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Department of

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Culture

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Arts and

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Leisure

*A Brief
Introduction
for Staff*

Welcome Aboard!

As everyone knows, DCAL has been established as one of the 10 Departments which was set up following the devolution of power to Northern Ireland's new Assembly. With around 350 staff and a budget of nearly £65 million, its responsibilities are wide ranging and subsume some of the duties previously carried out by the Departments of Education, Environment, Agriculture and Finance and Personnel.

While DCAL's Press Office proposes to introduce an in-house magazine in the not too distant future, the first edition of which will feature informative articles on the areas of work for which we are responsible, this News Sheet aims to give readers a snapshot of our new Department's responsibilities. It will also give you details of where to find everyone at the moment and how they can be contacted.

Who is in charge?

Our Minister is **Mr Michael McGimpsey**, Member of the Legislative Assembly for South Belfast, and our new Permanent Secretary is Dr Aideen McGinley, formerly the Chief Executive of Fermanagh District Council.

Their officers are in DCAL's Headquarters which are located at:

3rd Floor, Interpoint, 20-24 York Street, Belfast BT15 1AQ
Telephone: 028 9025 8825 Fax: 028 9025 8906.

You will be interested to know that plans to move more of our staff to Interpoint are well advanced and you will hear more in due course.

What does DCAL do?

DCAL is the Department responsible for the central administration of Arts and Culture, Museums and Libraries, Sport and Leisure, Inland Waterways and Inland Fisheries. It also has overall responsibility for the Ordnance Survey, the Public Record Office, language policy, matters relating to the National Lottery, Millennium events and the Northern Ireland Events Company. In addition, it has responsibility for two of the cross-border implementation bodies dealing with Waterways Ireland and Language issues.

There are five Divisions administering this work in DCAL:

Culture, Creative Industries and Sport

Previously the responsibility of the Department of Education, this aspect of the work involves the Arts, Museums, Film, Libraries, creative industries, Sport, National Lottery matters, the Odyssey Millennium Project and the Ulster Historical Foundation.

Among the initiatives planned for 1999/2000 are a feasibility study for a National Sports Stadium for Northern Ireland, the development of a Northern Ireland Network Centre as part of a UK Sports Institute and the completion of the Odyssey Project in Belfast.

Forthcoming developments in our Museums include provision for Maritime exhibits and a Museum of Conflict Studies for the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland - this

comprises the Ulster Museum, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the Ulster American Folk Park.

In the world of Arts and Culture, reviews are planned of community arts, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Film Commission while it is proposed to introduce a greater degree of harmonisation in the library service.

This Division is headed by *Dr Eddie Rooney* who is located at Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, (Tel: 028 9127 9279).

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

People are, of course, aware that PRONI is the official home of public records in Northern Ireland. But how many know exactly what treasures are stored on its premises or what use can be made of the information which is held?

Previously part of the Department of the Environment, PRONI collects, catalogues and preserves documents which provide a legal or historical record of the past. As many of these records as possible are available to the public for consultation or research and are invaluable to those who may, for example, be trying to trace their family trees. It also holds major valuable collections including those of the Abercorn family which include first hand accounts of events such as the Plantation and the Famine. As well as research facilities, PRONI offers the general public lectures and exhibitions as well as access through the Internet.

Up and coming events include a Conference on the Act of Union 1801 and an Internet Exhibition on emigration to Australia and North America.

Dr Gerry Slater is in charge of PRONI which is based at 66 Balmoral Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6NY (Tel: 028 9025 1318).

The Northern Ireland Events Company/ Northern Ireland Millennium Company

The Northern Ireland Events Company aims to support the promotion of major local events which have the potential to impact positively on the image of Northern Ireland, create opportunity for greater social cohesion and bring economic benefits.

The Events Company is involved in a range of projects including the Belfast Festival at Queen's, the State of the World Forum Conference, the Senior British Open Golf Championship and a Festival of Horse Racing.

The Northern Ireland Millennium Company is responsible for co-ordinating the Northern Ireland Millennium Festival and ensuring that there is a balanced and accessible programme of events. The Festival was launched in September with the lighting of torches which were taken to 10 locations across the Province.

Around £2.8 million of millennium grants, allocated by five Lottery distribution bodies, have already been awarded to 60 groups in Northern Ireland.

John Walker is the Head of Division and can be contacted at Rosepark House, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast (Tel: 028 9052 6313).

The Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI)

OSNI, formerly the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, creates and maintains a topographic archive of Northern Ireland by undertaking surveys, producing maps and managing information systems, including the Northern Ireland Geographic Information System (NIGIS).

It is currently developing a range of products and services, such as the computerisation of topographic information to aid the interpretation and dissemination of geographic information created by NIGIS technology. Users will be able to access this system as NIGIS can be integrated into libraries, visitor centres and other facilities.

Other ongoing work includes the production of new map products to support the tourism and leisure sectors, professional users and the Government.

OSNI is based at Colby House, Stranmillis Court, Belfast (Tel: 028 9025 5755) but also operates out of six other locations throughout Northern Ireland. The Division is currently headed by *Mick Cory*.

Corporate Services and Implementation Bodies

While finance and personnel matters fall to this Division, it is also responsible for two of the cross-border implementation bodies with responsibility for languages and Inland Waterways.

Language policy is developed by the Linguistic Diversity Branch, formerly of the Central Community Relations Unit. It is mainly concerned with the Irish language and Ulster-Scots but it will also be exploring effective ways to encourage and support Irish language film and television broadcasting in Northern Ireland. The North-South Language Body deals with the Irish language, Ullans and the Ulster-Scots culture.

Responsibility for Inland Waterways and Inland Fisheries has transferred to DCAL from the Department of Agriculture. Inland Waterways is the present statutory navigation authority for Lough Erne and the Lower Bann river. It provides water recreation facilities such as jetties, slipways and riverside walks. Current programmes include extending the Northern Ireland cycle network along the Lagan towpath and other stretches of river in Counties Tyrone, Fermanagh and Armagh. It also works in partnership with the Ulster Wildlife Trust to develop public access to wetland habitat on the Bog Meadows in Belfast.

The work of Inland Fisheries can best be summed up as the conservation, protection and development of inland wild fish stocks. This entails the prevention of pollution and the regulation of angling and commercial fishing. It is also deeply involved in aquaculture undertakings such as rainbow trout farms and hatcheries for both trout and salmon.

With responsibility for a public angling estate of 62 waters, Inland Fisheries is working to develop their commercial potential while ensuring the conservation and protection of the fish stocks.

The cross-border body in this area, known as Waterways Ireland, deals with the Shannon-Erne Waterway and will be examining the possibility of developing the Ulster Canal. From 1 April 2000, its responsibilities will extend to navigation on Lough Erne, the Lower Bann and other waterways in the Republic of Ireland.

Nigel Carson is the Head of Division here and can be reached at Interpoint.

We hope that this short introduction to the work of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure will help to familiarise all staff with what their new colleagues do and wish everyone well for the future.

Remember, your Press Office will, in due course, be introducing a staff magazine and they will need all the help they can get! If you have any ideas for articles or features, you should contact either of the following at Interpoint:

Principal Information Officer: **Brian Kirk** (028 9025 8900)

Information Officer: **Jackie Hogg** (028 9025 8901)

Why not visit your website for more details?

www.dcalni.gov.uk



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