

30 May 2006

HANSON MOVES ICONIC MAZE DEVELOPMENT CLOSER TO REALITY

The development of the former Maze/Long Kesh site took a major step forward today with the launch of a masterplan for the project.

The Minister responsible for the project, David Hanson MP, said the proposals represented a fantastic opportunity to showcase all that was best in Northern Ireland in terms of regeneration, sharing the future and conflict transformation.

Mr Hanson said: **“The opportunity now exists to turn security and military assets, for so long associated with conflict, into symbols and engines of economic and social regeneration, renewal and growth.”**

The masterplan proposes a wide range of facilities on the 360 acre site, including a multi-sports stadium and an international centre for conflict transformation.

The Minister also announced that he was launching a design competition for the stadium and that the GAA, soccer and rugby had all nominated representatives to sit on the Design Steering Group.

“This is the only site that can attract all three sports required to make a stadium operationally viable. I think it’s now time for Northern Ireland to get behind this project, a project for all of Northern Ireland but also a project that will make a significant contribution to the continued success of the region’s capital city, Belfast.” Mr Hanson said.

The Minister said the international centre for conflict transformation would be a place where people can learn about managing and transcending conflict.

“This particular initiative lies at the heart of what the transformation is about – learning not just locally and regionally but internationally about our experience here of the move from conflict into peace,” he added.

Mr Hanson said the support of the four main parties for the overall Maze/Long Kesh project remained a critical factor in its delivery.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Key Elements of the masterplan

- A multi-sports stadium with a capacity for 42,000 spectators to be used for Gaelic games, rugby and soccer in addition to open air concerts and other large events. The stadium would also contain a quality hotel, associated conference facilities and a wide range of leisure and entertainment facilities including bars, cafes, restaurants, specialist retail, multi-screen cinema and possible ice rink
- An International Centre for Conflict Transformation. The facility would be based on the existing listed buildings and structures and could include an iconic new build facility to provide educational and visitor facilities.
- High quality employment space, promoted in association with Invest NI, with the potential for a range of business uses to help create new jobs to encourage inward investment.
- A Rural Excellence and Innovation Zone to include a high quality Exhibition Centre and associated showgrounds and potential equestrian centre.
- High quality integrated housing.
- A community zone with public open space, sports and children's play areas for the existing local community.

Stadium Design Competition

- A competition to appoint a multi-disciplinary design team will be published in the European Journal shortly.
- The successful team will work with a Government led Stadium Design Steering Group which will include representatives of the Sports Council

for Northern Ireland and the Governing Bodies of the three sports to take forward a detailed design process for the Stadium.

Electronic copies of the masterplan can be obtained from OFMDFM's website at www.newfuturemazelongkesh.com & www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/regeneration-former-security-sites

For further information contact the OFMDFM Press Office on 028 9052 2260.