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To: 1. Mr. Murray, 2. Mr. Nally
From: Colm Butler

NORTHERN IRELAND TALKS - STRAND II ARRANGEMENTS

Advance visit

I visited Stormont last evening with **Mary Whelan**, Foreign Affairs, to see proposed room allocations for the delegations at the 'Strand II' talks. Our contacts were

- (a) **Marcus Dodds**, NIO;
- (b) **David Hill**, Head of Talks Secretariat; and
- (c) **John Townson**, Stormont (Supt. of the Houses equivalent).

2. Irish delegation rooms

The First Floor plan of Stormont shows, in solid yellow, the areas set aside for the Irish delegation.

(a) Rooms

- rooms **139 to 149** have interconnecting doors, so that they can be grouped or configured as required,
- room **149** (28ft. x 20ft.), currently set out as a makeshift TV Studio, is to be transformed into an office suitable for use **by the Taoiseach**,
- rooms **150 and 152** can also be made available (at a push) if needs be - Room 152 is at present used as an RUC rest room,
- rooms **141 to 148** are all equal in size (20ft. x 14ft.) and can be allocated according to needs,
- room **139/140** (20ft. x 24ft.) could be used for a number of purposes, e.g. secretarial pool or small conference/meeting room,
- room **142** (20ft. x 35ft.) could also be used for conference or secretarial purposes;

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(b) **Toilets**

- room 151, currently used for storage, can be converted for use as a **bathroom for the Taoiseach**,
- we asked for use of the **toilets** in the corridor to the Commons Visitors Gallery, as there is no gents toilet adjacent to the Irish delegation rooms;

(c) **Catering**

- there are no dedicated **catering facilities** in the Irish delegation areas, or indeed any of the delegation areas,
- catering can be provided from the kitchens beside the talks Conference Room either in the dining areas shown on the floor plan or in the delegation rooms, by arrangement with the catering manager; and

(d) **Press**

- there are no press briefing facilities within the building itself,
- there is a **Press Village** beside the building along the West side, in which there is some briefing/conference facility.

3. **British delegation rooms**

The area marked in blue is for the British delegation. **Room 106** is the Secretary of State's room, and is the same size as the room envisaged for the Taoiseach.

The Talks Secretariat are located elsewhere in the building and their rooms were not identified to us.

4. **Location of the talks**

The **Conference Room**, shown in pink, is where the "Strand I" talks are taking place. It is proposed to enlarge the conference table to accommodate the larger number involved in "Strand II".

The other rooms to the right and left of the Conference Room are for general use as shown, with the **Dining Room marked in orange** set aside for support staff.

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6. **Northern delegation rooms**

The **Ground Floor Plan** shows the allocation of delegation rooms to the Northern participants in the talks.

7. **The Chairman's rooms**

The chairman of the "Strand II" talks will be accommodated in **Rooms 16 and 17**.

8. **Timescale**

The timescale for the completion of work on the rooms is very tight. They would like to have the rooms ready for occupation by about 19 June with all works completed one week later.

9. **Overnight accommodation**

We had lengthy discussions on the question of **overnight accommodation** for members of the delegation. This aspect of the arrangements is far from resolved. Also, **Dodds** seems to be hyper-sensitive to Unionist feelings. For example, there would be no question of anybody staying overnight at Stormont itself, it has never been done before and "not even *CRAIGAVON* ever slept at Stormont".

On the availability of 'Luttrellstown-type' accommodation, they have not been able to come up with any real suggestions. Their feeling is that some people would be wary of providing such accommodation, and the National Trust do not let out their properties. They suggested that we might make contact with people, if we knew of any.

We visited the **Culloden Hotel** which, if selected, would have to be taken over completely for security reasons. The NIO highlighted the costs associated with such a solution and mentioned figures of about £750,000 to £1,000,000 for a five week booking. It is also far too big for our requirements. From the outside, we saw **Stormont House Hotel**, which is almost at the end of the Stormont avenue, but appears to be a security problem because of its proximity to the main road.

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A number of options were suggested by us and were not favourably received for a variety of reasons, such as security, "historic resonance" associated with particular locations, or difficulty in movement to and from Stormont. Stormont Castle was ruled out on the basis that it is not suitable and is being used as offices for senior NIO officials.

Dodds gave the impression that they would prefer the Irish delegation to come in quietly, without much visibility, do the business and leave quietly. We pointed out that there would be no question of the Irish delegation 'sneaking in' and that they would expect to be treated with due dignity.


Maryfield was repeatedly suggested as offering the best and easiest solution in terms of adaptability and security. They say it could be easily adapted to provide accommodation for four people at Ministerial level and a number of additional rooms for officials. Travelling time between Maryfield and Stormont is about 10 minutes by car, and it has helicopter landing facilities if required.

10. **Further action**

They asked us to look at a number of accommodation related questions as set out on the list attached. They also gave us copies of their draft note on administrative arrangements for consideration.

We undertook to come back to them as soon as possible on the room allocations at Stormont and on the question of using Maryfield for overnight accommodation.

ALSO, A DECISION IS REQUIRED ON WHO SHOULD TAKE OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SETTING UP THE IRISH DELEGATION ROOMS WHEN THE DELEGATION HAS BEEN SELECTED.


31 May, 1991.