

HIGHLIGHTS LIST

Release of 1986 files at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland



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Introduction

The files are being released under the 30/20 Year Rule.

The annual release of selected official files continues against a background of greater public access through the Freedom of Information Act balanced against the need to protect personal information. The FOI Act (2000) created a new access to information regime and all records were reviewed in accordance with both that Act and the Data Protection Act.

Annually since 1976, official records held by PRONI which were 30 years old have been reviewed with a view to making them publicly available (“the 30 year rule”). In September 2011, the Assembly accepted a Legislative Consent Motion to reduce the time limit for release from 30 years to 20 years (“the 20 year Rule”). This is underpinned by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the amendments made to it by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The 20 Year Rule is being phased in over 10 years, with two years worth of records being reviewed and released each year. This is the second year of the phasing-in period; which saw the records of NI Departments and the NIO with terminal dates of 1985 brought forward for release during August 2014 and the records of 1986 brought forward in December 2014.

This process involves the referral of the files to the Responsible Authority for sensitivity review. This entails a page by page examination to ensure that a record contains nothing sensitive as defined by the FOI Act and DP Act.

Records Released

These files are available to the media in advance of their release to the public on the strict understanding that **there is an embargo on publication or broadcast until 00.01hrs on Monday 29th December 2014.**

570 files being deemed as suitable for release as “fully open”. A further 179 files are open but subject to blanking out of some content.

The main file series being released includes Central Secretariat and Northern Ireland Office files.

Some of the main issues covered by the 1986 release include:

- Anglo Irish Agreement
- Anglo-Irish Conference
- MacBride Principles on discrimination in the workplace
- Black Report on Children in Care
- Community relations
- Women in the public sector
- Youth Unemployment
- Child Abuse
- Government response to AIDS epidemic
- Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster
- Crumlin Road Prison Protests
- NIO policy on dealing with Sinn Fein representatives
- Prison service meetings with Church and political leaders
- European Convention on Human Rights – UK Government attempts at derogation
- Fisheries Conservancy
- Kinsale Gas
- Work of the NI Assembly
- Harland & Wolff
- Belfast – City Centre re-development
- Committee of Inquiry into Children's Homes and Hostels

Records may be closed either fully or in part only. Blanking out involves the removal of a limited number of papers from the file that have been deemed as exempt from the right to know under FOI. To facilitate the release of as much information as possible, redaction can be used to blank out sensitive data within individual documents that would otherwise prevent release. All information which is withheld in the manner outlined above, however, must be retained in accordance with the exemptions contained within the FOI Act. In the majority of cases, the reason for

extended closure was the application of section 40 – the *personal information* exemption – of the FOI Act. This means that personal information is exempt from the right to know if it would breach the Data Protection principles.

The catalogue of files for 1986 will be publicly available online on PRONI website from Monday 29th December 2014 and files will be available to view at PRONI from Monday 29th December.



1986 Highlighted Files

Central Secretariat

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| CENT/1/15/5 | 1986 | Anglo Irish Conference – Irish Representations about Divis Flats Paper prepared by the Irish side ahead of the Intergovernmental Conference, with response from UK side with the approach being taken by DOE and the Housing Executive. Correspondence regarding the decision to demolish the Divis Flat in Belfast and the Rossville Flats in Derry. |
| CENT/1/15/29A | 1985-1986 | Assembly: Unionist Protest File contains papers relating to the escalating protest by Unionist politicians at the Assembly. This includes correspondence about the erection of flag poles and the flying of the Union flag at Parliament Buildings. |
| CENT/1/15/30A | 1985-1986 | District Council: Unionist Protest File contains papers relating to the actions being taken by Unionist councillors as part of their opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement. It includes the judicial review about the 'Belfast Says No' Banner at City Hall; contingency planning; and reports on banners across local councils. |
| CENT/1/15/40A | 1986 | Anglo-Irish Conference – Meetings of Conference and Permanent under Secretary's Steering Group File contains a note of a meeting to discuss cross-border security cooperation, dated 31 October and also includes papers for other AIC meetings including the 6 October Conference. |

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| CENT/1/15/42 | 1986 | Briefing – First Day – SOS & Ministers (September 1986) Briefing papers prepared for Secretary of State and ministers coming into the NIO covering all major aspects of politics and the economy in Northern Ireland. Includes assessments of the financial performance of Short Bros PLC, Harland and Wolff, James Mackie & Son, De Lorean; matters of 'current or imminent controversy': Kincora, the Black Report on services for children and young people in care, school rationalisation, and the creation of the University of Ulster. |
| CENT/1/15/47A | 1986 | Political Developments File contains regular reports about political developments, commenting on specific events such as the Unionist Day of Action on 3 March and providing analysis of politicians, parties, conferences, etc. It also contains notes of discussions with various politicians about trying to move the political process forward following the Anglo-Irish agreement and getting dialogue underway. |
| CENT/1/15/48A | 1986 | Anglo-Irish Conference, Irish Representation about Irish Language Issues – Volume 1 File contains papers on the Irish Government's position on the Irish language; the NIO response to these papers; and discussion about the position and use of the Irish language in NI, including the overturning of the prohibition on dual language street names, and consideration of Irish language OS maps. |
| CENT/1/15/49A | 1986 | Political Developments – June – July 1986 File contains a paper on the Stalker investigation dated c 3 June 1986; briefings for meetings with political parties; report on General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and correspondence with the Moderator, Dr Tom Simpson; and notes of discussions with local politicians and parties. |

