

From: Peter May
Principal Private Secretary

19 June 2000

cc Mr McCusker
Mr Gamble

Mr Cluney

FOCUS FIRST : AWAYDAY

I attach, for consideration, a draft article for the OFM/DFM magazine on the awayday. I realise I may be too late, and feel free to shorten the text if needed.

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DRAFT ARTICLE FOR FOCUS FIRST

THE AWAYDAY

My own dictionary offers three definitions for the term awayday:

- (i) 1970s British Rail cheap day return to far flung parts;
- (ii) an 'inspirational visioning of the future involving and empowering' a group of staff;
- (iii) a day and a night out of the office in which the objective is to drink as much alcohol as possible.

The fashionable approach would undoubtedly be to say that I cannot recall which of the 3 the awayday held at the Hilton Templepatrick on 17-18 May turned out to be. Sadly, however, that could not be said to be the truth for most at least – the failure even to spend, at the time of writing, all of the kitty gathered for the purposes of the 3rd definition merely highlights the point.

The reality is that the Senior Management Team of the Department, together with representatives of the advisers of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister took time out to examine what changes were needed to make the Department work more fruitfully when suspension ended, and how a greater sense of identity for those working within the Department could be created. Discussions were wide-ranging; focussing on the way the Executive Committee operated, how Ministers and junior Ministers interacted with the wider Department, and stretching to include

thoughts on how the new administration could set its stall out early on by announcing a string of policy initiatives. A number of specific actions were agreed:

First, there was a clear commitment from the senior management group to brief staff on the issues that were discussed.

Second, that on their return to office the First Minister, Deputy First Minister and the two junior Ministers would be briefed on the work so far.

Third, that a further note would be issued by Mr Semple to update staff on the project.

Finally, that the Project Board would meet in June to carry forward the project.

The role, values and culture which the Department might aspire to were also addressed. Drafts have been produced and circulated for comments among those present, with a view to initiating a Departmental-wide planning process during the summer.

Perhaps the only way to judge whether the money was spent wisely was to examine what difference it made. These specific actions set out above are only the start of reaching that judgement. You still have the opportunity to contribute, hopefully in a constructive way, to making the Department work better and to giving people both the sense that their

contribution counts and that they are part of a wider team with a clear objective.