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**FROM: JOHN SEMPLE
2 NOVEMBER 1998**

cc distribution list below

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L)

**NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY TRANSITION PROGRAMME -
PROGRESS REPORT AND NEXT STEPS**

- Issue:** A progress report on the Transition Programme and proposals for the next stages.
- Timescale:** Decision by mid-November.
- Recommendation:** The Secretary of State is asked to note the progress to date and to endorse the proposed next steps.

1. This memorandum reports progress on the Transition Programme and seeks the Secretary of State's approval for the remaining stages.

Progress to Date

2. The seven seminars in the core programme have been held; so have half of the planned functional seminars led by Departments. The International Programme (Brussels and the United States) is now virtually complete in terms of planning and logistics. The arrangements for Brussels have been reported separately.
3. All parties represented in the Assembly have participated, some (inevitably) more often than others. In total, 87 out of 108 Members have attended one or more seminars. Understandably, the First and Deputy First Minister and other party leaders have not been able to attend but



reports indicate no lack of support on their part. Annex 1 gives a further picture.

4. Each seminar has been evaluated in writing by those attending. Their response has been consistently positive. The comments have not been productive of new ideas, but that is not surprising.
5. The Programme Office has maintained good informal contact with the party Whip's offices throughout. They have been welcoming and supportive, though none has been able to make positive proposals of their own. The over-riding impression from the Whips and their Members is that the Transition Programme has secured their confidence; it is seen to have been designed and implemented solely to serve their interests.
6. Equally, there can be no doubt about the impact of the Programme on the Members. In brief, they are now becoming aware, as many never were before, of what is entailed in assuming responsibility for the government of Northern Ireland. A degree of quiet apprehension is discernible in all parties, coupled with a dawning recognition that hard decisions (eg about closure of hospitals) are going to be their responsibility.
7. Our own judgement is that the Programme has by its practical, professional approach succeeded beyond [anybody's] expectations in enhancing the credibility of the new governance of Northern Ireland. An important factor in this has been the involvement of prominent and authoritative speakers and participants from both NI and elsewhere. Wendy Austin, John Simpson, Peter Hennessey, George Bain,



Bridget Hadfield, Robert Hazell, Christopher Allsop (member of the Governor's MPC) are but a few.

The Next Steps

8. The arrangements for 5 further functional seminars and the International Programme are all in place. These will maintain the same high standard. The Programme Planning Team is now focusing on (a) what is required to follow up what has already happened; and (b) the 'Supplementary' Programme. We are very conscious of the fact that the Transition Programme must now begin progressively to give way to programmes to serve Members continuing requirements which have been devised (and funded) by the Assembly itself. The Assembly's staff under the Presiding Officer (designate) are beginning to develop their own plans, but we believe that Member's requirements will need still to be met from the Transition Programme until well into the New Year. These further proposals have been prepared on this basis but they are subject to consultation with the First Minister, the Deputy First Minister and the Presiding Officer.
9. Follow up details:
 - 9.1 Producing and publishing a 'readers guide' to the NI 'Constitution', including the Standing Orders, ie Procedures of the NI Assembly, and arranging a seminar to promote understanding of it.
 - 9.2 Producing and publishing an amplified version of the guide to NI public expenditure programmes, procedures and mechanisms for



- decision-taking (as provided for the core seminar on Public Finance), covering the new systems for PE management.
- 9.3 Providing, early in 1999, an additional core seminar on 'Business and the Assembly', with participation by eg CBI, NIC/ICTU, small business organisations and major private sector companies. (This follows up a suggestion made by the First Minister). This might provide the occasion to launch a NI equivalent of the UK Industry and Parliament Trust.
 - 9.4 Establishing links, networks and arrangements for liaison with other representative bodies elsewhere, ie the UK, Eire and the EU and the United States of America.
 - 9.5 Assembling an indexed set of Transition Programme papers, to be available for reference by Assembly Members via the Assembly Library.
 - 9.6 Preparing an indexed set of Transition Programme papers for Permanent Secretary colleagues in the Scottish and Welsh offices. Both have displayed great interest in our pathfinding role.

The Supplementary Programme

10. The brochure published on 1 July 1998 said that provision had been made within available resources to meet 'needs identified in discussion with Party representatives'. This did no more than reflect the Planning Team's belief that more needed to be done than could be identified at that stage. That belief has been shown to be well-founded, although the



Whip's offices have not come forward with ideas; rather they have been cheerfully acquiescing in ideas put to them and expecting the Programme Office to continue to perform. The Team's view nevertheless is that there is more needing to be done in making available to Members expertise and information not covered in the original programme. The requirement falls under four heads.

10.1 Committees of the Assembly

- Subject programmes for each designated Committee going further and deeper than the functional seminars into the Committee's field of interest. Other members not on a particular Committee are also likely to want to participate.
- Each committee will need to develop skills and capacity in carrying out its work. They need to have an opportunity to discuss their methods of working with other similar committees from parliaments in the USA, UK, the Republic of Ireland and mainland Europe.
- Training for Clerks of Committees, their Deputies etc in procedures and the competencies to implement them.

