

Minister.
For your information
Jrs 8/4

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mc Diary.

THE NATIONAL TRUST
for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty

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28 March 2002

Dear Minister

Giant's Causeway: National Trust Position Paper

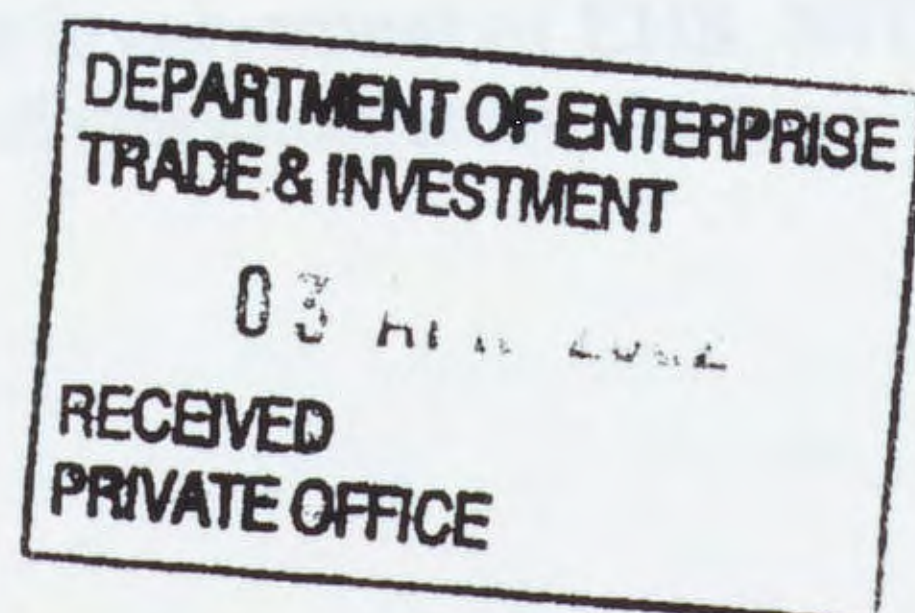
You will recall that in my letter to you of 25th March, I indicated that I would send you a position paper identifying a range of possible approaches to the development of new visitor facilities for the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site.

I am pleased to enclose this paper, which I am also sending to the other key stakeholders at the Giant's Causeway.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Laird

Ruth Laird
Director for Northern Ireland



CHAIRMAN: MR P J CASEMENT BA MSC
DIRECTOR: RUTH LAIRD BA MIPD
Registered Charity Number 205846



THE NATIONAL TRUST

THE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY WORLD HERITAGE SITE

A position paper by the National Trust on possible ways forward for the provision of new visitor facilities, March 2002

Introduction

The National Trust has consistently welcomed the decision of Moyle District Council to bring to an end the bid process and proposed sale of the visitor facilities at the Giant's Causeway, to retain the site in public ownership and to take on responsibility for the provision of replacement facilities. We recognise and respect the Council's stated preference to explore how best to undertake the project within its own resources and with grant aid. However, we have also expressed our willingness to be supportive of the Council, and to work closely with it, and all the other key stakeholders, to deliver our shared objective of world class, sustainable visitor facilities for Northern Ireland's only World Heritage Site.

This position paper sets out a number of possible ways forward which the National Trust has identified for consideration. It is not an exhaustive list and the paper is intended to inform and stimulate discussion at this stage of the process. The proposals listed have the potential to bring significant funding to the project, and would be financially attractive and beneficial to the Council and its ratepayers.

The National Trust is willing to discuss these proposals, or variations of them, in greater detail with the Council and other stakeholders at any time.

1. Stakeholder Approach

The stakeholder approach positions Moyle District Council as the co-ordinating body which draws in support from all the stakeholders involved in the Giant's Causeway including Environment and Heritage Service, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, the National Trust and the local community. The Council would control and lead the development and management of the facilities.

This approach enables the Council to lever considerable funding (probably in the order of 75%) from sources including NITB & IFI. The National Trust would be ideally positioned to provide the remaining funding either directly from its own resources or in partnership with the private sector and bodies such as Heritage Lottery Fund. The Council would therefore be able to develop the required facilities and retain controlling ownership at no cost to the ratepayers. A considerable ongoing revenue stream would also be assured on an agreed basis. The involvement of EHS, NITB and the community would represent the broader interests of stakeholders in the long term.

Key points:

- The site remains in public ownership

- The Council retains control and takes the lead in development of visitor facilities
- No Council funding required and therefore no impact on ratepayers
- Guaranteed revenue stream to the Council
- Solution ensures the long term management of the World Heritage Site and the visitor facilities on an integrated site
- Allows creative use of existing brown field site, without need for green field development
- Solution likely to be acceptable to planners.

