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26 June 1990

MR GOWDY
MS O'HARE

Mr Nelson

Re x in para 3, could you sort out with
Bernie who might speak to David De Burca,
given the departure on leave at the end of next
week & Bert O'Hare's present absence, would you
also see if we could set up the inspection
envisaged?

cc MR NELSON

M/27.6

TOURISM: BORDER CHECKPOINTS

1. I attended the meeting between Mr Needham and Mr Cope this afternoon to discuss this topic, in the light of the concerns expressed by Hugh O'Neill at recent ISG meetings. Also taking part were John Ledlie, John McKervill and Col David Strudley (?) from Army HQ.
2. Before getting on to the subject of permanent vehicle checkpoints (PVCs in army terminology) Mr Needham raised the issues of the effects on visitors, and particularly overseas business visitors, of the appearance of the access control point to lower Chichester Street (at the Law Courts), and of the intimidating habit of Army Land Rover occupants appearing out of the top and back of their vehicle with rifles pointed in a businesslike manner. While he noted the paramount importance of security considerations, the Minister nevertheless asked that something be done to reduce the awfulness of the appearance of the former, particularly because of its closeness to IDB House, and about the necessity for the behaviour in the case of soldiers travelling in Land Rovers. Mr McKervill said that a meeting was due to take place tomorrow to try to sort out the access point at Chichester Street; and Col Strudley explained why it was considered necessary, in the heightened security danger which they felt at present, for soldiers both to wear their helmets and to keep a careful look out for attacks on their vehicles. Mr Needham emphasised the negative effects which these two

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problems had had on recent visits when he had been escorting a group of senior Japanese businessmen in one case and Mr Jay Pritzker in the other, and hoped that the temptation by soldiers to use their telescopic sights to check out the prettier girls in the surroundings might be inhibited more effectively than at present. He also asked that Army HQ might examine whether Land Rovers needed so frequently to use the main shopping streets in Belfast where the negative impact on tourists and ID visitors would be greatest.

3. In discussing PVCs, Mr Needham emphasised that he did not wish in any way to dilute security. He felt, however, that a considerable amount could be done to alleviate the physical appearance of the checkpoints, and that consideration could be given to localised road widening at checkpoints so that when less than 100% of the traffic was being checked there need not be major traffic delays. I made Hugh O'Neill's point that it should also be possible to have the Army present a less intimidating and more informed impact on visitors passing through PVCs and that a little on-the-spot reassurance would be helpful. Mr Cope said that the Army was well aware of the appearance problems with their PVCs and, after some discussion about the practicalities and the security considerations, we agreed that it would make sense to take an on-site look at the problems and to see if relatively simple solutions might be possible. Mr Ledlie noted that the Newry/Dundalk road checkpoint was in process of considerable reconstruction and Ministers agreed that some sort of solution ought to be possible at relatively little cost. Neither DED nor NIO proved willing to accept responsibility for any such costs, but Ministers did agree that the funding question could be looked at once we had got some idea of what might be possible and the general order of cost. Mr Needham was anxious that Bert O'Hara should represent the Tourist Board on this mission and John Ledlie is also personally keen to be involved. It was agreed that some sort of landscape expert should

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join them. I have undertaken to arrange this get-together as soon as possible. (At Mr Needham's suggestion, we should talk to David McAuley to try to arrange a landscape architect from DOE Works Service/PSA).

4. So far as visitor reassurance at PVCs is concerned, John Ledlie came up with the idea that we might devise a leaflet for Army or RUC personnel at border checkpoints to give to motorists if any delay is involved. It was agreed that this would be worth trying, that DED/NITB/Mr Needham would devise the wording, and that DED/NITB would find the money to fund it.

Perry McDonnell

PERRY McDONNELL

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CONFIDENTIAL*northern ireland tourist board*

RIVER HOUSE, 48 HIGH STREET, BELFAST BT1 2DS, TELEPHONE 231221 TELEX 748067 FAX 240900.

