



Public Record Office
of Northern Ireland

2008 ANNUAL RELEASES

1978 files – Highlights List

A full list of the files will be available

Introduction

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.

Records continue to be brought forward for release as they approach 30 years of age. This 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.

This year's annual release covers official files with a terminal date of 1978. Of the 479 departmental files examined, 20 were subject to full closure, with an additional 57 subject to partial closure or redaction (blanking out). Partial closure 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 withheld under this procedure must conform to the exemptions contained in 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.

Central Secretariat

CENT/1/3/12 1974-1978 Security in NI – mainly includes copies of press releases issued by the NIO on the security situation in Northern Ireland. It also contains notes of meetings at which the security situation in Strabane and South Armagh was discussed with local deputations, January 1974; note from Kenneth Bloomfield on PIRA ceasefire, January 1975.

CENT/1/7/14 1978 Anglo-Irish Economic Co-operation Cross Border – Erne Area – includes note of a meeting between Lord Melchett and J Tinney TD, Minister of Education, 13 December 1978, topics included common Waterways joining the Erne and Shannon, cross border competitions.

CENT/1/7/20 1978 SDLP Annual Conference – comprises an NIO report on the conference commenting on speakers, issues, party policies, etc.

CENT/1/7/24 1978 The Government's Aims and Objectives in NI for the next 6 months and the next 5 years – includes memo from Roy Mason, Secretary of State to Prime Minister, James Callaghan, on the situation in Northern Ireland, dated 13 September 1978, covering the political front, security situation, economic and social matters, Irish Government. It also contains a separate report on plans for the next 5 years for Northern Ireland.

CENT/1/5/35 1976-1978 Anglo-Irish Economic Co-operation – Cross Border Study – Erne Area – includes correspondence between Fermanagh District Council and NIO about cross border co-operation; report on Anglo-Irish economic co-operation with particular reference to Northern Ireland.

CENT/1/5/40 1976-1978 Hillsborough Seminar, 1976 – includes discussion papers prepared by NIO officials on topics such as political strategy commenting on Northern Ireland political parties, paramilitaries, future options [29 October 1976]; note of the 1976 seminar reflecting the views of the Secretary of State, current political situation, impact of the security situation, etc., [3 November 1976]; paper for 1978 seminar on the image of Direct Rule [14 April 1978]; the social outlook and options [March 1978]; follow-up paper from Brian Cubbon, NIO Permanent Under Secretary [16 May 1978], setting out the key objectives.

CENT/1/6/11 1977-1978 Anglo-Irish Economic Co-operation – UK-Irish Republic Steering Group – includes minutes of meetings, related papers, reflecting the extent of co-operation between the Irish and UK Governments.

CENT/1/6/18 1977-1978 Anglo-Irish Economic Co-operation (Committee Papers) – includes minute of discussion between NIO and Irish officials about the forthcoming meeting between UK Prime Minister, James Callaghan and Jack Lynch [20 September 1977]; and briefs prepared by the NIO for the visit by the Taoiseach.

CENT/1/6/19 **1977-1978** **Anglo-Irish Economic Cooperation (Committee Papers)** – includes minutes of meetings. A document records 'The main purpose of the joint steering group is to satisfy pressures from Dublin for discussion of North-South matters, while cloaking the whole affair in the mantle of Anglo-Irish relations as a whole, in order to minimise political repercussions in Northern Ireland'. [6 September 1978].

CENT/1/7/4 **1978** **Central and Local Government Facilities in West Belfast** – relates to the government response to a forthcoming publication by a senior army officer highlighting the shortcomings of British government machinery to counter civil disorder in NI and to prepare briefing material to counter this view.

CENT/1/7/6 **1978** **Secretary of State's Meeting with Mr O'Kennedy in Dublin, 5 May 1978** – includes briefings for Roy Mason, Secretary of State, prior to the meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland; notes of the discussion between the Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, covering security, extradition, NI political situation, co-operation, etc.

CENT/1/7/11 **1978** **NICS Seminar Hillsborough, 21 April 1978** – includes a report on the proceedings of the day covering discussion on the image and working of Direct Rule and related papers.

Northern Ireland Office

NIO/9/2/2/12 **1978** **Judicature (NI) Bill 1978** – includes briefing for Roy Mason, Secretary of State, to secure the Lord Chancellor's agreement that the new Northern Ireland court structure should be his responsibility rather than that of the NIO. It outlines political arguments, views of Unionist politicians, SDLP, views of the judiciary (dated 31 January 1978) and subsequent change of policy outlined in a draft letter to the Prime Minister from the Secretary of State.

NIO/10/1/4 **1978** **Boundary Commission for NI** – includes a letter from Alderman Peter Robinson, Party Secretary, UDUP, to the Boundary Commission, calling for an increase in the number of Westminster seats allocated to NI.

NIO/10/16/2 **1978** **Tunnel Detection and Prevention** – includes report on the discovery of a partially completed tunnel at the Maze, and how it must have been executed, etc.

NIO/10/19/1 **1977-1978** **Speaker's Conference – NI - Representation at** – includes a letter from the Speaker of the House of Commons to James Callaghan, Prime Minister, dated 13 February 1978, reporting on the conclusions of the conference to increase NI representation at Westminster to 17 MPs.

