

624/92



ASST SEC 19 FEB 1996
CENT SEC

UNDER/ SEC 7/12
16 FEB 1996
CENT SEC

PSE 154/96

15 February 1996

TO: PS/MINISTER (B&L)

cc

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L)

FROM: R B SPENCE

PS/SIR J WHEELER (B&L)

PS/MR M ANCRAM (B&L)

PS/BARONESS DENTON (B&L)

PS/SIR D FELL

MR SEMPLE

MR LOUGHRAN

MR CARVILL

MR THOMAS

MR WATKINS

MRS L BROWN

Mr McArthur 20/2
Mr Deane 20/2



Mr Jones 20/2

EVENTS STRATEGY

1. This minute deals with the possible implications of the end of the PIRA ceasefire for the strategy for attracting major events to Northern Ireland over the next 5 to 10 years.

2. The end of the ceasefire has had two immediate impacts on the Events Strategy:-

2.1 The plans to mount a Tall Ships event in Belfast Lough in 1997 have probably been dealt a fatal blow. We were already working to an extremely tight timetable, but I feel that it may now be impossible. The owners and captains of the Tall Ships will be reluctant at the present time to give firm commitments to come to Belfast and the prospects of securing sufficient private sector sponsorship will have been reduced. Work is, however, proceeding on a feasibility study and I suspect that we may end up with a much lower key annual event, which could be expanded over the years to include a Tall Ships visit.

2.2 The British Seniors Golf event scheduled for Portrush in July is still likely to proceed, but the prospects of attracting more well known players from the USA have





been badly damaged - the players are deciding their playing schedules about now - and the aim of securing a major international sponsor has also been made much more difficult. We had fortunately managed to reduce our overall financial exposure for this event; we are now guaranteeing the prize money with the other costs being split 4 ways with the other 3 partners in the event.

3. The end of the ceasefire has probably put on hold consideration of Northern Ireland hosting an annual event in the European PGA tour. It is not yet clear whether our chances of hosting the British Open in 2001 have been damaged.
4. An annual celebration of cultural diversity was another event in the strategy. I had secured a commitment in principle from a major private sector sponsor. This may now be in doubt but is being pursued.
5. It had been the intention to include an announcement about the creation of the Events Company in the Prime Minister's remarks at the reception for district councillors planned for 14 February. We will continue with the preparatory work to create the Company and seek another appropriate opportunity for a public announcement. The end of the ceasefire has probably increased the need for a mechanism to underwrite major events since event owners, potential sponsors and participants are likely to have become more nervous about coming to Northern Ireland.
6. The Minister is invited to note that the ending of the PIRA ceasefire has had a damaging effect on the plans to attract major events to Northern Ireland.

RBS

R B SPENCE

