

~~Mr. Cross...~~

For file...

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- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
- PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L)
- PS/Sir David Fell
- Mr Carvill
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Bell
- Mr Holmes 9.1
- Mr Canavan
- Mrs Jendoubi
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Jordan
- Mr Jardine
- Mr Corbett
- Mr Morrow
- Mr Higgins

1. cc Mr Adams  
 2. Mr Corbett ✓  
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**NOTE FOR THE RECORD**

1. Michael Ancram met Dr Paisley, accompanied by a delegation from the Ulster-Scots Language Society, at Rathgael House on 6 December 1995. Those present were:

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|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Michael Ancram MP | Dr I Paisley MP MEP | Mr J McIntyre      |
| Mr Canavan        | Dr I Adamson        | Mr C Gillespie     |
| Mrs Jendoubi      | Councillor N Dodds  | Mrs I McCullough   |
| Mr Jack           | Dr P Robinson       | Rev Dr John Nelson |
|                   | Mr J Erskine        |                    |

2. Dr Paisley asked Dr Adamson, Chairman of the Ulster-Scots Language Society (USLS), to make initial remarks in favour of greater Government support for Ulster-Scots. Dr Adamson referred to a submission for funding made by the Ulster-Scots (Ullans) Academy in February 1994, to which he felt that there had as yet been no satisfactory response from Government. While both the USLS and the Academy had been grateful for modest support, for publication of "Ullans" magazine and of a book on Ulster-Scots, "The Hamely Tongue", they considered it essential for more substantial funding to be made available on an ongoing basis if the present marginalisation of the language was not to be exacerbated. Dr Adamson went on to say that the USLS had a somewhat different philosophy from Irish language activists, who aspired to

supplant English by promoting everyday use of Irish. The USLS simply wished to see Ulster-Scots more fully recognised as a legitimate part of Northern Ireland's diverse cultural heritage. What was sought was essentially equality of funding, equity of treatment and parity of esteem for a language in which there was a strong literary tradition, especially in Counties Antrim and Down. Dr Adamson feared that, without Government support, the language was likely to die.

3. Dr Paisley said that Ulster-Scots was a language which had been "beaten out of" generations of school children. He believed that the people who spoke it should be entitled to preserve their language. He considered the sum of money which the USLS and Ullans Academy were seeking in order to do so to be relatively modest.

4. Dr Nelson said that Ulster-Scots had been spoken in Ballycarry, Co Antrim, for over 350 years and was still alive among his congregation there - but only just. He said that the lifestyle and way of thinking of the people were expressed through their language, which they greatly valued, as evidenced by the level of demand for any publications which did relate to it.

Mr Erskine said that an enhanced capacity to produce publications could only help to broaden interest in Ulster-Scots and in the diversity of cultures in Northern Ireland. Dr Robinson said that existing attitudes towards Ulster-Scots as "just a dialect" or "bad English" could be damaging to the self-respect of speakers, who were largely unaware of the rich literary tradition in the language. Mr Gillespie, a native of Co Donegal, said that the survival of the Ulster-Scots tradition there was evidence of its validity, despite more general official hostility to it in ROI. On the other hand, recent support from Donegal County Council for events in which the Ulster-Scots tradition featured strongly further highlighted the lack of official recognition which it received in Northern Ireland.

5. Mrs McCullough argued that difficulties faced by people whose speech was influenced by Ulster-Scots in making themselves understood when in England added to the case for greater recognition of the language.

6. The Minister said that the Government acknowledged the importance of the Ulster-Scots tradition in Northern Ireland. As a lowland Scot himself, he was familiar with some of the language. He said that, in fact, there was at present greater scope for use of Ulster-Scots in public examinations in Northern Ireland than there was to use Scots in exams in Scotland.

Mrs Jendoubi explained that this potential came through an option within the Environment and Society area of study at key stage 4, where 40% of the marks in the modular GCSE Cultural Heritage course were set aside for an individual case study, which could quite legitimately be based mainly on Ulster-Scots.

Mr McIntyre pointed out that, while that might be the case, it would be difficult for pupils to take up this option without a much wider range of curriculum materials on which such study could be based. The Minister said that his point was simply that the curriculum provided scope for the study of Ulster-Scots, which could be explored by those who wished to use it.

7. The Minister said that he believed that Ulster-Scots should be treated in the same way in Northern Ireland as was Scots in Scotland. In order to ensure that this was the case, he had asked officials to explore existing provision in Scotland. Dr Paisley asked if, in this case, the Minister agreed that Ulster-Scots was a language. The Minister replied that he was aware of the view of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages that Scots was a language. He was also aware of an academic view that did not correspond with this. His main concern was that the treatment of Scots and Ulster-Scots should be the same, regardless of whether they were languages or dialects.

8. Mr McIntyre said that he would be unhappy with the position proposed by the Minister. He regarded the situation in Northern Ireland as completely different from that in Scotland - what was required was parity of esteem between the Ulster-Scots and Irish traditions, and he doubted whether anything else would comply with the Government's own PAFT initiative. He also said that there was no time to wait for the study to which the Minister had referred. The Minister expressed some surprise at Mr McIntyre's reaction to his suggestion, which he had intended to be helpful.

9. Dr Robinson explained that the Ullans Academy had never been involved in the debate about whether Ulster-Scots was a language or a dialect. He said that there were many academics who claimed to be Ulster-Scots experts, but

who could not in fact speak the language. Concerning the position of Scots in Scotland, it was largely studied in English Departments at Universities. However, some local authorities, notably Dumfries and Galloway, had officers responsible for promoting Scots. There was also a Scots Language Resource Centre in Perth. However, what the Academy wanted was not parity for Ulster-Scots with Scots, but support for Ulster-Scots as a language in its own right.

10. Mr Gillespie said that, as an English teacher, he had felt that the way the curriculum was organised in its own way made the case for funding for the Ullans Academy. Without the necessary infrastructure of resource materials, core texts and dictionaries, it would be difficult to ensure consistency in teaching. The Academy simply wanted to have these fundamental requirements put in place. Responding to Mrs Jendoubi's observation that the Ulster Dictionary project was receiving £250,000, Dr Robinson said that this was not purely an Ulster-Scots dictionary, but included also words of Irish derivation.

11. The Minister said that he hoped to consult further with those who were interested in Ulster-Scots to establish how the Government could most usefully and effectively support the language within the resources available - which, he realised, might not be enough from the delegation's point of view. Dr Robinson said, for example, that it was his hope eventually to see Ulster-Scots being taught as an examination subject in its own right.

12. On the issue of financial support for the Ulster-Scots Academy, the Minister said that the 1994 application had been for a large sum - £125,000 capital - in terms of the available budget. Dr Paisley asked if a proposal from the Academy to match resources provided by Government would make support more likely. The Minister said that he would be prepared to consider any fresh specific application made by the Academy. Dr Robinson said that he considered a 6-figure sum per annum a reasonable level of Government support for Ulster-Scots by comparison with the 7-figure sum provided each year for Irish language projects. Mr Canavan pointed out that Irish language activists considered the support given to them to be inadequate, tending to compare it with the level of support given by the Government to Scots Gaelic - which, Dr Paisley pointed out, more people spoke as a first language than was the case with Irish in Northern Ireland.

13. Dr Robinson said that the application made to CCRU in 1994 had been rejected without any feedback being given on the reasons. He said that the Academy would appreciate some guidance as to what size of proposal would be considered reasonable - though, based on the needs of the Ulster-Scots movement, the 1994 application would still stand. The Minister said that there were simply not sufficient resources available to meet a bid of that magnitude. Dr Robinson said that the Ullans Academy was simply seeking an equivalent institution to the Ultach Trust. The provision of such a facility would send out an important message concerning a tradition which had been excluded, ignored and marginalised, but which was in fact just as important as Irish, and which could be helpful, for example, in attracting tourists from the USA to Northern Ireland.

14. Dr Paisley pressed the Minister to suggest a level of resources for which the Ulster-Scots Academy could bid with a reasonable expectation of success. The Minister explained that Cultural Traditions funding was allocated on a project basis and in response to bids. He could not, therefore, suggest an overall figure.

15. Mr Erskine said that the USLS hoped to see the Government giving material value to the recognition which it claimed of the Ulster-Scots tradition, in order to facilitate cultural diversity in a real sense. Dr Robinson stressed that he was delighted that facilities were there to promote the Irish language - he simply wished to see an equivalent foundation which had the aim of saving and promoting Ulster-Scots.

16. The Minister concluded by saying that he had heard very strong representations in favour of greater Government support for Ulster-Scots. The Government already recognised the very important cultural value of this tradition. The delegation had raised issues which he would wish to consider, and he invited Dr Paisley to write to him with specific proposals. Dr Paisley said that those who were interested in Ulster-Scots recognised the need to be pragmatic, but needed clear guidance about whether or not resources would be available. He assured the delegation, however, that he would continue to aim to treat Ulster-Scots in Northern Ireland on an equal basis with Scots in Scotland. Both Dr Adamson and Dr Paisley expressed regret at the way they saw Ulster-Scots as having been treated over the years, but seemed encouraged by the Minister's assurance.

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Scots in Scotland. He felt that  
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