22 June 1990

Miss B O'Hare
DED Tourism Branch**BORDER CHECK POINTS**

Mr O'Neill has the following additional comments to his letter of 9 May 1990 to Minister Needham:

- (1) Border posts could be made more attractive and friendly. A lot of money needs to be spent on improving the appearance of border posts in order to give the best possible 'First Impressions' and welcome to Northern Ireland. At the moment there appears to be no formal programme with regard to construction of border posts and materials such as corrugated iron/metal appear to be put together simply according to the instructions or orders of the local commander.
- (2) People manning border checkpoints should be under continuous direction and supervision to ensure that they give a service commensurate with discrete and efficient security. In addition, when there are delays at border posts, there should be people patrolling car queues giving those waiting a friendly reassurance. Otherwise tourists approaching checkpoints can become frightened and turn back. *
- (3) Staff manning checkpoints should be fully briefed on how information can be obtained re tourist facilities in Northern Ireland and au fait on directions to/time to reach various destinations.
- (4) Immediate approaches to the border should display 'Welcome to Northern Ireland' signs.
- (5) No particular examples of border posts can be highlighted - they are all poor and intimidating, particularly with regard to attendance of soldiers manning posts. Much tourism is being lost as a result. *

*S. J. Banks*S J BANKS
PA/Hon H O'Neill**CONFIDENTIAL**

Chairman: The Hon. Hugh O'Neill Executive Director: R. J. O'Hara

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21 June 1990

PS/MR NEEDHAM (B&L)

cc MR FELL
MR GOWDY
MS O'HARE
MC

FROM: P S McDONNELL

TOURISM: BORDER CHECKPOINTS

1. Mr Needham is to meet the Minister of State on Tuesday 26 June at 3.15 pm in Stormont Castle to discuss whether anything can be done to improve the appearance of border checkpoints and the ways in which checking procedures are carried out. The meeting has been arranged in response to correspondence from Hugh O'Neill, Chairman of the NITB, raising both of these issues.

BACKGROUND

2. The condition of border crossing points has been of continuing concern to the DED/NITB group which is overseeing the implementation of the new strategy for developing tourism in NI. The group feels that these posts, constructed in many cases of rough steel, corrugated iron and concrete, present an unattractive and often intimidating impression to visitors and tourists travelling from the ROI. Particular problems are reported in Fermanagh where a system of one-way traffic is operated at a number of posts. Those most commonly mentioned in complaints are:-

Roscor Bridge (near Belleek)
Derrylin (Enniskillen - Belturbet road)
Clontivrin (Lisnaskea - Clones road)

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Long delays are also reported at Middletown, on the Armagh-Monaghan road and at the main crossing point on the Newry-Dundalk road.

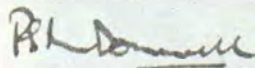
3. Clearly security considerations are paramount, and it is difficult to reconcile the need to ensure that these posts are impregnable to attack and the desire to give them a welcoming appearance. There is, in the minds of NIO, a related problem in that making the posts look better might create an unwanted impression of permanence. However, NIO do appear to accept that it should be possible to improve the condition of at least some of the more important crossing points.

4. Mr Needham might suggest that one way forward might be to undertake a small pilot scheme involving, say, two checkpoints (perhaps the one on the Newry-Dundalk road and one in Fermanagh) and attempt a programme of physical refurbishment. Some localised road widening, to alleviate the traffic delays, might also be worth considering.

FUNDING

5. The other main difficulty is money. NIO officials imply that none is available for such problems. Nor, either, do DED or NITB have provision for funding for a project of this nature. It is also highly unlikely that it would meet the criteria for EC aid under the Tourism Programme or the INTERREG measures, although I understand DFP is exploring the possibility within the latter. If, however, Mr Cope is agreeable in principle to the pilot scheme approach we can arrange to explore possible funding routes in more detail.

