



c.c. John Alderdice

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4.11.1994.

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Dear David

Polit. progress

I attach a copy of the draft of the Political Development Trust Proposal which we have developed on the basis of our discussions with you and other interested parties.

I hope it is acceptable, but if there are any changes you would like to suggest, please let me know.

You are of course free to share it with your colleagues, but I would ask you not to circulate it more widely, in case we need to make some changes as a result of comments from any of the parties.

We would like to move forward as quickly as possible and would appreciate it if you could respond within two weeks.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Clem

Clem McCartney

- OB: ...
- The Trust established with the following objectives:
1. To provide access to a wider range of information to enhance their ability to operate effectively in the political system
 2. To develop awareness of the potential of the political process, and to this end to facilitate dialogue and discussion about the process of politics and political participation in Northern Ireland in the context of local, regional, European and wider developments.
 3. To provide politicians with an opportunity to explore a wide range of issues relevant to Northern Ireland and consider alternative responses
 4. To encourage greater participation in politics by people at all levels and in all sectors of society through various forms of political education.

A POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TRUST FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

A Proposal

INTRODUCTION

This proposal is the result of a feasibility study carried out by two independent consultants supported by a grant from The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for this purpose. Interviews and consultations with relevant individuals and representatives of political parties were conducted over a period from April to October 1994. The details of this proposal are based on these discussions, but are not attributable to any one individual or political party.

There is widespread recognition of the need for an independent body which will facilitate and promote the development of political skills and expertise in Northern Ireland, and also assist in the development of broader commitment to and participation in the political process. The objectives, intended users, status and roles, activities, management, staffing and budget of the organisation are outlined with the understanding that there will be further opportunity for discussion and amendment of this proposal before the political development trust comes into operation. The name of the organisation is open for discussion and it will be referred to here as simply "the Trust".

OBJECTIVES

The Trust is established with the following objectives:

1. To assist existing and emerging political activists to enhance their skills
2. To provide access to a wider range of information in order to enhance their ability to operate effectively in the political system
3. To develop awareness of the potential of the political process, and to this end to facilitate dialogue and discussion about the process of politics and political participation in Northern Ireland in the context of local, regional, European and wider developments
4. To provide politicians with an opportunity to explore a wide range of issues relevant to Northern Ireland and consider alternative responses
5. To encourage greater participation in politics by people at all levels and in all sectors of society through various forms of political education.

INTENDED USERS

The Trust is being established to cater for the following groups:

A. Current politicians/political activists, including

Elected representatives at all levels

Candidates for political office

Party officials

Party workers in local constituencies

Non-party political activists

B. Potential political activists, including

Young people/students,

Women

Trade unionists,

Community workers/activists.

STATUS AND ROLE

The Trust is an independent body with its own management structures as outlined below. Funding is being sought from a variety of sources, including charitable trusts, governments and international organisations. The Trust will work mainly through other organisations and agencies, including local educational institutions and international organisations that carry out similar programmes in other parts of the world. The Trust will act as a co-ordinating mechanism to ensure that a full range of opportunities for political education and political development are available. In some cases the Trust will identify needs and initiate activities, in others it will respond to requests from the political parties and find a suitable way to meet the demand. In some circumstances organisations offering a programme will approach the Trust in order to test the viability and acceptability of its proposals to political activists. For carrying out particular programmes, the Trust Board may decide to establish a co-operative relationship with another agency or organisation, either locally or internationally.

ACTIVITIES

The objectives of the Trust will be achieved through the following activities which the Trust will either provide or stimulate other organisations to provide:

1. Skills training in:

Effective political discussion and debate,

Teamwork and groupwork, both internally and cross-party,

Use of the media and interview techniques,

Research techniques,

Lobbying and responding to lobbyists.

2. Electoral training - Each political party has their own way of training candidates and party workers, but there are aspects of electoral

Each major party will nominate two Board members, selecting individuals who are active in maintaining and developing their party organisation, including paid employees of the party where appropriate.

The non-party political members of the Board will be chosen to include at least one person from each key sector of the wider society: business, trade unions, academia, voluntary organisations and community organisations. However they will be selected and appointed as individuals, bearing in mind the need to ensure that the membership of the Board broadly reflects the general population. Since young people and women are both target groups for the activities of the Trust, every effort will be made to ensure that significant numbers of these two groups are members of the Board.

In the first instance, half of the members will have a 2-year term of office and half will have a 4-year term. Subsequently every 2 years, half the members will be re-appointed or replaced on 4 year terms of service.

Responsibilities of Board

The duties of the board will include:

1. determining, on a quarterly basis, current needs and demands and on that basis the range of activities and programmes which the Trust will support
2. Deciding any restrictions on access to services, within the general principle that the Trust's services and programmes should be made as widely available as possible to all those interested in contributing to the political process, including those in the smallest parties.
3. Setting levels of fees and charges as appropriate, on a sliding scale based on ability to pay.
4. Reviewing the activities of the Trust
5. Appointment of staff
6. Overall management of the Trust including fund-raising and finance.

The Board has the power to appoint sub-committees, and delegate responsibilities as it thinks fit.

STAFFING

The Trust staff will initially be as follows:

- A chief executive, who will have good administrative experience and the ability to work well with people from a broad range of political

training which are basic for anyone who is running for political office. There will be a moratorium on this kind of training in the two months leading up to an election, or immediately after a national election is called.

3. Establishing and providing a computer data base and library of materials on public issues, government departments, quangos, comparative issues in representative democracy, etc. This would be a resource for the organisation itself as well as for the users of its services.
4. Facilitating cross-party working groups to research and examine issues of current interest from time to time. The work of such groups would include clarifying the nature and parameters of specific problems and developing ideas and responses to the issues in relation to the process of politics in Northern Ireland. Future topics will emerge, but current issues which might benefit from such an approach include:
 - The role of public representatives and their links to their constituents
 - The relationship between elected bodies (e.g. local councils), government departments and quangos
 - The relevance of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.
5. Programmes in political education for schools, civic associations, community organisations, etc. The content of the programme will include education about political systems and processes at all levels from local councils to the European Union. Elected representatives and party officials will be resource people for these programmes.
6. The Board will also be open to new and innovative ways of carrying out its objectives.

All activities of the Trust will be offered on an open basis, though some programmes may only be taken up by one or two political parties. Some programmes may be provided on the basis of separate provision for each party, but a similar opportunity will be available to all.

MANAGEMENT

Membership

The Trust's Board will comprise equal numbers from the main political parties and representatives of the wider community, and in addition there will be an independent chairperson.

The chairperson will be appointed on the basis of his or her acceptability to all the major political parties. He or she will not be currently active in politics, but may have been involved directly in the past.

perspectives. He or she will have experience in education and preferably also in party politics.

One training officer to co-ordinate the programme of training outlined above. Extensive experience in one or more of the key areas of political activity is essential. The major responsibility of the post is to plan and co-ordinate training which involve resource people from political parties and other outside organisations including political education to be offered for schools and civic associations. They will also conduct some courses themselves. (If direct training becomes a major aspect of the work, a second training officer post will be created).

Two information officers to maintain the Trust's data base, conduct research, prepare and produce general briefings and respond to individual requests for information. They will need to have a thorough understanding of political systems and processes in Northern Ireland and the ability to analyse these in the light of new developments both here and elsewhere. They will co-ordinate the "working group" activities of the Trust with assistance from outside organisations and consultants. One information officer will be responsible for managing the Trust's library of materials.

One computer consultant on a short-term contract to set up the data base. Once it is up and running, the information officers will be responsible for updating and administering this data base.

Support staff to carry out secretarial and accounting tasks for the Trust and its programmes (initially one office manager and two secretaries).

BUDGET

The budget for the first year of operations is:

Rent of premises

Equipment

Staff (salaries, national insurance, allowances, etc.)

Consultancy fees (Trust development)

Consultancy fees (programme development)

Consumables

COMMISSIONING PERIOD

A temporary Steering Group will be established to oversee the establishment of the Trust, including the adoption of the constitution, initial fund raising, the creation of the Board and appointment of the chief executive. This Steering Group will comprise one representative of each of the main political parties. The authors of this proposal will co-ordinate

and facilitate the establishment and functioning of this group based on consultations with the relevant parties. This Steering Group will be formed as soon as the proposal has the support of the main political parties.

Clem McCartney
Steve Williams
October 1994