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| CENT/3/10 | 1986 | AI (Anglo-Irish) Agreement Papers Reports to the Cabinet Office and to the Prime Minister on how the Agreement was publicly received and the issues arising from it, contingency planning for unionist opposition to the Agreement, and impact on forthcoming elections. |
| CENT/3/11 | 1986 | 11 March 1986 Stormont Castle, IC (1986) Vol.2 Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference - briefing for Secretary of State on matters including cross-border security, the Marching Season, relations between the security forces and the minority, flags and emblems; American aid; notes on meeting held between the British and Irish sides. |
| CENT/3/12 | 1986 | 19 May 1986 Old Admiralty Building, IC (1986) Vol.3 Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference - briefing for Secretary of State on matters including cross-border social and economic co-operation, proposed bill of rights, demolition of Divis flats, security and police issues, extradition treaty and International Fund issues with USA; notes on meetings held between the British and Irish sides and reports on legal issues including the Diplock courts, the Special Criminal Court, judicial appointments, and extradition |
| CENT/3/20A | 1986 | IC (86) 4 Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference – 17 June 1986 File includes the briefing papers, internal NIO note of the meeting, joint statement and joint record of the meeting. |
| CENT/3/24A | 1985-1986 | Political Development (including inter-party talks) File contains minutes of meetings with political parties including delegations from the DUP, UUP and SDLP; NIO discussions on political developments; papers expressing grave concerns about the impact of Unionist opposition to the Agreement; paper entitled Re-opening Political |

Dialogue dated 4 April 1986 by Kenneth Bloomfield; and a paper entitled Political Developments in NI: 17 July 1986 reflecting on recent 12 July parades.

CENT/3/26A

1985-1986

NI Assembly – Future

File contains various papers on the Assembly and the possible options for its future leading up to its dissolution in June 1986.

CENT/3/45A

1984-1986

Diplomatic Links between US, UK and Ireland

File contains notes of meetings and briefings for meetings relating to discussions with US representatives, about NI and Anglo-Irish relations. This includes the negotiations leading up the Anglo-Irish agreement, views of the Taoiseach on progress made following the agreement, dated 12 June 1986 and US views on NI.



Northern Ireland Office

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| NIO/6/63A | 1986 | <p>Northern Ireland Emergency Committee – Radioactivity – Chernobyl</p> |
| <p>File contains response by NI government departments to the Chernobyl disaster and co-ordination with arrangement in GB, setting out the roles of local authorities, the police, and central government; paper entitle ‘Alerting Procedures for a Peacetime Nuclear Emergency’ setting out the procedures and responsibilities of NI government departments; a timeline of events as they unfolded during May 1986, immediately after Chernobyl.</p> | | |
| NIO/12/471A | 1980-1986 | <p>Prisons – Protesters – Changes in Protesters’ Regime (including discussions with church leaders and politicians)</p> |
| <p>Possibility of St Vincent de Paul providing reading material for the protesters in the Maze, and reasons why the NIO felt this was undesirable; briefing for Secretary of State ahead of meeting with Cardinal O’Faich and Bishop Daly; the possibility of establishing a liaison group and the NIO’s opposition to this suggestion; discussions on the possibility of abolishing the requirement to wear prison uniform (“...whatever the impact on the protest, the decision would be helpful to us in the propaganda war’), work, and proposed changes to prisoners’ daily regimes to take account of the comments of the ECHR on the inflexibility of the current regime.</p> | | |
| NIO/12/473A | 1982-1986 | <p>Prisons – Visits – Inter Prison visits by members of boards of visitors and visiting committees</p> |
| <p>Minutes of boards of visitors’ meeting; arrangements for visits to prisons.</p> | | |
| NIO/12/487A | 1986 | <p>Prisons – Hunger Strike – Hunger Strike Belfast Prison 25th June 1986</p> |
| <p>File contains copies of press cuttings; situation report covering events in all NI prisons from 20th - 23rd June, including the report that 48 protestant prisoners were refusing food; further situation reports regarding the hunger strike in Belfast.</p> | | |

NIO/28/1/7

1983-1986

Home Defence Planning Committee – Minutes

Planning and arrangements in the event of a possible nuclear attack, and plans for the local and national response to such an attack would be co-ordinated, arrangements for participation in 'Wintex-Cimex' (held in February/ March 1985). Proposed structure of post-strike regional government in Northern Ireland, Development of wartime communications, departmental war plans. Paper suggesting selection criteria for nominations to Area Control Teams (very helpfully pointing out that 'claustrophobia is hardly an advantage ... in a windowless bunker').



