

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER 2006 IN ROOM GD14, STORMONT CASTLE
AT 8.45 AM**

Present: Nigel Hamilton
Will Haire
Wilfie Hamilton
Edgar Jardine
Andrew McCormick
Aideen McGinley
Gerry McGinn
John McGrath
Stephen Peover
Bruce Robinson
Pat Toal

In Attendance: Rosalie Flanagan
Stephen Grimason
Noel Kelly
Debbie Sweeney - Secretary

1. **Apologies:** John Hunter
Paul Sweeney
Brian Doherty
Nick Perry
Alan Shannon

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 20 October 2006**

The minutes held on 20 October were agreed.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Smithsonian Presentation**

Edgar Jardine introduced the following officials with responsibility for the 'Rediscover Northern Ireland' programme.

Mick Cory	-	DCAL
Colin Jack	-	DCAL
Tim Losty	-	NIB
Colm Shannon	-	EIS
John Speers	-	DARD
Alan Hingston	-	Invest NI
Bill Montgomery	-	Invest NI
David McAuley	-	DEL

Noreen Taggart - Ulster University
Shan McAnena - QUB

Mick set out the context of the Smithsonian Festival and said the key message of the event was 'to present Northern Ireland as a creative, confident, outward looking region and extend our relationship with the United States in ways that are mutually beneficial.'

He said there are six broad themes to the Festival: crafts, food and drink, history and heritage, trades and occupations, sport, traditional music and performing arts. The programme detail will be developed from September to December and final participants will be signed up in the New Year.

Colm Shannon outlined the communications strategy to deliver a corporate NI approach. He said the objective was to present Northern Ireland as a creative, confident, outward looking region and extend the relationship with the United States in ways that are mutually beneficial. Colm said in delivering a good communications strategy he would expect an increased media coverage in US/NI and changed perceptions. Colm said there would be a constructive activity plan for the two weeks of the Festival.

Tim Losty said the role of the Northern Ireland Bureau was important to the success of Rediscover NI; they were there to assist and advise on communication with US stakeholders and strategic issues. The Rediscover Northern Ireland programme would be launched at the NIB St Patrick's Event.

Bill Montgomery said the emphasis of Invest NI would be to promote trade and investment opportunities in and from the US market. The message to the US was that Northern Ireland was a great place to do business with. Bill said they had Trade Missions in March and June and an Investment Reception at the Barry Douglas concert on 23 March.

Sue Ward said the Tourism Objectives to improve and promote the image of Northern Ireland as an attractive destination. Sue outlined the events planned for 2007 in Washington.

David McAuley said the objective of the education element at the Festival was to maximise the opportunities for strategic partnerships and international collaboration in higher and further education.

Shan McAnena outlined the Queen's University events which included a Poetry Event and a Symposium on Northern Irish Poetry. Queen's were also contributing to the reception at the Barry Douglas concert, Art and Health Residencies and a contemporary Art Exhibition.

Noreen Taggart said the Ulster University would host a reception to open display of NI visual artwork which would include a performance by Brian Irvine Ensemble and an Alumni Reception.

John Speers said there were culinary demonstrations, a food and drink gourmet event, an Ambassador's Reception as well as Northern Ireland hospitality at other functions. The objective was to reinforce a positive perception of Northern Ireland through the quality and characteristics of food and drink and to inform, influence and connect with food and drink interests.

In discussion, Bruce pointed out that Northern Ireland's current investors were just as important as those who may invest and they should be drawn into the event to show appreciation for backing Northern Ireland.

Stephen Peover enquired whether the Festival was all 'high arts' or if they had considered any interest for young people.

Colin Jack said there was a programme of film for young people and they were currently trying to secure a couple gigs by successful Northern Ireland rock bands.

Nigel Hamilton thanked the Smithsonian Team for their update of progress so far and said the organising group had the Departments' full support. Nigel said he and Alan Gillespie would be hosting the Corporate Launch of 'Rediscover Northern Ireland Washington DC 2007' at a dinner on 8 November in the Grand Opera House.

5. **Restoration**

Rosalie Flanagan updated PSG on the week's political meetings. She said the parties would meet with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Wednesday 1 November.

6. **PQ Performance**

Nigel asked PSG to note the deterioration of PQ answering and, while he recognised that the lateness of answers was often out of Departments' control, he asked that PSG focus on the PQs which were only 1-2 days late but, if eliminated, would improve statistics considerably.

7. **Tour de Table**

Derry Chamber of Commerce Dinner and Conference

Aideen McGinley confirmed she would attend the Conference on 23 November, and Bruce Robinson said he had confirmed his attendance at the dinner on 22 November.

CBI/IBEC Dinner

Bruce Robinson updated PSG on the CBI/IBEC dinner held in Dublin.

RPA Legal Assistance

Noel Kelly asked PSG to consider their requirements for legal assistance to help implement RPA.

[Action: Andrew McCormick, Will Haire & Stephen Peover]

IOD Lunch

Gerry McGinn updated PSG on the IOD lunch which he and Stephen Peover attended.

Grade 3 Issues

PSG noted that a DPS note had issued.

David Reddaway Dinner – Tuesday 31 October

Nigel asked that attendees prepare a short 2-3 minute talk on their departmental issues, focusing on North/South issues.

[Action: Attendees]

FT Bank Economic Outlook and Business Review Dinner – 27 November

PSG are asked to check if they received an invite to the dinner on 27 November in the Great Hall at Queen's. Attendance would be discussed at PSG on 3 November.

[Action: PSG]

PSG 10 November

PSG on 10 November will be held in the Stormont Hotel, Thornhill Suite, from 8.45 am – 11.00 am. Mary Keegan, who is visiting NI that day, will meet with PSG.

At 11.30 am in the Dunmisk Suite, Nigel will launch the Code of Ethics and lunch with the Civil Service Commissioners will take place at 12 noon back in the Thornhill Suite.

[PSG to note]

Next Week's PSG (3 November)

There will be a NIO presentation on New Criminal Records, and the rest of the meeting will be HR issues.

DEBBIE SWEENEY
30 October 2006