

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Anglo-Irish Secretariat
Belfast

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21 January 1998 **No of pages including this one: 2**

For: Paul Murray **From: Kieran Dowling**

Subj: Reply to Robert McCartney re Presidential visits

1. We reported last month (our SF 1661 of 11 December refers) on Robert McCartney's letter of 2 December to the Secretary of State on the question of the "protocol" governing visits by President McAleese to Northern Ireland, and in particular the question of advance notice by the Irish Government in regard to such visits.

2. We understand that a reply from the Secretary of State in the terms below, which broadly reflect an exchange we had in the Secretariat, issued in the run up to Christmas.

   As will be seen, the reply is very general and avoids dealing directly with a point made by McCartney that the Irish Government should be required to provide advance notice in the case of every visit by President McAleese, including informal visits.

Secretary of State's reply

"You wrote to me on 2 December 1997 expressing your concerns about the protocol arrangements for the President of the Irish Republic when visiting Northern Ireland. You might find it helpful if I briefly outlined the three main categories of visits made by foreign Heads of State to another country.

These are:

- when a visiting Head of State is invited by the Sovereign, the visit is described as a **State Visit**;

- when a visiting Head of State is invited by the Government, the visit is described as **guest of Government**, or simply, **official** visit; and

- all other visits are described as **working** when the Head of State visits at his/her instigation, or at the invitation of local bodies or groups to

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undertake official engagements , or as **private** when the Head of State visits for personal reasons, but may also undertake a limited number of official engagements.

In accordance with UK-wide convention, a Head of State outside London is usually met by Her Majesty's representative, the Lord-Lieutenant of the County. In addition, the Head of State may be met by a Government Minister or his/her representative. Similar procedures are followed at the point of departure.

The arrangements made for President McAleese's recent private/working visit were entirely in line with those made when the President of the Irish Republic visits any other part of the United Kingdom and I can confirm that these protocol arrangements are always observed."

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