



Minister of State

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
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Dr John Alderdice
55 Knock Road
BELFAST
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13 February 1992

Dear John,

You will recall that the joint statement issued following the meeting on Monday 27 January confirmed that the 4 Northern Ireland party leaders would respond to an invitation to field party teams, to take part for information, in intensive factual briefings on present financial and other arrangements affecting the people of Northern Ireland. These briefings were also referred to in the meeting with the Prime Minister on Tuesday of this week.

I would like to put this series of briefings in place as quickly as possible. As agreed at the 27 January meeting I will chair the meetings. At the first meeting, I would propose to ask Mr David Fell, Head of the NI Civil Service, to make a presentation about the overall structure and machinery of Government in Northern Ireland. Mr Fell's presentation will be followed by one from Mr John Semple, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance and Personnel, who will outline the relationships between his Department and HM Treasury, the mechanisms for establishing the size of the NI Block grant, and arrangements for managing the NI Block.

I would envisage that at later meetings we will cover issues which are the responsibility of other Northern Ireland Departments, but we can address the preferences of the parties in relation to these follow-on presentations at our first meeting.

I would also propose that the size of the party teams should be kept fairly small, and while I would not wish to be too rigid about this I would suggest that 1-5 representatives per party would be acceptable. It will, of course, not be necessary to field the same representatives for each briefing, and you will no doubt wish to tailor your representation in accordance with the subject matter being discussed.

The meetings themselves will be held in a conference room in Parliament Buildings, Stormont, and could be scheduled to last about 1½ hours.

As a first step I should be grateful if you would arrange for your office, or a representative from your party, to make contact with Alison Presho in my Belfast Office (0232 763011 Ext 3350) with a view to identifying a mutually convenient date for our initial meeting.

The Secretary of State will be in touch with you separately to take forward the agreement that party leaders meet with him to consider matters of common concern.

*Warm regards,
Brian*

DR BRIAN MAWHINNEY MP