



MEMO

From: Sam Foster
Minister for the Environment

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

Tel:

cc: See distribution list
overleaf

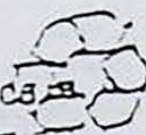
Date: 14 January 2000

L.C. WILL WARE

To: 1. First Minister
2. Deputy First Minister

PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT

1. Your 22 December minute sought first contributions to the work required to produce a Programme of Government. I understand that, at this stage, departmental Ministers are being asked to table ideas and proposals rather than draft text.
2. I attach an annex which sets out my proposals for inclusion in the Programme of Government. Depending on the degree of detail to be included in the Programme of Government, these may need to be edited down.
3. The nature of DOE's responsibilities means that many of the proposals that I am making touch on the interests of other departments. I have tried to identify these as clearly as possible so that necessary liaison and consultation can take place. The main cross-cutting themes I am proposing are Sustainable Development and Road Safety. Both have profound implications for the kind of place we want Northern Ireland to be and for the community we serve. Road Safety is literally a life and death matter. I am proposing that they should be adopted as major themes of the Programme of Government. My Department will need to work with other departments on how best to operationalise these. I believe that my proposals promote the coherence of policy and action which is essential to the concept of a Programme of Government.



4. As requested, I have taken account of public expenditure realities in framing my proposals, though I am sure that the Programme of Government will result in some changes to the prioritisation of our Budget. In doing so, I am obliged to question whether the pre-Devolution arrangements for allocating resources to regulatory and service delivery organisations within the Civil Service (eg the Planning Service and the Environment and Heritage Service but also other regulatory activities such as Transport Licensing and Enforcement) were effective. I do not believe that they were. I believe that they failed to recognise the significance of workloads that were and are driven by factors outside the control of those organisations. This point is illustrated by a comparison which I drew to Mark Durkan's attention when we met recently.

| | 1993/4 | 1999/00 | % change |
|--------------------------------|--------|---------|----------|
| DRC | 462 | 498 | +7.8 |
| Total public expenditure (DEL) | 4227 | 5126 | +21.3 |

While this is a broad comparison its import is clear and profound. It is quite clear that public services such as Planning and Environment have suffered significantly and indiscriminately from being resourced from within the much tighter DRC regime. The consequences are a backlog in planning applications of over 8,200; delays in the release of development land because 7 Area Plans are already out of date, with another 5 to reach their end date by 2001; an extensive backlog in transposing EU Environment Directives into NI legislation, exposing us to infraction proceedings; and shortfalls in the monitoring and enforcement of Environment law and policy. The Environment Committee of the Assembly is already pressing hard for these well-known problems to be resolved.

5. I suggest therefore that we need to adopt a new realism if we are to have a coherent and workable approach to land use planning, protection of the

environment and to other important regulatory activities. These are essential, front line public services, and should not be treated as if they were administrative overheads. The interests of many other Ministers and departments are adversely affected by the under-resourcing of these services yet the cost of solving the problems would be marginal on the scale of the NI Block.

6. I hope that Ministerial colleagues will recognise the importance of my proposals both to their departmental and to our collective objectives, and I look forward to discussion of the Programme of Government with you and in the Executive Committee.

7. Copies go to Departmental Ministers, Dermot Nesbitt, Denis Haughey and John Semple.

David Steele

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SAM FOSTER
Minister of the Environment

(Approved by *De Minora* and signed in his absence)

cc Executive Committee
Ministers
Mr Nesbitt
Mr Haughey
Mr Semple
Mr Quinn

PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT
PROPOSED INCLUSIONS: DCE

1. Sustainable Development (Major cross-cutting theme)

1.1. Policy:

- Commitment to integrating Sustainable Development principles into all policies and actions of Departments, public bodies and wider society in NI.
- Commitment to maintaining and enhancing Sustainable Development practices in the operations of all Departments (Greening Government).

1.2. Implementation:

- Production of a Sustainable Development Strategy to reflect the institutions, landscape, culture and way of life in Northern Ireland.
- Development of Sustainable Development Indicators relevant to the Strategy, taking account of the UK indicators set out in Quality of Life Counts, Indicators for a Strategy for Sustainable Development for the UK.
- Monitoring and consideration of all relevant Sustainable Development Indicators as an integral part of policy-making, programme planning and service delivery throughout the public service.
- Monitoring the environmental performance of Departments in relation to Green Transport Plans, Energy Conservation, Waste Minimisation, etc.

