



Internal Memo



1781

RECEIVED - 2 DEC 1997

M Pearson

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From: R B Spence
Permanent Secretary

Your ref:
Our ref: PSE 779/97

Tel: (5)41175/6

2736
- 1 DEC 1997

Date: 1 December 1997

To: PS/Secretary of State (B&L)

cc: PS/Mr Murphy (DFP,B&L)
PS/Mr Ingram (DED,B&L)
PS/Mr Worthington (DENI,DHSS&L)
PS/Lord Dubs (DANI,DOE&L)
PS/Mr Semple
Mr Watkins
Mr Hamilton
Mr McCusker
Mr Ronaldson
Mrs L Brown

DEVELOPING THE STORMONT ESTATE

1. Linda Brown and I are meeting the Secretary of State on 3 December 1997 to discuss progress on the development of the Stormont Estate.
2. Project Plan

The public expenditure discussions have released £1m in 1998/99 for the project. I attach an outline project timetable which concentrates, as the Secretary of State has requested, on developments which will ensure early access to the building and the parklands for a wide range of people. Due to the funding available, it will not be possible to complete the coffee shop and nature trails until 1999, but, by that stage, the exhibition, tours of the building and a children's playground (with associated car parking) should all be in place.



3. The intention is to build up to a major event in the parklands by carefully introducing a series of minor events over a number of weeks in order to establish Parliament Buildings and the parklands as a venue for musical, sporting, and other events.

4. Concerts

The Secretary of State's interview about the possibility of mounting a pop concert in the grounds of Stormont has sparked a great deal of interest and activity amongst promoters and others.

5. We have arranged tours of Parliament Buildings and the parklands for two major pop promoters (Jim Aiken and Eamon McCann) and two classical promoters (Raymond Gubby and Trevor McClintock). The general view is, however, that the parklands do not offer a natural location for a pop concert and there could be strong opposition from local residents. Although the major promoters are still working to bring big names (Oasis and Garth Brookes) to Northern Ireland, securing these events for Northern Ireland is not dependent upon the availability of Stormont. We know that discussions are underway between promoters and Belfast City Council about the use of Botanic Gardens and it seems likely that, at the very least, one major pop concert will take place again in Belfast during the summer time. Botanic Gardens is a much more acceptable and neutral location than Stormont.
6. On the other hand, the classical promoters are very keen to have the opportunity to make use of both Parliament Buildings and the parklands for an event. Raymond Gubby has been extremely energetic in bringing forward proposals.



He feels that an area in front of Parliament Buildings would be ideal for a classical concert and picnic event incorporating fireworks and that several opportunities present themselves inside the building. He has also been in touch with Barry Douglas who would be delighted to come play inside Parliament Buildings possibly during March. We have also had a suggestion from Trevor McClintock ("Class Acts") about bringing Pavarotti to the Stormont parklands.

7. We need now to take some key decisions. Taking into account public opinion, wear and tear on the parkland and the NI market for concerts, it would seem sensible to limit major concerts to one in 1998 in the parklands. Taking account of the views of promoters themselves and the possible negative publicity associated with running a pop event, I think that in the first year the event should be classical rather than pop. While a classical event would not attract young people, it would have the merit of softening the image of Stormont without attracting the negative publicity associated with a pop events.
8. Once a decision is taken about the type of event, it will be necessary to go out to the promoters with a tendering document and take the decision on allocating the venue on a fair and equitable basis. There is a need to run these events on commercial lines. Having spent £20m to refurbish Parliament Buildings, there would be little public support for running events which proved a drain on the public purse. Bearing in mind, lessons from "Positively Belfast", events should be run and supported by promoters and not by the Department.



9. Parliament Buildings

Events inside Parliament Buildings should be easier to manage. Every one of the people who has seen the building has commented on the opportunities which it offers for running a variety of events. The building is already being used again for lunches, dinners, presentations and meetings. Although these are largely civil service sponsored at present, there is every reason to anticipate the use of a much wider spread of events following implementation of a marketing plan for Stormont. A proposals brochure will be published and circulated widely within the public service, schools, charities etc to generate the widest possible interest and activity.

10. Consultation with Politicians

Lord Dubs and I are meeting Peter Robinson as the MP for East Belfast on 2 December to discuss his views on the opening up of Stormont. Arrangements will be made to consult representatives of the political parties about the content of the exhibition.

11. Security

The plan is to maintain security operations as they exist at present, but a more user friendly approach to the public interfacing points will be adopted. There is a need to clarify responsibility for public order within the grounds and legal opinion will be taken at the start of project development. Before a major event takes place, a complete risk assessment of the parklands will need to be carried



out and health and safety aspects for events will be in accordance with current requirements.

12. Finance

At present, there is no parliamentary approval to spend public funds on recreational facilities, exhibitions or facilities for tours/events at Stormont. We may need to announce the spending via a PQ and place the required funding in the appropriate estimates. An amount of £150k is required this year, £1m in 1998/99 and £650k in 1999/2000 to cover the capital cost in the various projects.

Key Decisions

13. The Secretary of State is invited to agree that:-

13.1 we aim for one outdoor classical music concert at Stormont provided it is commercially viable; and

13.2 we pursue all the viable options for indoor events at Parliament Buildings.

Pauline Boyle
for R B SPENCE