2. **Joint Moyle District Council/National Trust Partnership Approach**

This approach represents a development of the stakeholder approach identified above and operates on the basis of a Joint Partnership Board to be established between Moyle District Council and the National Trust. Posts could also be nominated by Environment and Heritage Service and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and include community representation. There are two scenarios to be considered:

- a) as a long term Joint Partnership; or
- b) if the Council decided it was in its best strategic interests the Council could withdraw from the partnership in the medium term.

These variations are described below:

- 2a) Moyle District Council would bring the Visitor Centre site to the partnership arrangement, while the National Trust would make a significant up-front payment to Moyle District Council in recognition of the land asset which the Council is contributing to the arrangement. In addition the Trust would contribute finance towards the development and construction of new visitor facilities and this in turn would lever in grant aid. The Joint Partnership could raise funding from a number of sources: for example Heritage Lottery Fund, NITB, and the International Fund for Ireland.

In this scenario, the Joint Partnership Board would continue to manage the visitor facilities on completion of the development project, with revenue being shared on an agreed basis.

Key points:

- Joint involvement between Moyle District Council and the National Trust during the development phase and beyond
- The provision of a substantial lump sum payment to Moyle District Council by the National Trust at the outset of the Joint Partnership
- Visitor facilities developed with no impact on the ratepayers
- Ongoing revenue stream to the Council
- The retention of the site in public ownership.

- 2b) In this scenario, the project would essentially have three phases:

Phase 1: period to construction and re-opening of the Visitor Centre facility

Phase 2: the medium-term operating period after re-opening (say four years)

Phase 3: long-term future management

It is envisaged that the original Joint Partnership would stay in place until completion of Phase 1. During Phase 2, the opportunity would be given for Moyle District

Council to disengage from the partnership if it so wished, on the basis outlined below. A longer term Management Board involving the National Trust, EHS, NITB, and local community and business interests would continue to oversee the long-term management of the visitor facilities thereafter.

In this scenario, the up-front cash payment by the Trust to Moyle District Council at the commencement of the Joint Partnership would represent a significant proportion of the open market value of the site. During Phase 2 of the project all surplus revenue generated from the new Visitor Centre would go to Moyle District Council, until such time as the remaining agreed value of the site had been paid off. This process could have an agreed end date, say four years after the re-opening of the Visitor Centre, at which point the Trust would agree to pay off any outstanding shortfall should this still be necessary.

Key points:

- Joint involvement between Moyle District Council and The National Trust during the development phase
- The provision of a substantial lump sum payment to Moyle District Council by the National Trust at the outset of the Joint Partnership
- Visitor facilities developed with no impact on the ratepayers
- An on-going revenue to the Council for a number of years until the balance of the agreed sum is paid
- The retention of the site in publicly accountable ownership and then declared inalienable in time, thereby securing its long term future
- Solution ensures the long term management of the World Heritage Site and the visitor facilities in an integrated way
- Visitor facilities developed with a clear connection to the World Heritage Site
- Allows creative use of existing brown field site, without need for green field development
- Solution likely to be acceptable to planners.

3 National Trust purchase of Moyle District Council's holdings at the Giant's Causeway

Under the terms of the 1991 Tourism Order the Council is empowered to transfer its land holdings at the Giant's Causeway to the National Trust. The National Trust made it clear to the Steering Committee which was set up in the aftermath of the fire in 2000 that it would be prepared to invest a considerable sum to acquire the land, and to take on the responsibility to develop visitor facilities in partnership with other stakeholders. Such an option remains on the table for discussion.

Key points:

- Council benefits from a considerable lump sum payment for the purchase of the land.
- No requirement for future Moyle District Council funding, and therefore no impact on rates. (Loss of revenue currently generated on site would be offset by the lump sum payment.)
- Total integration of the World Heritage Site with the visitor facilities site
- Site declared inalienable and therefore protected for all time

- Allows creative use of existing brown field site, without need for green field development
- Solution likely to be acceptable to planners.

4 **Adjacent National Trust land taken into consideration**

The National Trust has extensive land holdings in the immediate vicinity of the Giant's Causeway (approximately 70 hectares). This includes the Causeway Hotel and Innisfree Farm and associated land, currently the Education Centre and work base for all our operations on North Antrim.

In taking into consideration a range of possible sites in order to identify the optimum location for visitor facilities, the National Trust would be willing to explore the options which may exist around Innisfree Farm and/or the Causeway Hotel. Such options could be developed jointly with other stakeholders on an agreed basis.

Conclusion

This position paper is intended only to provide a brief overview of the possible opportunities for the development of sustainable visitor facilities for the World Heritage Site. The National Trust is very happy to discuss any or all of these proposals (or variations of them) in greater detail with Moyle District Council and other stakeholders.

27th March 2002

For further information please contact:

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