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**Reference Code:** 2021/102/4

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# Ulster Unionist Council

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*Rec'd via British  
Government on 29/10*

27 October 1992

Mr John Chilcott  
Permanent Under Secretary  
Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont Castle  
Belfast 4

Dear John

Please find enclosed a further paper setting out our views on the proposed Council of the British Isles.

I would appreciate it if you would also convey this paper to the Irish Government.

We will be quite happy to meet either yourselves or the Irish to discuss the matter further if you so wish.

Yours sincerely

*David Trimble*

David Trimble MP

## Council of the British Isles

We propose that a Council of the British Isles be created. This Council will be the forum within which consideration can be given to the "totality of relations" within the British Isles. The Council will consist of representatives of the two governments plus representatives of regional administrations. The new Northern Ireland administration will be one such regional administration.

The Council of the British Isles, however, must not be regarded or treated as just a "Celtic fringe" affair and consideration will have to be given to the representation of other regional interests within the British Isles.

### Structure

The Council will have to have a varied and flexible structure. Provision may be made for meetings at various levels, ie government only, government(s) plus representatives of some or all regional interests, meetings at regional level and meetings at official levels.

Thus it will be possible for meetings to be arranged within the framework of the Council which deal with particular topics or particular geographical regions. Such meetings would have a membership appropriate to their nature. It is envisaged that the "Inter Irish Relations Committee", referred to in our Strand II papers, will be such a grouping within the Council.

It must be emphasised, however, that our willingness to participate in such a committee is dependent on it being established within the framework of the Council of the British Isles, ie we are firmly opposed to any free standing body relating to the island of Ireland as a whole.

The issues that such a committee will debate cannot be divorced from their British Isles context. Moreover, the new Northern Ireland Assembly will only have a limited competence so that London cannot be excluded for even on transferred matters it will have to safeguard the United Kingdom's international obligations and the interests of the British taxpayer. See also the comments made in our paper of 22 September 1992.

### Functions of the Council

The Council could be a forum within which consideration is given to maintaining and enhancing the recognition and protection of human, civil and cultural rights of individuals and communities within the British Isles. This could take the form of enabling any member of the Council to raise within the meetings of the Council or its committees any matter relating to the particular rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in so far as they relate to any part of the British Isles. It is expected that discussion of these matters would take account of proceedings and agreements made within the CSCE process.

Consideration within the Council could be given to co-operation on economic and environmental matters either at a British Isles level or at an inter-regional level.

Provision must be made for consideration of security and counter terrorist measures, if only at the level of establishing a mechanism for the exchange of intelligence and co-operation aimed at improving the skills and resources of the various security forces within the whole of the British Isles. Consideration should be given to making effective arrangements relating to the control of movement of persons and extradition.

### Discharge of functions

The Council would not have, nor would it acquire, any direct executive function. It would, however, be the place where mutual co-operation would be discussed and it could be the place where agreements on inter-governmental or inter-regional co-operation could be made.

Matters discussed within the Council, whether at governmental, regional or official level, may result in a government or regional administration deciding to take action within its own area of responsibility.

Such discussions may result in an agreement between two or more governments and/or regional administrations. The implementations of these agreements, whether by means of legislation or administrative action, would be the responsibility of the particular governments or regional administrations that had entered into the agreement in question. It should be remembered that the Northern Ireland representatives will be drawn from an Assembly committee which will not have executive powers.

The work of the Council should be organised in such a way that all bodies participating in it can be involved and informed about all matters that affect their interests so that never again will there be discussions and negotiations concerning a party behind its back. It will not be sufficient for the governments to invite Assembly representatives to attend only when the former think fit. Subject only to necessary confidentiality, Assembly representatives must have a right to information and access.