10.2 The Whips and Party Offices

It is apparent that Members and supporting staff in these offices are on a long, steep learning curve and would welcome and benefit from exposure to party mechanisms in other representative democracies, eg in Europe.



10.3 Individual Members and Small Groups Requirements

A 'tailor-made' programme for those Members who are or wish to be engaged in specific subject areas, providing access to, and to be 'trained' by, acknowledged experts in their field. A Transition Programme calendar of relevant events of interest to Assembly Members will be published in November and up-dated quarterly.

10.4 Senior Civil Servants

Permanent Secretaries have been prominent in supporting the seminars both by participating themselves and enlisting their senior colleagues. But there is still much to learn about interacting with the new Democratic institutions and it is envisaged that they should participate in the remaining programmes for Assembly Members as well as providing follow-up activities arising out of the (very well attended) functional seminars. In addition, a programme of customised development is planned by the Central Personnel Group; and the views of the Senior Civil Service have been canvassed regarding appropriate sessions.

11. The schedule at Annex 2 summarises the action plan to give effect to the 'follow-on' and supplementary programmes.

Costs

12. The original provision was £300k for the Transition Programme. So far as possible, services have been sought and given free of charge - but, per contra, we have required and achieved a high standard in presenting the



programme and securing outstanding figures from outside Northern Ireland to contribute. Even so, expenditure incurred to date, with the most costly components to be met from Northern Ireland funds behind us, is about £130k.

13. Looking ahead, the Programme will have to meet the following costs:

- the functional seminars series (estimate £95k);
- the follow-on and supplementary programmes outlined above, recognising that these may continue longer into 1999 than originally expected (see para 14 below). The largest item will probably be expenses of expert professional contributors. The estimate is that £50k will cover all these costs. This leaves a reserve of £25k.

14. The International Programme will incur no more than marginal costs; the EU and USA will meet all Member's and Programme Office costs. Other costs, eg (a) Members' expenses in travelling to events in the programme and (b) costs incurred by Departments in providing information and events following on from the function seminars, will be met by the Assembly and Departments respectively.

End of the Programme

15. As stated above, we envisaged that the Assembly will wish as soon as practicable to take over responsibility for planning and delivering a Programme to meet Members' needs. This is unlikely to become



effective, however, until the Clerk and his supporting officers have been appointed, and even then there will be higher priority tasks confronting them. There can be no doubt that the Secretary of State's initiative in creating the Transition Programme has been amply justified, and we believe that the developments of it now proposed will continue to be both a stabilising and forward-looking contribution to the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

Conclusion

- 16. If the Secretary of State is content, the necessary actions will be taken now to offer consultation with the First and Deputy First Minister, and the Presiding Officer (designate) to implement the next stage in the Transition Programme.

John Semple

JOHN SEMPLE

ANNEX 1

PARTICIPATION IN THE CORE SEMINARS PROGRAMME

Date 1998	Title	Assembly Members	Civil Servants	External Participants	Total Attended
29 July	Overview of NI Government I	38	17	16	71
30 July	Public Finance I	19	12	8	39
25 Aug	Public Finance II	34	11	7	52
27 Aug	Overview of NI Government II	28	19	12	59
07 Sept	European Union	54	16	22	92
09 Sept	North/South Co-operation	49	31	38	118
24 Sept	Other UK Assemblies	37	10	12	59

PARTICIPATION IN THE FUNCTIONAL SEMINARS PROGRAMME

Date 1998	Title	Assembly Members	Civil Servants	External Participants	Total Attended
21 Sept	Health and Social Services	32	25	10	67
01 Oct	Agriculture	42	25	17	84
06 Oct	Public Health	29	20	15	64

ANNEX 2

Responsible for DesignA. Follow up to Core and Functional Seminars

Guide to Constitution and additional Core Seminars.

Programme Office

Guide to Public Expenditure.

DFP

Seminar Papers.

Programme Office and
Assembly Librarian

Additional core seminar (Business and the Assembly).

Programme Office

B. Committees of the Assembly

Subject programme.

Committee Chairs
(when appointed) and
Assembly Clerk

Committee Clerks Training

Assembly Clerk

Training in How Committees Work

Programme Office

C. Whips and Party Officials Programme

Programme Office

D. Individual/Small Group Programme

Programme Office
(with input from
Departments)

D(i) Calendar

November 1998

February 1999

May 1999

August 1999

[It is envisaged that the calendar will be compiled in the Transition Programme format distributed to each Assembly Member and Permanent Secretary.]

Responsible for Design

D(ii) Additional 'subject' Seminars/Visits

Programme Office
(with input from
Assembly Speaker and
Clerk, Departments
and Professional
Advisers)

E. Senior Civil Servants

Senior Civil Service
Division within the
Central Personnel
Group