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FROM: S J LEACH
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR POLICING AND SECURITY
13 AUGUST 1998

cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - e
PS/Mr Ingram (B&L) - e
PS/PUS (B&L) - e
Mr Jeffrey - e
Mr McCusker - e
Mr Maccabe - e
Mr Perry - e
Mr Smyth - e
Mr Priestly - e
Mr Margetts - e
Mr Crawford - e
BIS Mr Gamble - e
Mr J Powell, No 10

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Mr Watkins - e

BILATERAL CONTACTS IN PORTADOWN: 12 AUGUST 1998

1. Along with the Rev Roy Magee, Mr Quinn, Mr McCusker, Mr Crawford and Mr Gamble, I undertook meetings yesterday afternoon and evening with the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition (GRRC) and the Portadown Orange District, in order to assess the situation following the three rounds of indirect contact talks last month and to be in a position to advise No 10 on their possible resumption.
2. Despite some sabre rattling at both meetings (the **Residents** arguing that the nightly gatherings of loyalists on the fringes of the Garvaghy Road were hardening opinion and making it much more difficult to contemplate any accommodation; the **Orange Order** predicting dire consequences if a parade was not allowed down the road in the next month before the nights lengthened) the view of us all was that, in the end, an appreciable degree of progress was made at both meetings, on which it should be possible to build.

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3. In particular, there was some clear **common ground**. Thus both sides:

- declared their commitment to finding a permanent and lasting accommodation of the parades issue; and
- accepted that a civic forum, of which they shared a broadly similar conception, would be an essential element of the deal (the Orange were notably warmer towards this proposal than on previous occasions).

4. The **residents** made clear that, while they were opposed to any march this year, they were "entirely flexible" about the possibility of marches in principle from 1999 onwards (but would wish to negotiate numbers, frequency etc). They also stressed that the establishment of the civic forum should not be seen as a trade-off for their agreement on parades. We accepted that there was no trade-off as such, but underlined the reality that there had to be action in the same timescale to resolve the parades issue and to establish the forum. We were proposing measures across a broad front to tackle parades and other community issues in Portadown, but all the steps had to be implemented together - as Jonathan Powell's initial letter had said, the "outcome [of the process] had to be agreed in full, covering all aspects, before implementation". Brendan McKenna accepted this.

5. For their part, the **Orange Order**, after a strong presentation of what they saw as the dangers if an early parade were not allowed, struck a more accommodating note towards the end of the meeting, with Dennis Watson in particular hinting that they might well be willing to accept dialogue with the GRRC through an independent Chairman in the right circumstances.

6. There is, of course, still considerable mistrust between the two sides, and a considerable gap over substance. The Orange, particularly at District level, are

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focused on a parade this year as the essential first step. By contrast the Residents want to begin by settling the longer-term issues (civic forum etc) and then working back. But both sides do regard the need for progress as **urgent**. And, while I would take the more apocalyptic comments we heard yesterday with a pinch of salt, it **is** clear that Portadown is something of a pressure-cooker at the moment, and intensive efforts will be needed over the next few weeks if the situation is not to worsen.

7. With that in mind, following the meetings we identified the following way forward:

- (i) We should work to get agreement from both sides to a brief **statement** affirming their common determination to find a way forward. (The Orange agreed with this idea; Mr McCusker will float it with the residents tomorrow.) Once a text is agreed, it would be issued publicly next week in order to take some of the heat out of the situation locally and give us more time to work on a lasting accommodation. The Orange Order agreed that if such a statement could be issued, they would seek to use the influence at their disposal to reduce and if possible phase out the nightly gatherings in the Craigwell Avenue area (although they were careful to specify that such gatherings were not orchestrated by the Order).
- (ii) We shall pursue work on defining and working up further the **civic forum** idea. Mr McCusker and Mr Gamble will be seeing the Residents tomorrow to take this forward.
- (iii) We shall also pursue work on the key area of defining **arrangements for future parades** - numbers, frequency etc. The Order did not give ground yesterday on the issue of numbers, but I

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underlined that in our view a parade comprising only the officers of the relevant lodges should be an option, and this may stimulate some further thinking on their part. The issue of whether there could be a parade before next July is likely to be the most difficult one: but the formula we aim to take forward is to reach agreement on arrangements for "future parades", leaving till the very end the issue of when the future begins.

8. When and if we believe that the gap on these issues has been bridged or is bridgeable, Mr Powell might then judge it appropriate to reconvene the indirect contact talks to achieve a final settlement.

9. The immediate next stage is therefore to agree a short statement which both sides could subscribe to. I attach a possible draft, which is largely wording made available by Mr Crawford based on a text which I believe was almost agreed at the second round of indirect contact talks. If you and copy recipients are content with this, we should I think talk over the substance of it informally with both sides (perhaps by telephone). Any fine-tuning could then be incorporated into a text we would send them early next week and (assuming they are content) issue as soon as possible thereafter.

