

E. R.

D. Cassin

P/A

CONFIDENTIAL

NH/115/87

cc. Mr Spence
Mr M Elliott
Mr Bell
Mr D J R Hill - LOB
Mr G McConnell

Mr S Hewitt

CROSSMAGLEN GAELIC ATHLETIC CLUB

1. Following the note from Principal Secretariat of 10 March 1987 on this subject, I have been pursuing this matter with the Department of Education and you have seen some subsequent correspondence.
2. DENI have now given me the enclosed Background Note and requested that this should be used to give the Secretariat an **oral briefing** in response to their original enquiry. We agreed in our recent discussion that you would use this material to reply verbally to the points raised in the original enquiry.
3. In light of earlier attitudes within DENI about this particular subject, some progress at least has been made in the production of this Background Note.
4. Perhaps when your oral briefing session has taken place, you might advise me accordingly so that we can complete our records on this matter.

Nigel Hamilton

NIGEL HAMILTON

Central Secretariat

3 June 1987

/JH

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Background Note

CROSSMAGLEN GAC

1. Crossmaglen GAC applied to DENI on 4 December 1986 for grant on the costs (estimated £150,000) for the provision of a sports hall with social and ancillary facilities. The Department's initial response gave no cause for optimism to the Club as resources for 1987/88 had been allocated.
2. Subsequently the Department was asked by the Club's Solicitor, Mr Rory McShane, to meet officials of the Club at Crossmaglen. (Mr McShane is also Solicitor to Newry and Mourne Council and is a member of the Sports Council.) The meeting took place on 13 March and Club officials explained in some detail what the Club proposed to provide.
3. The Club has a full size gaelic pitch and is presently constructing another close by. New extensive changing rooms are also in the course of construction and the cost of both these projects will take up most of the £150,000 compensation paid by NIO.
4. As a final phase the Club would like to replace their existing hall to provide a sports hall which would also be capable of providing a social facility for the Club and the village generally.
5. The response given to the Club during the meeting was that within the Department's voluntary sports club's capital programme their project for a sports hall would not rate a high priority. In 1987/88 just over £300,000 is available for the programme and there are over 80 applications for grant-aid; nearly half the applications come from gaelic athletic clubs. With demand far exceeding the resources available priority has to be given to those clubs which do not have basic playing or changing facilities and which have been longest in the queue for grant-aid. In 1987/88 support will be provided to a range of sports and almost one-third of the budget has been allocated to GAA clubs.
6. On a wider community front it was suggested that Newry and Mourne Council

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

might wish to endorse the Club's contention that their facilities provided a community focus. The Department would be prepared to consider such an endorsement together with any submissions from a security viewpoint in reaching conclusions about the proposal should there be some flexibility in the programme later in the financial year. On that basis the Club was asked to submit plans for technical appraisal. In considering a Council endorsement the Department would prefer it to be expressed in terms of a financial contribution and Mr McShane and the Club are to approach the Council on that basis. The Council will though take into account the fact that it has already provided a community centre in the village.

7. On the wider points raised in the Secretariat's request Annex I gives details of support to voluntary sports clubs between 1974/75 and 1985/86. The 1986/87 details have not been finalised but the grant to GAA clubs was almost £50,000 representing around 16% of resources available to the programme. Annex 2 gives details of support from the Sports Council for equipment grants.

8. Compensation payments do not provide an automatic barrier to grant applications. However compensation is relevant to the extent that it provides available resources to a club to undertake capital development. What facilities a club has or is capable of providing is relevant in determining allocations in what has continually been a restricted budget.

9. The question of GAA Rule 15 on membership by members of the security forces has always caused some controversy. GAA clubs are sports bodies within the meaning of the Recreation and Youth Services (NI) Order 1986 and are therefore entitled to be considered for grant-aid. Government policy though restricts the level of support available to sports clubs with restricted membership rules and GAA clubs fall within that category. Clubs with open membership can receive support at 50% or 75% depending on their existing level of facilities. The rate for clubs with restricted membership rules is 33 1/3% or 50%.

10. The Government has come under considerable pressure over the years to reconsider policy on GAA clubs and the legal basis for support has been considered in some depth by the law officers. Successive Government's have

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

concluded in legal and policy terms that grant should continue to be paid, though it has been made clear on many occasions by Ministers that the rule in question is viewed with abhorrence. When suitable occasions arise the GAA is made fully aware of the Government's view.

CONFIDENTIAL