1.3. Implications for other Departments:

- Integration of Sustainable Development principles into policy, planning and service delivery in all economic, social and environmental programmes will potentially impact on the functions of all departments, depending on how broadly it is defined.

eg:-

- OFMDFM (Equality, Promoting Social Inclusion)
- DOE (Planning control, Environmental Protection, Natural and Built Heritage)
- DRD (Regional Planning, Transport, Roads, Water)
- DSD (Housing, Urban Regeneration)
- DETI (Green image, exports, inward investment, tourism, workforce health and productivity, energy efficiency)
- DHSS&PS (Public health, social services)
- DARD (Rural Development, rural tourism, animal health, Green image and agriculture exports)
- DE (aspects of curriculum, school planning and provision)
- DHFETE (access to higher and further education, employment services)
- DCAL (access to arts and culture, sport and leisure, inland waterways)
- DFP (construction)

2. Regional Strategic Framework

2.1 Policy:

- DRD the lead department on this
- Commitment with other Departments to the finalisation of the Regional Strategic Framework and to having regard to this

- Climate Change – Commitment to contribute to implementation of the UK Climate Change Programme (to be published early in 2000) in line with the UK's international obligations.
- Waste Management – Commitment to sustainable waste management by implementing the NI Waste Management Strategy (to be published in early 2000, subject to consultation with the Environment Committee and endorsement by the Minister).
- Biodiversity and Protection of the Countryside – Commitment to conserving key wildlife sites, the finest areas of countryside, and NI's biodiversity and to improving opportunities for accessing the countryside.
- Conservation of the Built Heritage – Commitment to recording, protecting and conserving the built heritage and, through the listing process, to securing the retention of buildings of architectural and/or historic merit.
- Dangerous Wild Animals - commitment to put in place legislation and an effective system for controlling ownership.

3.2 Implementation:

- Commitment to resourcing DOE/EHS to meet all the UK's EU and International obligations on the Environment, including legislation and monitoring backlogs and shortfalls.

4. Road Safety (Major cross-cutting theme)

4.1 Key Facts:

- 141 road deaths in 1999; deaths and serious injuries about 25% higher than GB; worst region in UK; proportionately less Road Safety Education Officers than GB.

- Benefits for the NI economy by reducing the economic costs of road accidents currently estimated at some £455m pa.

4.2 Policy

- Commitment to new Road Safety Plan including targets for reductions in deaths/serious injuries to 2010.
- Commitment to parallel legislation with GB on the mutual recognition of endorsable driving offences.

4.3 Implementation/Implications for other Departments

- Co-ordination between DOE (road safety publicity and education), DRD (safety-related investment in roads network, traffic calming) and NIO/RUC (enforcement of driving and vehicle standards).

5. Future of Local Government

5.1 Policy:

- Pending any comprehensive review of post-Devolution public sector structures, District Councils will continue to make a vital contribution to delivery of accountable public services.
- the comprehensive review to consider devolving substantial functions to local council control.

6. Co-operation with Republic of Ireland Government

6.1 Policy:

- Committed to co-operation in NSMC on:

- research into environmental protection; and
- water quality management and waste management in a cross-border context

- Also ongoing operational co-operation in shared sea loughs and the Irish Sea and in sharing experiences.

6.2 Implementation:

- Regular contacts and meetings with Environment Minister and Departments in ROI both within the framework of the North/South Ministerial Council and informally.

6.3 Implications for other Departments:

- Potentially of interest to DHSSPS in relation to the public health aspects of river water quality and to DARD from work on the environmental impact of agriculture and related activities.

General Service Delivery

7.1 Policy

- Commitment to continue to improve the efficiency and quality of service provided by the Department and its Agencies (Driver Vehicle Testing Agency, Driver Vehicle Licensing, Environment and Heritage Service and Planning Service)

7.2 Implementation

- Continued use of a wide range of management and quality techniques to make the best use of staff and other resources, to increase customer satisfaction and to improve business results, as evidenced by quality awards such as Investors in People and Charter Mark.