



- cc PS/SaGS (L+B)
- PS/Mr Murphy (L+B)
- PS/Mr Ingram (L+B)
- PS/PHS (L+B)
- PS/Mr Smyth
- Mr Jeffrey
- Mr Staley
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Lench

- Mr Daniel
- Mr Shannon
- Mr Bell
- Mr Hill
- Mr Beaton
- Mr Perry
- Mr Macaulay
- * Mr Brooker *



23/54/98
 22 JUL 1998
 708/7
 27 JUL 1998
 PM/98/037
 PRIME MINISTER

* for advice draft
 reply to FCO
 J 23/2

A New British Irish Relationship

1. At your joint press conference with the Taoiseach on 1 June, you looked forward to a new, more intense, bilateral relationship with the Irish. I now wish to recommend to you and colleagues a wide range of proposals which would put this into effect and on which there is already a broad measure of agreement among Departments at official level. I also wish to set out ways in which these ideas can be taken forward.
2. The Belfast Agreement gives us an opportunity, which has not been available since the creation of the Irish Republic, to establish a relationship with our nearest neighbour which is no longer overshadowed by our respective interests in Northern Ireland. In order to make a reality of this we need to develop bilateral links which are both deep - tackling together serious issues of intergovernmental business - and broad - drawing on a wide range of British and Irish society, including business, professional, social and cultural groups. You have already spoken of an initiative to this end.

Substance

- ... 3. I attach a paper which outlines the basis of this new relationship. It proposes:
- a Declaration of Dublin as a public expression of the two Governments' commitment to a new relationship;
 - annual Summits, regular Ministerial contacts and other high level meetings;



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- non-governmental contacts, including Parliamentary groups and private sector involvement;
 - detailed policy areas for expanded bilateral cooperation, with particular emphasis on EU affairs.

4. I hope that you and colleagues will endorse this broad approach, and the detailed areas for cooperation set out in the paper. They could then be put to the Irish before the summer break.

Procedures

5. Subject to Irish views, I then foresee this new relationship being publicly launched by you and the Taoiseach in the Autumn. This should fit in with some of the joint structures agreed in the Belfast Agreement; several elements will need to be factored into decisions on when and how to launch this initiative. In particular:

- Before any initiative we shall need to have got the establishment of the shadow Northern Ireland Executive behind us, and probably also the first meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council, involving the Taoiseach. All this is unlikely to be achieved until early October;
- The Belfast Agreement requires an early meeting of the British-Irish Council at Summit level and David Trimble is likely to press for this once the North/South Ministerial Council has met, in order to counterbalance it. A meeting of the British Irish Council will also need your and the Taoiseach's participation, as well as that of Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and representatives of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. (The British-Irish Council sometimes called the "Council of the Isles" will



be made up of the British and Irish Governments, the devolved Governments and the Islands);

- It would make sense to link this initiative to your proposed speech to the joint Houses of the Irish Parliament.

6. One possible approach would be, once the North-South Council was out of the way, to launch the bilateral initiative at a Summit in London, with the inaugural Summit of the British-Irish Council immediately following it. You could then visit Dublin, perhaps in November, to address the Irish Parliament and to sign a joint Declaration with the Taoiseach, formalising the new relationship. We would need to ensure that David Trimble did not object to the British-Irish Council being possibly eclipsed by the launch of the bilateral initiative.

7. An alternative would be to have the bilateral Summit in Dublin, to coincide with your address to the Irish Parliament. But this could mean a separate Summit in London to launch the British-Irish Council, since a launch of that body in Dublin would probably not be acceptable to the Unionists.

8. We do not need to decide the details now, and we will need to take Irish views. One issue which we will need to agree with them is how this initiative links in with the work of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and its Secretariat. I envisage both playing an important role in the new relationship. For planning purposes I think we are looking at a probable date in mid October for the Summits, and between then and the middle of November for the Dublin visit. (The Conference is the bilateral structure involving the UK and Irish Governments concerned with all matters of mutual interest, but incorporating a set of Ministerial meetings and a Secretariat focussed on Northern Ireland.)



