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/Draft

Dr A Callaghan

Miss Eames

- cc Mr Cowan
- Mr Hamilton
- Mr McKenzie
- Mr Radcliffe
- Mr Galway
- Mr Hayes
- Mr McConnell
- Mr Pearson
- Mr Darby
- Miss Doake
- Mrs Brown

Williams to hold pending Dr Hamilton's. For information - I passed this to Dr Hamilton today

copy

20/2

for consideration. I pointed out that neither you nor Mr A Cornick had seen the response

Secretary

LOCAL GOVERNMENT - STIRRINGS IN THE EAST

JW 16/2

1. You asked me to co-ordinate a Departmental response to Peter Smyth's minute of 27 January 1995 about grievance being expressed by Councillor Robert Coulter, Mayor of Ballymena Borough Council, that Councils in the North-East of the Province are not receiving fair treatment from central government when compared to other Council areas.
2. Similar grievances were expressed by Councillor Coulter during a visit by the Secretary of State to Ballymena early last year. The Secretary of State subsequently wrote to the Mayor to highlight the significant levels of government expenditure being allocated to the Ballymena Borough Council area. A copy of the letter is attached.
3. We have sought inputs from all the main players in the Department (copies attached) and despite prompting those with little to contribute, I think you may find the situation report a little less "upbeat" than may be expected.
4. I attach a suggested draft response which you might consider asking PS/Mr Moss (DOE) to send to PS/Secretary of State.

N HAMILTON

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cc PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B & L)
PS/Mr Moss (DHSS & L)
PS/Baronness Denton (DED, DANI & L)
PS/PUS (B & L)
PS/Mr Fell
Mr Spence, DOE
Mr Watkins
Mr Hamilton, DOE
Mr Maxwell
Mr McCabe

From: PS/Mr Moss (DOE)

February 1995

PS/Secretary of State

LOCAL GOVERNMENT - STIRRINGS IN THE EAST

1. The Secretary of State asked for comments on Peter Smyth's minute of 27 January 1995 about grievance being expressed by Councillor Robert Coulter, Mayor of Ballymena Borough Council, that Councils in the North-East of the Province are not receiving fair treatment from central government when compared to other Council areas.
2. The Department of Environment is, of course, fully committed to treating Councils in the North-East of the Province as fairly as Councils in other areas. To highlight this commitment I have outlined below some of those areas which are generally of most concern to Councillors, and which, I feel, confirms my Department's unbiased approach.

Roads

3. (i) Councillor Coulter's comments about a shift in priority from the A26 to the A6 would appear to emanate from the fact that, of the 2 main routes between Belfast and Londonderry, the M2/A6 rather than

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the M2/A26 has been included in the European Union Trans European Road Network. This decision however does not affect the priority which the Department will give to schemes to upgrade the A26, the significance of which has been fully acknowledged.

At present the Department's long-term proposals for the A26 concentrate on dualling large sections of the route. Work to dual the section between Antrim and Ballymena is being carried out in 4 stages. The first stage has already been completed and the second stage is scheduled to commence in the 1996/97 financial year at a cost of £2.7m. Stages 3 and 4, costing £2.9m and £2.5m respectively, are highly placed in the 6-15 year programme.

Schemes for the section of the A26 between Ballymena and Coleraine are also proposed. The dualling of a 1.2km section on the Coleraine/Ballymoney Road, close to the entrance to the new hospital at Coleraine has just been added to the 5 year major works programme, whilst schemes to dual sections at the Frosses, Drumnaglea and the Ballymoney By-Pass at a total overall cost of over £10m are included in the 6-15 year programme.

This programme of works compares favourably with that proposed for the A6, where the only schemes planned in the current 5 year programme is a single carriageway by-pass of Toome (scheduled to commence in 1999/2000) and a single carriageway by-pass of Dungiven which is included in the 6-15 year programme. Any schemes to upgrade

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rural section of the A6 will concentrate on improving the existing single carriageway and there are no dualling schemes proposed.

The Department's long-term proposals to dual the remaining single carriageway section of the A8 Belfast-Larne Road, the first stage of which is programmed to start in 1997/98 at an estimated cost of £2.5m, will also benefit Councils in the area.

(ii) Water Executive

The Water Executive has been carrying out a heavy programme of capital works over recent years, including the completion of a new main sewage treatment works in Ballymena at a cost of over £10m. Further expenditure of more than £30m is planned for the Capital Works Programme in the Ballymena, Antrim, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Larne and Moyle Council areas, over the next 3 years. This allocation of funds closely follows the distribution of population in Northern Ireland and the source of water supplies.

(iii) Transport

Approval has recently been given for Northern Ireland Railways to proceed with the upgrading of the line from Antrim to Bleach Green, Whiteabbey, at a cost of around £8m. The upgrading of the line will lead to time savings for those passengers boarding at Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballymena and Antrim, for Belfast or Londonderry. The

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upgrading will also enable the development of a rail market along the M2 corridor. In addition, the opening of the Cross Harbour Rail Link in November 1994 allows passengers to travel between Larne and Central Station, Belfast (and beyond) without having to change their mode of transport.

Ulsterbus have plans to improve their facilities at a number of locations in the area. These include the construction of a new bus station, with associated library and retail outlet, in Antrim, and a new bus station in Coleraine, with both schemes hopefully commencing within the next few months. Proposals for improving the present facilities in Ballymena are also under consideration.

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