

Sub 249103

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From: Malcolm Briant
Policy Services, Tourism and Equality Division
DETI

Date: 24 March 2003

To: Ian Pearson

*Noted
25/3*

PRESS RELEASE BY MR JOHN O'DONOGHUE, MINISTER FOR ART, SPORT AND TOURISM IN ROI ON THE EFFECT OF THE IRAQ WAR ON TOURISM

Objective: To bring to your attention a Press Release issued at the end of last week by John O'Donoghue, Minister for Art, Sport and Tourism in ROI, on the plans for dealing with the tourism implications of the Iraq War.

Issue: As you are aware we have in place with Tourism Ireland Limited (TIL) and the Department of Art, Sport and Tourism (DAST) in Dublin arrangements to deal with possible effects of the Iraq War on tourism on the island of Ireland. This includes keeping in touch with one another on communications with the media. Minister O'Donoghue issued a Press Release last week at the beginning of the Iraq War and this is attached for your information.

Timescale: **URGENT**

Presentational Issues: At this early stage we are not aware that the Northern Press has picked up the effects on tourism but of course may well do so if the War is prolonged and/or the trade either in the North or the South starts to lobby.

Recommendation: That you note Mr O'Donoghue's Press Release but that at this early stage you do not issue any similar statement.

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DEPARTMENT of ENTERPRISE,
TRADE and INVESTMENT
An Equal Opportunities Organisation



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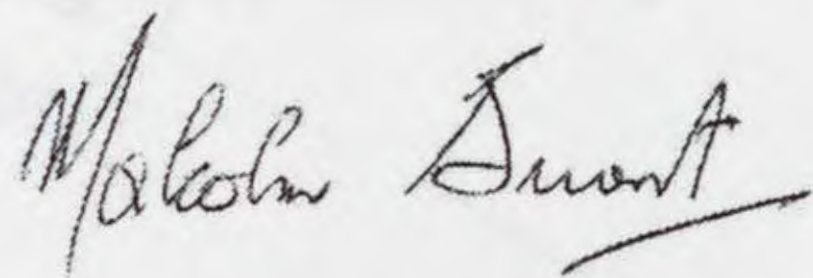
Background

We are in close contact with TIL and DAST on the arrangements of closely monitoring the effect of the Iraq War on tourism on the island of Ireland, making tactical changes in the marketing programmes, maintaining close contact with the tourism industry, and also exchanging information on media aspects.

2. Mr O'Donoghue was quick off the mark in issuing late last Thursday evening a Press Release on the possible effects on tourism of the War spelling out the marketing and structural arrangements for dealing with any negative effects on the industry. These are in line with the arrangements which we have agreed and which the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Ireland Limited reported and discussed with you at your meeting with them on 12 February 2003.
3. We also had prepared last week a Press Release for your consideration and use to be issued either as drafted or adapted as necessary to the circumstances. However at this early stage in the War and as we of today have not come under any pressure from the tourism industry, I do not think it tactically necessary for you to issue any statement at the moment.

Recommendation

4. I would recommend that you note the Press Release by Mr O'Donoghue and that we have a draft Press Release ready for your consideration when required, and that at this stage you do not issue any statement. We will keep this on the shelf and use at an opportune time when it is absolutely necessary.



MALCOLM BRIANT

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cc Bruce Robinson
 Alan Clarke
 David Carson
 Fiona Hepper
 Jill Heron

Iraq - The Tourism Implications

"Time for cool heads and measured responses" - O'Donoghue reveals tourism contingency plan.

Minister for Arts Sport and Tourism, John O'Donoghue, today expressed his regret at the outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf. *"With global economic slowdown, foot and mouth and Sept 11th, this is the fourth major challenge experienced by the tourism industry in the past 2 years"*, said O'Donoghue.

"This is a time for cool heads and measured responses. The key to tackling the situation is to closely monitor evolving consumer reactions in key marketplaces and to develop appropriate and balanced responses, in particular in the area of marketing and promotion", the Minister said.

O'Donoghue said that he had already met with the CEO's of the main tourism agencies - Tourism Ireland Ltd. and Bord Fáilte - to put in place plans for a response to the current scenario.

The Minister outlined the key elements of that response:

- *"We have put in place excellent communications from our key markets (Tourism Ireland has an overseas staff of about 100, located in 19 countries) to provide best intelligence driven by the marketplace, the reactions of consumers and the overseas trade."*
- *"We have put in place excellent communications with the tourism trade here (through the setting up of a Tourism Industry Response Group utilising Tourism Marketing Partnership structures, adjusted as appropriate, and also through regular communications bulletins, including e-zines. The Group held its inaugural meeting yesterday to review developments, and will meet again next week)".*
- *"I will continue to liaise with representatives of the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation and the CEOs of the Tourism State Agencies as matters develop."*

- *"Internal Response Teams have already been established within Tourism Ireland Ltd. and Bord Fáilte to deal with operational marketing and promotion issues."*
- *"Marketing and promotional campaigns will be adjusted in 2003 as appropriate, using the substantial level of funding provided in the Estimates. The location, nature and extent of these will be determined by the intelligence flowing from the marketplace on consumer and trade behaviour. Further details will be provided over coming weeks by the Tourism State Agencies"*

O'Donoghue said that experience with Foot and Mouth and the aftermath of Sept 11th showed that the Irish tourism industry was resilient and had the capacity to overcome great challenges. He was confident that it would face and overcome this latest challenge.

Ends/...