Department of Economic Development

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| DED/21/11/1 | 1986-1986 | MacBride Papers File details the complex legal debate concerning equality and an end to discrimination in the workplace in USA, and UK government response to MacBride, in particular with regard to issues like flags and emblems displayed at workplaces in Northern Ireland. |
| DED/21/11/2 | 1986 | File correspondence and reports concerning the application of the MacBride principles to American firms trading in Northern Ireland. Included are American Brand (New York), then owners of Gallagher's Ltd, Hughes Tool Co., Texas (Hughes Tool Co., Monkstown and Belfast), Oneida cutlery (Bangor), Ford Motor Company (Belfast), Armco and DuPont (Londonderry). |



Department of Finance & Personnel

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| DFP/3/1/76 | 1985-1986 | Equal Opportunities – First Report Reports and statistics used to compile the first report on equal opportunities in the civil service in Northern Ireland. Includes methodology used and draft press releases. |
| DFP/13/10 | 1986 | Protest by DUP Assembly Members at Parliament Buildings on 15 May 1986 There was a series of protests and demonstrations to mark the six-month anniversary of the imposition of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In Belfast members of the Democratic Unionist Party occupied the switchboard of the parliament buildings at Stormont. File contains notes on the chronology of the incident as it unfolded within Stormont. |
| DFP/19/3 | 1986 | Children in Care/The Black Report - Consideration of Options Report and papers concerning the response the Black Report, which was critical of the role of Training Schools as a means for reforming young offenders. Explores the options available: 'Pure Black' channelling support through the normal educational and social services; the 'Prior Compromise' – the creation of children's homes in the grounds of existing Training Schools; or maintain status quo. File includes reports on the financial implications of adopting each option and the views of DHSS and NIO on the options considered. |



Department of Environment

ENV/37/13A

1985-1986

Contacts with Political Parties – Policy Matters Vol.2

File includes protocols for dealing with, and in communications with Sinn Fein, and other groups, including prominent Loyalist George Seawright. In one confidential memo, an official states: 'whether it was right to treat Mr Seawright in the same fashion as Sinn Fein. On one hand, Mr Seawright's comments were despicable by any standards, he had advocated violence and therefore Ministers had not wished to deal with him... Mr Seawright is a maverick and some would say, a nutcase but he is not a subversive in the Sinn Fein sense and to treat him on a par with Sinn Fein and refuse to see him, say, as part of a delegation, might only serve to enhance his standing in some quarters and give added publicity to him and his views...'



Department of Health & Social Services

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| HSS/11/65/11 | 1986 | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome – (AIDS) File contains papers relating to the response to AIDS, including the position being taken in Northern Ireland, consultation with ROI on the number of reported cases of AIDS, advice given to health sector professionals, such as dentists. Lines for the Secretary of State to take in response to queries raised in relation to AIDS. |
| HSS/11/65/12 | 1986 | AIDS – Ministerial Steering Group – Minutes and Papers File illustrates the initial reaction of government at the time, including concerns for children in school. |
| HSS/13/40/11A | 1975-1986 | Child Abuse – Inquiries and Investigations File details the policy formulation from the mid 1970s to the time of the 1984-6 <i>Committee of Inquiry into Childrens Homes and Hostels</i> , and sheds light on the ongoing work to determine levels of child abuse. It was stressed that the focus should not just be on 'non accidental injury to children', but also to the emotional/mental damage caused by abusers. |
| HSS/13/43/16A | 1986 | Child Abuse – Review Group Child abuse statistics; DHSS guidance on handling of allegations of child abuse; review of procedures; response to NSPCC document, "Child Abuse - Working Together"; notes of meeting held by the Child Abuse Review Group. |
| HSS/13/43/19A | 1986 | Planning Group – Child Health – Child Abuse Review Group Statistics of confirmed and suspected cases of child abuse 1977 - 1983; review of policy; discussions with RUC; revision of GB policy. |

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| HSS/32/1/22/1A | 1986-1986 | Russian Nuclear Reactor Accident File details the information exchanges and briefings following the accident, including a telex to the Soviet Embassy asking the extent of the fallout, and asking for assurance that contaminated foodstuffs would not be exported to United Kingdom. This was swiftly followed by a complete ban on import of foodstuffs from the Soviet Union. The Health Service were briefed to expect possible contacts at A&E departments, from travellers to the region who were concerned. |
| HSS/32/1/22/2A | 1986-1986 | Lessons of the Chernobyl Reactor Accident File contains correspondence on the immediate response to the accident, such as checks on milk and water supplies, but also details the national response plan for Northern Ireland, in the event of a nuclear accident. This includes the preparations for dealing with irradiated foodstuffs, emergency dwellings and other arrangements following a radioactive cloud arriving over Irish shores |
| HSS/32/1/22/5 | 1986 | Russian Nuclear Reactor Accident Chernobyl disaster. Aftermath and impact on neighbouring countries, UK, and Ireland. Safety of food produced in European countries and continued monitoring of agricultural produce, monitoring impact on sheep and lamb farming in UK, restrictions on food imports. |