10. I should be very happy to discuss. Meanwhile, it would be helpful if copy recipients could let Mr Crawford know if they are content with the attached draft statement. I am passing this separately to Roy Magee and Peter Quinn.

[Signed: S J Leach]

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Statement issued by Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition and Portadown
Orange District

All sides acknowledge that there is a shared responsibility on everyone to build a climate of mutual respect and trust. Everyone must be committed to help create such a climate. All sides have agreed to continue bilateral discussions to seek to achieve that objective, which would include a lasting accommodation regarding parades in Portadown.

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NOTE OF MEETING WITH GARVAGHY ROAD RESIDENTS COMMITTEE: 12 AUGUST 1998

1. The purpose of this note is to set out an agreed record of the discussion that took place between the Garvaghy Road Residents Committee, led by Mr MacCionnaith and a delegation comprising Mr McCusker, Mr Leach, Mr Crawford and myself. The Reverend Roy Magee and Peter Quinn also attended. The meeting took place in the Drumcree Community Centre at 4pm on Wednesday 12 August.
2. **Mr Leach** opened by explaining that the purpose of the meeting was to follow-up the indirect contact talks that took place during July; take stock of the current temperature locally, explore the scope for recommencing the talks process (and its modalities); and tease out further the committee's views on the Forum and Portadown initiative proposals, both of which might contribute to a long-term settlement including a lasting accommodation on parades.
3. **Mr MacCionnaith** in response expressed disappointment that it had taken some 6 weeks for the Government to re-engage with the committee and that the committee had not seen more detailed work on fleshed-out proposals for the Forum and initiative. He then expressed serious concerns about a number of issues that were hardening local attitudes and making it much more difficult to contemplate an accommodation on parades. Nightly gatherings of loyalists in the Craigwell Avenue area, which were intimidating local residents, were the most conspicuous example, together with the harassment of local people in the town centre, close to where Robert Hamill was murdered. Despite ongoing police presence these and other examples served to harden views that policing was ineffective and inadequate. **Mr MacCionnaith** said that it was difficult to see a resolution of the parade issue against a background of ongoing intimidation.
4. **Mr Leach** noted the points made by Mr MacCionnaith and emphasised that operational issues were a matter for the police themselves. Nonetheless, he acknowledged the real concerns felt on these points and would seek the views of the RUC. The considerable tension which existed in Portadown was of course not simply a security problem which could be resolved by police action, but rather a community problem which needed to be resolved through the indirect talks process.
5. **Mr MacCionnaith** then made some brief comments about the Forum and the Portadown initiative proposals. In summary, the committee welcomed the proposals but had a number of specific concerns about both. For example, on the Forum, safeguards were needed to ensure that local people had a real say in it and that the correct balance of representatives was established (particularly in the case of local politicians). Also, the Forum, while accommodating the local council and Portadown 2000, should not be unduly influenced by either organisation. As for the initiative: it should be a consensus-based model designed to tackle demonstrable need.
6. **Mr McCusker** explained that there were a number of models which could be used to develop the Forum. For example, the European partnership model under the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and the local partnerships which

were developed by Making Belfast Work. He stressed that there was no right or wrong model, but it needed to be flexible and responsive to local circumstances. The proposed Portadown initiative was very much based on the proven MBW model and focused on an *action team* approach. **Mr McCusker** said that the type of approach envisaged on both should provide the reassurances needed by the committee.

7. **Mr MacCionnaith** stressed that the establishment of the Forum and the introduction of the planned initiative should not be seen as a *trade-off* for their agreement on parades. In his view the area faced serious social and economic need and Government intervention was necessary. **Mr McCusker** said that he accepted that the area was suffering from multiple disadvantage, but made the point that in terms of objective analysis of need it would not rank as high as some other areas of Northern Ireland. The spill-over of civil unrest and heightened community tension resulting from the annual Drumcree parades made it imperative that the multi-faceted problems of the areas were tackled within a broad framework. **Mr MacCionnaith** accepted this point.
8. The meeting then turned again to the parade issue. The committee made it clear that they were opposed to any march this year, though flexible about the possibility of marches from 1999 onwards if an overall agreement was reached. From the discussion it was clear that the three key issues would be numbers, frequency, and any other conditions (bands). They had not given much thought to the possible details of a smaller parade, although in that context it would be helpful to know the number of office bearers in the Portadown District. The committee stressed that the Orange Order should use its influence to put an end to the nightly gatherings. **Mr Leach** agreed to register both points with the Orange Order at the meeting later that evening.
9. The following action was agreed:
 - (a) **Mr McCusker** and **Mr Gamble** would meet the Committee on Friday 14 August to flesh-out the Forum and Portadown initiative proposals;
 - (b) **Mr Leach** would raise with the Orange Order the issue of the nightly gatherings and ask them to use their influence to put a stop to them;
 - (c) **Mr Leach** would raise the local policing issues with the RUC;
 - (d) **Mr Leach** would explore the parades issue with the Orange Order, in particular, to ascertain their position on numbers, frequency and other conditions.

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4 September 1998