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NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

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SECRETARY OF STATE ANNOUNCES ACTION FOR "MAKING BELFAST WORK"

The Secretary of State, Rt Honourable Tom King MP today announced a new programme - "Making Belfast Work" - to reinforce the efforts to tackle the social, economic and environmental problems of the most disadvantaged areas in Belfast.

"Its purpose", he said "is to stimulate greater economic activity, reinforce local enterprise, improve the quality of the environment and equip the people of these areas to compete successfully for available employment".

The Secretary of State said that he would be reviewing, in the context of the 1988 Public Expenditure Survey, the overall level of resources which can be made available for this programme. "I am already providing significant public investment, and I have allocated a further £10 million for expenditure on projects in the current financial year ending 31 March 1989".

Mr King said that there are disadvantaged areas in all parts of the city, but particularly in the West of Belfast, and that these covered both the Protestant and Catholic communities.

He said that he had asked Richard Needham MP, the Minister responsible for the environment in Northern Ireland, who has special responsibility for Belfast, to take charge of this programme. He will be supported by a new central government unit, and will work closely with the public agencies, the private and voluntary sectors.

The Secretary of State stressed that much progress had already been made in Belfast, particularly during the past 5 years, and especially in improving housing conditions and revitalising the city centre. He said: "But a number of areas show high levels of

unemployment, relatively low levels of skill, poor educational qualifications and a depressing physical environment. The Government is determined to do everything it can to help improve the quality of life of the people in these areas. I am therefore announcing today how we further intend tackling these problems".

The Secretary of State said that however much people of goodwill in the local communities, the churches, the public and voluntary bodies try to do to revive the areas of greatest deprivation, it is the blight of terrorism that undermines the spirit, destroys hope, drives out initiative, instils fear and turns away opportunities for investment. The Government can play its part, supported by all those who wish to see better times for the people of Belfast. The Secretary of State added that it is an end to terrorism that will do most to bring back confidence, jobs, self-esteem and opportunities.

Detailed facts and figures which he had published today showed that people living in the most deprived areas were worse off than others in the Belfast urban area and Northern Ireland in their prospects for employment, their educational achievements, their environmental conditions and their health.

"I realise that for this programme to succeed it must harness the goodwill and enthusiasm of all the community".

"Over the last 18 months we have established 4 action teams covering the areas of Lower Falls, Lower Shankill, Duncairn, New Lodge, Whiterock, Turf Lodge, Springmartin, Lower Ormeau, Short Strand, Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and Lower Newtownards Road. These teams have had considerable success and have supported 150 local community initiatives since they were set up. I now propose to double the number of teams, each with an annual budget of £500,000".

"The Government will give particular support to:

More Jobs and Better Training

We will be seeking to attract new investment to the areas, to develop local enterprises

and new businesses, to encourage the development of an enterprise culture and, while permanent, viable employment is being created, to maximise the opportunities for jobs under the ACE scheme. At the same time, it is essential that school-leavers and the unemployed are adequately trained in the skills which employers need. Specific projects this year will include:

- Establishment of Job Markets on Falls and Shankill Roads.
- Development of new and additional schemes for open learning, the training of unemployed adults and Information Technology training in West Belfast.
- Creation of Job Clubs, similar to the 2 now established on Falls and Shankill Roads.
- Improvements to community workshops to include:
 - enhancement of training facilities;
 - enhanced job search possibilities by an "after YTP job service";
 - additional expenditure on literacy and numeracy;
 - more trainers to improve quality of training;
 - more consultancy work and secondment of business advisers.
- An additional £500,000 for LEDU to help small businesses.
- Specific training for 120 adults in the retail and distribution sector in the 12-month period starting September 1988.
- 500 extra ACE jobs, with priority for self-help community initiatives and

local community improvement.

- A major package of support provided for the West Belfast Enterprise Board to help it establish a centre for enterprise development in the former American Monitor premises.

Education

If young people are to have a proper foundation for their future, there must be a substantial improvement in educational attainment, greater availability of further and adult education, and closer links between schools and employers. We shall be discussing with the relevant education authorities immediate action to:-

- develop a new adult and continuing education centre at Whiterock in the former St Thomas' school;
- strengthen through rationalisation secondary school provision in the area;
- improve maintenance and the physical environment of schools;
- provide additional equipment for improved classroom support.

Health

There is a need to tackle the formidable problems of poor health care, low levels of immunization and inadequate health prevention measures. We will be discussing with the Eastern Health and Social Services Board action this year which will:-

- appoint a second facilitator to support local GPs in raising standards of general health care;
- set up an immunization task force;
- develop further health promotion projects;

- take forward substantially increased maintenance and environmental works on facilities and buildings in these areas.

Environment

To make these areas more attractive to potential employers and to improve conditions for the local people, more needs to be done to upgrade the physical environment. This year we will be undertaking the following additional work:

- Reconstruction and resurfacing works on carriageways and footways in the areas including:
 - Silverstream, Tynedale and Highfield estates
 - Clonard Gardens and Kashmir Road
 - Falls Road
 - Medway Street
 - Grosvenor Road/Westlink to the Royal Victoria Hospital
 - Whiterock Road
 - Cliftonville Road
 - Iveagh Estate
 - Castlereagh, Woodstock and Cregagh Roads
 - Lower Ormeau
- New street lighting schemes throughout the areas
- 30 Environment Improvement schemes including
 - Alliance, Manor Street, Ainsworth/Springfield
 - Crumlin Road, Tudor Place/Agnes Street, Cliftonpark Avenue
 - York Road/Antrim Road
 - Grove Youth and Community Centre
 - Duncairn Gardens

- Artillery Flats
- Connswater
- Shankill/Westlink

Voluntary Sector

We will be striving to enlist the positive involvement of local people, especially through voluntary and community initiatives, in tackling their social and economic problems. In addition to the efforts of the existing and new Action Teams and the assistance available to local enterprise groups, a further £250,000 will be provided this year to help the voluntary sector.

I am sure that this programme will receive the support and participation of all those dedicated to reconciliation and peace. Government is determined that those living in the most deprived areas, especially the old, the unemployed, the disabled and the sick, should be given every opportunity to share in the improving fortunes of their city.