6. I will accompany the Minister to the meeting.



PERRY McDONNELL

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Netherleigh

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Mr P Bell
Northern Ireland Office
Stormont House
Stormont
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BT4 3TT

cc. Miss O'Hare.

4 June 1990

Dear Peter

I promised to write to you to follow up our discussion about the physical condition of border crossing posts and police vehicle checkpoints - and I imagine that you will now have seen the 9 May letter to Mr Needham from the chairman of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

I explained to you that these have been of continuing concern to the DED/NITB group which is overseeing the implementation of the new strategy for the development of tourism in NI. The group feels that the border crossing posts in particular can present an unattractive and unwelcoming impression to tourists coming from the ROI and in some instances are quite intimidating. The lengthy checking procedures in some cases also add to these difficulties.

It is, of course, fully appreciated that security considerations must take precedence. Within that context, however, the group believes that something should be possible to minimise the adverse image and the resultant effect on the growth of an increasingly valuable tourism industry. It is important for tourism that we present, as far as possible, a reassuring message to visitors and it is unfortunate that for some their first view of NI can be so formidable.

Yours sincerely

PERRY McDONNELL



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
An Equal Opportunities Organisation

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TO: PS/MINISTER OF STATE (B&L)
FROM: PS/MR NEEDHAM, DED

cc PS/Mr Needham, DED, DOE
PS/PUS B&L & L
PS/Sir K Bloomfield
Mr Stephens
Mr Fell
Mr Wilson
Mr Gowdy
Mr McDonnell
MC

APPEARANCE OF BORDER CHECK POINTS

The Minister has received a letter from the Chairman of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (copy attached) expressing concern about the appearance of border crossing points into Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland.

Mr Needham would welcome a meeting with your Minister to discuss this problem.

Paddy Harty
PP. JENNY PYPER
PS/Mr Needham

15 May 1990

1804/16/5
Miss O'Hara
M.S.

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DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
An Equal Opportunities Organisation

northern ireland tourist board

RIVER HOUSE, 48 HIGH STREET, BELFAST BT1 2DS, TELEPHONE 231221 TELEX 748087 FAX 240960.

9 May 1990

*Gmt 103800/90
GMC McDowell*

Richard Needham Esq MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Economic Development
Netherleigh
Massey Avenue
BELFAST
BT4 2JP

*u H. H. H.
H. H. H.
H. H. H.*

Dear Minister

I have spoken to you on a number of occasions about our increasing concern at the intimidating appearance of the surface entry points into Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland. As you know, a clear majority of our pure holiday visitors come from, or through, the Republic of Ireland.

Of course, we are not seeking to compromise security in any way but we do feel that more attention could and should be given to the appearance of these border control points and to the way in which the checking procedures are handled so as to give a more friendly welcome and experience to the visitor arriving by road transport.

Recent security incidents have led to an increase in the amount of protection at the border check points. This has taken the form of a haphazard use of corrugated iron, concrete and steel. They are all different. Some are very much worse than others and we are increasingly being put in a position of being asked to recommend which border crossing is the least intimidating and will offer the least delay for tourists.

It was suggested earlier this year that we should seek to bid for European funds to assist in the landscaping of these cross border control points. I do not know how this is progressing or whether it has received any favourable response. It would be a good use for any cross-border funds available from the EEC.

As I know from my experience of Northern Ireland Airports, very effective security checks and controls can be achieved at the same time as being friendly, unobtrusive and informative when delays are necessary.

Chairman: The Hon. Hugh O'Neill Executive Director: R. J. O'Hara

Richard Needham Esq MP

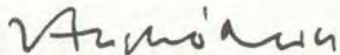
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9 May 1990

Can I suggest that you request an urgent meeting with the Minister of State who I believe carries the overall responsibility for these matters. I do believe that we could provide a number of solutions to improve the worsening situation as summer traffic increases. Major delays are becoming an every day occurrence.

We are expecting a good year for tourism with many first time visitors and it would be unfortunate if they get bad first impressions when arriving in Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely



HUGH O'NEILL
Chairman