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NORTHERN IRELAND BUREAU BRIEF

The Bureau came into operation on Monday 16 July 1990. It is housed in the British Embassy and, until 22 January 1992, was staffed by 2 Northern Ireland Civil Servants, Derek Wheeler (Senior Desk Officer - Grade 7) and Trevor Killen (Desk Officer - DP). On that date Mr Danny McNeill, Grade 5, was appointed. He will manage the Bureau from a NI base until July, from which time he will move to Washington and Mr Killen will return to a post in IDB. They are supported by one locally recruited secretary.

The objective of the Bureau is to develop a network of contacts in the United States, and particularly among Irish Americans, who are sympathetic and friendly towards Northern Ireland and who are prepared to demonstrate this interest in practical terms by, for instance, making or facilitating investments of one kind or another in the Province, stimulating tourism, or helping to get a positive message across in the American media. A copy of the terms of reference of the Bureau is attached. At present, the Bureau is experimental. After it has run for a period of 2 years Ministers will be asked to decide whether the results it has achieved justify its continuation.

Despite its physical location in the Embassy, the Bureau has its own distinct Northern Ireland identity, with its own stationery, calling cards and direct telephone line. Mr Wheeler and Mr Killen have not been restricting their activities to the Washington area or the East Coast but have also devoted time and attention to promising prospects in the mid-West, California, and elsewhere in the USA. For most purposes, communication with the Bureau will be via Central Secretariat. However, there is no reason why Departments should not contact the Bureau directly where that is necessary, as long as Central Secretariat are kept in the picture. Direct telephone numbers for the Bureau are 0101 202 898 4478 and 0101 202 898 2485.

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During the experimental period, the Bureau has produced since September 1990 a monthly situation report. Relevant extracts from the situation report are circulated for information and subsequent follow-up action to NI Departments.

Objectives

1. To assess the degree to which worthwhile opportunities exist for networking in the United States to encourage Americans of good will to contribute to the economic development of Northern Ireland, and to report within 2 years. (For the purpose of the Bureau, networking will be defined as the development of contacts in the USA, and in particular in the Irish American community, with a view to creating more sympathy for and understanding of Northern Ireland, and where possible translating that sympathy into economic benefits for Northern Ireland.)

Methods

2. The Bureau will pursue this objective by acquiring and developing contacts among Americans, notably those of Irish descent, who may, directly or indirectly, be able to contribute to the economic development of Northern Ireland. It will help those contacts to identify trade and investment opportunities of benefit to Northern Ireland.

Organisational Relationships

3. While the Bureau will be located in the Embassy in Washington, and its members will have diplomatic status, responsibility for

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political and information work on Northern Ireland, including Ministerial visits, will continue to rest with the Embassy and other posts in the United States. The Bureau will have a clear and distinct Northern Ireland identity which will, for example, be apparent by its use of separate calling cards, stationery and its own direct telephone arrangements.

4. The Bureau will work closely with other elements of the British Government's representation in the United States, including the Consulates-General and Consulates, BIS New York, the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. It should consult with any official or semi-official body before engaging in activities which are primarily the responsibility of that body or before becoming involved in activities in a region of US where a local post would normally take the lead. The Bureau will ensure that such bodies are kept informed of its activities; and correspondingly, others engaged in promoting HMG's interests in the United States will ensure the Bureau is kept informed of all developments likely to be relevant to its defined task.
5. As an element of the British Government's representation in the United States, the Bureau will work formally to HM Ambassador, Washington. In practice, the Ambassador will delegate responsibility for day-to-day supervision of the Bureau to the Head of Chancery.
6. The Bureau will report through the Security and International Division of the Northern Ireland Office, who will in turn ensure that other Departments and official bodies are, as appropriate, consulted about, and informed of, the Bureau's activities. The Bureau will be attached to the Central Secretariat of the Department of Finance and Personnel, and will be accountable to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

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7. The full costs of the Bureau will be met by the Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel.

Performance Monitoring and Review

8. The Bureau will be established initially for an experimental period of 2 years. At the end of that period, its performance will be reviewed jointly by the Northern Ireland Office, Department of Finance and Personnel, and HM Ambassador, Washington, and a decision taken on its continued existence.
9. The Head of the Bureau will submit to the Northern Ireland Office, Department of Finance and Personnel, and HM Ambassador, within 3 months of the Bureau's establishment, a work plan setting out objectives for the Bureau's activity, together with suggested indicators for measuring performance in meeting those objectives.
10. The Bureau will also submit a report on its activities every 3 months to HM Ambassador and the NIO, in a form to be jointly agreed.

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