9. I am copying this minute to members of DOP, and to Jack Straw, Mo Mowlam, Donald Dewar, Ron Davies and Sir Richard Wilson. On the model of our bilateral Summits with the French and Germans, you may wish to be accompanied by some of us as the bilateral Summit with the Irish.

ROBIN COOK

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
21 July 1998

Regional Issues:* including Formal links between districts (Liverpool/Dublin)

Transport: including Movement across the Irish Sea
Maritime safety
Security arrangements

Trade & Industry: including Energy links

Financial Issues: including Data exchange
Anti-fraud measures

Youth Exchanges:

Employment: including Training

Education:*

Environment:* including Sellafield and quality of the Celtic Seas

Joint Millenium Project:

eg Biomedical Research Institute

Community Affairs:* including Cooperation between Churches and ethnic groups

Cultural & Sporting Activity:*

* Will also have a significant BIC dimension.

THE NEAR HORIZON/HANDS ACROSS THE IRISH SEA:
A NEW BRITISH-IRISH RELATIONSHIP

Objectives

To create a new dimension to the centuries-old relationship, to place it on a more dynamic and cooperative basis, and to establish a real partnership between Governments and between peoples;

To discuss, and wherever possible to agree common positions on, the key issues of the day, including those arising from our membership of the EU;

To engage British and Irish society, at every level and in a wide range of areas, in this collective effort.

Institutions

To be founded in a Declaration of Dublin;

To comprehend regular Ministerial contacts and other high-level meetings, including within the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC) and the British-Irish Council (BIC);

To be organised around the core of annual bilateral Summits, including those of the BIIGC and the BIC.

To be managed by ad hoc groups in London and Dublin, with the involvement of the standing British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat in Belfast;

To include: (a) Parliamentary contacts and cooperation;
(b) exchanges of officials at working-level;
(c) Private sector involvement eg via ginger groups.

Policy Areas for (Expanded) Cooperation

EU Affairs: including Agriculture & Fisheries -
Structural and other Funds
Health Safety and the
Environment*
Institutional Reform
Justice/Home Affairs (eg
Schengen)

Foreign Policy: including UN activity
WMD proliferation
Middle East issues
International Development

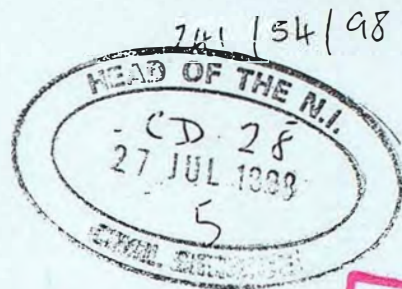
Security Policy: including Peace-keeping
European Security & Defence
Identity

Law and Order: including Common Travel Area issues
ateral cooperation on law

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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA



From the Principal Private Secretary



23 July 1998



a Mr Brown

Dear John,

A NEW BRITISH IRISH RELATIONSHIP

The Prime Minister was grateful for the Foreign Secretary's minute of 21 July. He believes that the paper outlining the proposals of the new relationship attached to the minute provides a very good start. Subject to the views of other Ministerial colleagues, he would be happy for these ideas to be relayed to the Irish as our preliminary thinking, perhaps via Veronica Sutherland in Dublin in the first place.

As the Foreign Secretary says, the details of what summit we might hold when can be left for later. We will need to discuss this in more detail with the Irish. It will not be easy to put together the right package for the London and Dublin Summits, given sensitivities on all sides.

I am copying this letter to Private Secretaries of other members of DOP, Ken Lindsay (Northern Ireland Office), Ken Thomson (Scottish Office), June Milligan (Welsh Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office) and to Veronica Sutherland (Dublin - by fax).

John Grant
John Grant

JOHN HOLMES

- cc PS/SJS (L+B)*
- PS/Mr Murphy (L+B)*
- PS/Mr Ingram (L+A)*
- PS/DUS (L+B)*
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- Mr Brooker*

John Grant Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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