

cc Mr Holmes
Private Office

Woods
23/3/89
Mr McKeown

CULTURAL TRADITIONS GROUP: THE IRISH LANGUAGE

1. I have seen a copy of Maurina Crozier's letter suggesting the creation of an "Ultach Trust" to promote the Irish language.
2. The letter predates the Minister's announcement yesterday of the new position to be accorded to Irish in the school curriculum. Our response on this aspect could thus be on the lines of:

"You will be aware that Dr Mawhinney recently announced changes in the proposed Education Reforms legislation which will effectively enhance the status of Irish in the school curriculum. Irish will be on an equal footing with the four major EC working languages and parents will have a free choice of which language or languages their children should take. Indeed, this places Irish in the unique position of being the only language, apart from the major EC languages, capable of fulfilling the requirements of the new statutory curriculum."

3. The nature of the reply on the letter's main proposition will presumably be for decision elsewhere. From other papers I have seen, I take it that CCRU will have given the CTG to believe that their proposal is likely to fall on sympathetic ears.

D Woods

D WOODS
22 March 1989

[PS]6774

Mr McCusker (CCRU)

The main papers on this issue are with you for a response. You may wish to incorporate the paragraph above in your draft reply.

Mr. Spence

Woods
23/3/89

TJ 35/2

CULTURAL TRADITIONS GROUP

in conjunction with the Institute of Irish Studies and the Central Community Relations Unit

nes Hawthorne
(Chairman)
nald Buchanan

Ian Adamson
Paul Arthur
Roger Blaney
Iaurna Crozier
John Darby
Alan Gailey
David Harkness
Maurice Hayes
Peter Holmes
Michael Longley
Rick Loughrey
Jack Magee
Tony McCusker
John Nolan
Ronnie Spence
Anne Tannahill

Rt Hon T King MP
Secretary of State for NI
Stormont Castle

16th March 1989

Dear Secretary of State

THE PLACE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE

We are writing, as individuals who have been involved in the work of the Cultural Traditions Group, to seek the Government's support for a new initiative on the place of the Irish language in Northern Ireland.

The Irish language is a very important part of our rich cultural heritage. Unfortunately, its place in Northern Ireland has become, and remains, a controversial issue. Although, in the past, Protestants both used, and were closely associated with the revival of, the language, most now either have no interest in it, or are alienated from it because of their perceptions of its association with the violent side of republicanism. To the minority community, the official attitude to the Irish language seems to be at best negative, and at worst hostile; the importance of the language to the nationalist identity is not perceived to be either properly understood, or respected.

As a consequence, we have seen specific Irish language issues, such as the status of the language in the new school curriculum, the prohibition of street names in Irish, the recognition of place-names in Irish, become so politicised, that it becomes very difficult for them to be discussed solely on their merits.

What we propose is the creation of a new charitable body - perhaps to be known as the 'Ultaich Trust'. The Trust's main objectives would be:

1. To widen appreciation of the contribution of the Irish language to the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland.
2. To increase knowledge of the language throughout the community.
3. To assist in the provision of written and oral material which will help to promote the wider use of the language.

CULTURAL TRADITIONS GROUP

We envisage the trustees being a small group, consisting originally of the signatories to this letter, possibly with the addition of one or two further names which Government and other interested bodies may want to suggest. The Trust would need an annual income in the region of £150-200,000 per annum (see annex). We are seeking to attract financial support from other sources like the International Fund for Ireland as well as Government.

We believe that Government commitment to provide a substantial level of support on a continuing basis - perhaps £100,000 per year - would provide clear evidence of Government's willingness to respect the place of the Irish language in Northern Ireland.

We are writing directly to you as we believe the place of the Irish language in Northern Ireland is a very broad issue which does not fall within the remit of any particular Department. We would be happy to discuss our proposal with you or with any Member of your Ministerial team.

Maurina Crozier

MAURINA CROZIER

signed on behalf of those listed below:

Dr. Ian Adamson

Dr. Roger Blaney

Dr. Maurice Hayes

Mr. Patrick Loughrey

Mr. Christopher Napier

Prof. G Stockman

CULTURAL TRADITIONS GROUP

IRISH LANGUAGE TRUST: ESTIMATE OF EXPENDITURE

	£
Salaries (See Note 1)	60,000
Publications etc	50,000
Travel and Subsistence	5,000
Rent, Insurance, Services	15,000
Telephone	3,000
Audit Fee	1,500
Conferences, Seminars, Workshops	10,000
Stationery, Postage, Advertising	10,000
Maintenance of Equipment	2,000
Legal Fees	500
Sundry Expenses	3,000
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	160,000

<u>Note 1</u>	Salaries	£
	Director	20,000
	Development Officer	15,000
	Administration/Finance Officer	15,000
	Clerk-Typist	10,000
		<hr/>
		£60,000