-ceasefire levels.
- The long-term objective is to move to normal policing. But, until then, it will be for the Chief Constable and GOC to advise on operational requirements and the resources they require.
- This response is both positive and measured, and based firmly on security advice. We hope to continue to make progress, but must not relax our guard prematurely. Terrorist capabilities remain and training and targeting continue; hence the importance of decommissioning illegally-held arms.

DECOMMISSIONING OF ARMS

Lines to Take

- It is essential to begin the process of decommissioning arms both IRA and loyalist. Substantial progress on this must be made before Sinn Fein can be admitted to substantive talks for an overall settlement. Without that progress, the reality is that certain other parties would not sit down with them.
- HMG wishes to see constructive discussion on this and other issues. This would include procedures for verification, the need for independent supervision of the destruction of arms, the different methods of decommissioning and certain practical and legal considerations. Cannot, of course, comment on the detail of the discussions we have had, but we will continue to explore these issues with Sinn Fein and PUP/DUP.

We are pressing to achieve three things:

- A willingness in principle to disarm progressively.
- A common practical understanding of the modalities, that is to say, what decommissioning would actually entail.
- In order to test the practical arrangements and to demonstrate good faith, the actual decommissioning of some arms as a tangible confidence building measure and to signal the start of a process.

Disarmament Commission?

- The Government is prepared to be flexible about the mechanics of decommissioning; the priority now is to get the process underway.

POLICING

Lines to Take

- The RUC and Armed Forces have played a courageous and vital role in maintaining the rule of law and the democratic process. The sacrifice of members of the security forces and their families over the past twenty five years will not be forgotten. An enormous debt is owed to the police and armed forces in bringing about the ceasefires.
- Every society needs an effective police service. Policing prevents crime, protects life and property, maintains order, and brings to justice before the courts those who break the law. There is no substitute for the police in maintaining public order and fighting crime.
- HMG is committed to the provision of an impartial, independent and effective police service, responsive and accountable to all the people of Northern Ireland.
- Continuing peace will require the police service to adapt to new circumstances. The Secretary of State, the Chief Constable, and the Chairman of the Police Authority have all welcomed this opportunity, and the RUC are already responding positively and professionally to changing times.
- Confidence in the RUC is increasing: trend shown by public opinion surveys and in increased calls to the RUC since the ceasefires. Not to be forgotten that 77% of the population (including 69% of the minority community) think the police do a good job.
- We are ready to consider any constructive ideas or proposals which might have widespread support and help to improve policing in Northern Ireland.

- But terrorists on both sides are still organised and still have their weapons; victims are still being targeted and vicious punishment beatings are still common. Full police capabilities are still needed and our guard cannot be dropped.

DISSATISFACTION WITH THE RUC

- Accept that there is some dissatisfaction with the RUC in nationalist and to a lesser extent, loyalist communities.
- There is a sense of grievance over certain security force actions. Mistakes have been made, on all sides; tragedies have resulted. But we must now look forward.
- The RUC itself, and their colleagues in the Armed Forces has suffered grievously: almost 300 Officers have been killed, and many hundreds more injured: sacrifices by all those Officers and their loved ones - for the sake of society as a whole - must be fully acknowledged.