



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
11 MILLBANK
LONDON
SW1P 4PN

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

Professor Monica McWilliams MLA
50 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1HB

3 April 2001

Dear Professor McWilliams

NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Following the Prime Minister's statement yesterday, I have decided to postpone until 7 June the local government elections which were due to take place in Northern Ireland on 16 May.

Although the incidence of foot and mouth disease has been less severe in Northern Ireland than in England, it remains a source of great concern. The Prime Minister and I have therefore agreed that it would be sensible to adopt the same approach to the local elections as in England. A Bill to postpone the local elections in England and Northern Ireland until 7 June will shortly be introduced in Parliament. It will provide for sitting councillors to remain in office until that date. The Bill will also extend Section 15 of the Representation of the People Act 1985 to Northern Ireland. This requires that, where two or more elections are to be held at the same time, they are to be taken together.

The usual statutory 25 working day timetable for local government elections will apply. I attach a copy of the timetable for a 7 June local election.

We have not taken this step lightly. However, in the light of the representations which the Government has received, we believe that a relatively short postponement of this kind is an appropriate response in the circumstances.

Yours sincerely
Kirsten McFarlane
JOHN REID

*(agreed by the Secretary of State and
signed in his absence)*



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE