



Cabinet Office

MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL OFFICE

From the Minister of State
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The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP
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DLH

IBDM

COMMUNITY RADIO

I have seen your letter of 10 June to Willie Whitelaw on the subject of Community Radio. While I have no comment on your general proposal to extend the Community Radio experiment, there is one aspect which concerns me as Minister with responsibility for quango policy.

You say you have suggested that the Advisory Panel, which was set up as a temporary ad hoc group, should remain together with widened terms of reference. They have, apparently, agreed. This would have the effect of turning the panel into an advisory NDPB and I wonder whether you would want to consider this further in the context of our declared policy on NDPBs.

Our policy is to resist setting up any new quango unless this is the most appropriate and cost-effective way to do a particular task. Now that you have had an initial report from the Advisory Panel, an alternative approach would be for Home Office officials to provide an overview of the experiment and advise you of any allegations about breaches of licence conditions. I wonder whether this would be worth considering. Incidentally, you do not mention any costs associated with the continuation of the Advisory Panel. Is it worth considering what resources will be needed if the wider monitoring you describe is carried out by (a) the Advisory Panel or (b) Departmental officials? I do not want to make too much of a meal of a proposal to set up a small

advisory body, but I think our policy on NDPBs is increasingly in danger of being forgotten and it is important that alternative ways of carrying out any new function are considered seriously before settling for an additional NDPB.

Copies of this go to recipients of your letter.

Richard

RICHARD LUCE



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