



Rie Austin

CEPT  
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This is come in very  
late. Does it affect

Prime Minister

It looks as if we  
should have a brief  
discussion of

27 November 1989

your conclusion? I have  
no strong view I think it  
most unlikely view an  
EC irritation would go

**EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY - PROPOSAL FOR SITING IN UK**

with cost? no Northern Ireland

I have seen Chris Patten's note to you about the proposed UK bid for the Agency. I would like to place on record a strong case for Northern Ireland to be the UK candidate for the siting of the Agency. In doing so I am not pressing for a particular option in the way we mount the UK bid but rather I am attempting to flesh out the rather sparse details about the Northern Ireland bid in the Annex to Chris Patten's note which I feel does not do us justice.

CAF  
27/11  
Please  
how  
also  
see

A Northern Ireland location (and we can offer a number of suitable sites) offers three keys elements:

- an advanced telecommunication and computing infrastructure;
- a wide breadth of scientific expertise in environmental studies (including UK leaders in a number of fields); and
- the most cogent argument, in Community terms, for a UK site.

Scottish  
Secretary;  
minute  
(attached)  
CAF.

The telecommunications network in Northern Ireland is as advanced as anywhere in the UK and is being enhanced by a £100 million investment by BT to establish a fibre-optic network which will give



a system equal to anywhere else in Europe. This project has been aided by the Community as part of the Special Telecommunications Action for Regional development (STAR) programme. Northern Ireland also has particular strengths in software development and computer expertise and this will be of particular interest to the Agency. In addition there is a good air communications network to centres throughout GB and Europe, including Brussels, Paris, Amsterdam and Barcelona.

The scientific expertise in environmental studies which exists in the Province is particularly impressive and this is not reflected at all in the Annex to Chris Patten's note. Both the Queen's University, Belfast and the University of Ulster have environmental science departments which have an excellent record of co-operation and research. They have been particularly involved in work on water quality and the effects of nitrates and phosphates, marine environment matters and analytical methods, in which they are UK leaders. This has often been carried out in conjunction with government science establishments who themselves are acknowledged leaders in their fields. For instance the Veterinary Research Laboratory at Stormont was the first centre to identify canine distemper as the cause of seal deaths last year.

Another interesting development is the QUESTOR centre at Queen's University which is a collaborative venture between the University and industry to carry out strategic research on environmental matters. It is multi-disciplined and is carrying out research into atmospheric pollution, computer modelling of pollution escape, aquatic water treatment and microbial degradation of chlorinated hydrocarbons. This centre is a first in Europe and is linked with the Hazardous Substance Management Research Centre in New Jersey. Needless to say our scientific experts would be only too willing to help the Agency as much as possible.



The attached Annex sets out the centres of excellence in both the Universities and Government Service in more detail.

However I am convinced that we not only have a strong case on telecommunications and scientific expertise. A telling argument is the wider Community dimension to a site in Northern Ireland, which does not apply to other regions of the UK. The choice of Northern Ireland could be commended to our partners as a practical measure of political support, consistent with their enthusiastic support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement and their agreement to contribute to the International Fund for Ireland (which incidentally has supported the QUESTOR centre mentioned above).

The Community has long acknowledged a responsibility to address the disadvantaged position of peripheral regions such as Northern Ireland, particularly as their position will worsen post-1992 as economic activity drifts towards the centre of Europe. This is why Northern Ireland has benefitted from initiatives such as the STAR programme, and has been designated as an Objective 1 region for new structural funds. There is a very strong argument for the Community to act directly in line with this policy, and for this reason a Northern Ireland location must be an attraction.

I must also mention the psychological impact associated with the siting of the Agency in Northern Ireland. The multiplier effect of this flagship project, albeit small in terms of direct employment, would be many times greater than in other regions. It would act as a catalyst for other service sector organisations to take advantage of the exceptionally attractive business opportunities which Northern Ireland offers in terms of cost, quality of staff, infrastructure etc. The Agency would also encourage people in Northern Ireland by making them in effect stake-holders in the Community and its systems. The advantages in countering the



inevitable image problem which Northern Ireland has would be considerable.

In conclusion I cannot agree with Chris Patten in his shortlisting of the locations. The case I have outlined is, I feel, particularly strong and whatever strategy is decided, whether general or specific, I contend that Northern Ireland should be a front-runner. What better place to have this Agency than in one of the most scenic and pollution-free areas of the Community, yet with the infrastructure and facilities which will ensure its successful operation.

A copy of this memorandum goes to Chris Patten, the Foreign Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Industry, Scotland and Wales and to Sir Robin Butler.

*Simm Sparrow*

PB

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

**NORTHERN IRELAND EXPERTISE IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE**

The expertise and analytical quality available in the environmental laboratories of Northern Ireland is second to none and compares more than favourably with the rest of the UK.

**GOVERNMENT SCIENCE SERVICES****DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (NI)**

Newforge Lane Complex: joint DANI/QUB research and teaching centre for agriculture and food science. Areas of expertise include aquatic science (including the agriculture/fresh water interface), marine environment systems (using a marine research vessel), soil and plant science, soil analysis, forestry research (including acid rain), emission of ammonia and nitric oxides etc.

Veterinary Research Laboratory: research on animal disease and animals as disease vectors.

Freshwater Biological Investigation Unit: this unit has been a centre of excellence for studies on nutrient enrichment with particular reference to nitrogen and phosphate levels. Developed a nitrogen leaching model which is the most advanced of its kind in Europe.

The extensive databases of these centres would be available.

**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Industrial Science Division: nationally accredited laboratories providing a wide range of analytical and consultancy services in environmental matters.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT (NI)

Nature and Conservation Branch: expertise in areas of nature conservation, biotopes and ecological systems.

Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland: state of the art systems utilising satellite survey, for production and storage of data vital to environmental studies eg geographic information systems, land use management etc. Advanced computer mapping facility.

UNIVERSITIES

Queen's University, Belfast: multi-discipline QUESTOR centre (first of its kind in Europe) to carry out strategic research into environmental studies such as water resources, pollutant spread, atmospheric emissions.

Chair of Analytical Chemistry (first in UK and one of only three) with particular emphasis on environmental analyses. Has carried out work for Community Bureau of Standards.

Department of Biology covering various centres of excellence which impinge on environmental science.

University of Ulster: strong Department of Environmental Science offering both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Areas of expertise include study of Lough Neagh system (research laboratory on Lough shore) with emphasis on pollution indicators, algal problems, water chemistry, palaeolimnology etc.

Expertise in hydrology, coastal management, terrestrial ecology, environmental planning and image processing.