- NIO/12/68** **1978** **Protest Action Arising from Claim to Special Category Status – Policy and General Matters –**
includes NIO reaction to Archbishop O’Fiaich statement about conditions in the Maze Prison. It reports on the scale of the protest, the numbers involved, activities of the protesters, etc.
- NIO/12/70** **1978** **Protest Action Arising from Claim to Special Category Status –Ministers Cases–**
includes correspondence with Rev. William Beattie on behalf of loyalist prisoners, and correspondence from various MPs including Sir Harold Wilson and others about the condition of Republican prisoners at the Maze Prison raising issues about close body searching, etc. Also contains Roy Mason’s approval for the continuation of searches [4/5 December 1978]
- NIO/12/72** **1977-1978** **Prisons – General Conventions – Additional Protocol Affecting Prisoner of War Status –** includes documents on UK Government stance, and copy of a letter issued by the Republican Movement to Convention delegates.
- NIO/12/110** **1977-1978** **Prisons –Special Category - Ending of special category status - Protesting Prisoners – Periodical Review**
includes reports on the scale of the protest, the numbers involved, activities of the protesters, etc.
- NIO/12/118** **1978** **Campaign for Segregation of Loyalist Prisoners –**
includes minutes of a meeting between the NIO Minister, Don Concannon and Rev Ian Paisley MP, and a deputation comprising wives of loyalist prisoners about conditions in the Belfast and Maze Prisons. It also includes various NIO briefings for the meeting.
- NIO/25/1/20** **1978** **Police – Assistance to Government Departments and Local Authorities –** includes letter from Merlyn Rees, Secretary of State, to Roy Jenkins, Home Secretary, about squatting in Northern Ireland particularly as a result of the Troubles in the early 1970s, and subsequently squatting orchestrated by paramilitary groups [dated 26 May 1976].
- NIO/25/1/10** **1977-1978** **Police Administration – Brutality: Allegations of Police brutality**
includes concerns of doctors examining prisoners and the steps taken to improve the system. It also contains complaints raised by Gerry Fitt and others about the ill-treatment of prisoners by the Police.
- NIO/25/2/11** **1978** **Police Authority – Meetings with the Secretary of State and NIO Officials –** includes minutes of meetings between Roy Mason, Secretary of State and the Police Authority covering topics such as security, Amnesty International Report; briefings for Secretary of State, on the security situation, etc, in advance of meetings.
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Department of Civil Service

DOCS/3/1/3 **1976-1978** **(1) Report of Working Party on Improving Civil Government, (2) Proposals for Merger of Development Officers and Civil Representative Services** – includes reports by the Civil Representatives on Army Brigade areas across Northern Ireland.

DOCS/3/1/5 **1978** **Fair Employment Agency – ‘An industrial and Occupational profile of the two sections of the population in NI’** – highlights NIO concern about the recent FEA report and the negative impact it will have for Northern Ireland; also includes note of meeting between Bob Cooper, FEA, and Don Concannon, Minister of State, about the report; and includes a UDUP response to the report.

Department of Commerce

COM/58/1/189 **1975-1978** **Towards Normalisation – Peace** – contains an account on a visit by NIO Minister, Lord Melchett, to 40 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, who briefed the Minister on their Youth Adventure Project in Belfast and their concerns that ‘there was a danger of winning the war, but losing the peace’, 7 December 1977.

COM/60/B/1/3/11 **1978** **Ministers Visit to New York** – includes a reference to a meeting with Mr DeLorean and colleagues to discuss the offer of assistance made by the Department of Commerce in June 1978.

COM/63/1/702 **1977-1978** **Policy Relating to Lagmore/Poleglass** – includes papers demonstrating ministerial and officials commitment to retaining land in West Belfast for industrial development and job creation whilst facing opposition from other Northern Ireland Departments and the Planning Appeals Commission, [1 December/20 December 1977].

COM/63/1/815 **1978** **Action Plan Group**– contains reference to the DeLorean project acting as an industrial and economic catalyst for the West Belfast/Twinbrook area, 4 August 1978.

COM/69/84 **1977-1978** **United Unionist Action Council (UUAC) Strike – Follow-up Action** – includes minutes of meeting on the stoppage, lessons learned, etc, 6 July 1977; also contains a report from the Steering Group on the Economic Activities of Paramilitaries concerning the problem of intimidation in Northern Ireland, and how it can be tackled, 2 August 1977; minutes of the Steering Group on Economic Activities of Paramilitary Organisations, 28 July 1977.

COM/63/1/773 **1978** **Strathearn Audio Ltd** – highlights the government’s efforts including the Secretary of State, Roy Mason, to get the factory onto a sound footing by attracting inward international investment.

1978 Highlighted Files

COM/63/1/774 1978 Strathearn Audio Ltd – highlights the government's efforts including the Secretary of State, Roy Mason, to get the factory onto a sound footing by appealing to the Treasury and attempting to attract international investment. It also includes reference to the special compensation payments for the wife of James Nicholson, an English businessman murdered by PIRA in 1977.

Department of Education

ED/13/2/375, 1977-1978 Education Files on the Reorganisation of Secondary etc – includes record of meeting between Ministers and the Representative body for grammar schools.

ED/13/2/445 1978 Integrated Education in NI – Lord Dunleath's Bill – Includes note of meeting between NIO Minister, Lord Melchett and Lord Dunleath, about the proposed legislation which sought to encourage integrated education in Northern Ireland, [7 December 1977].

Department of the Environment

ENV/8/1/21 1978 NIHE Rehabilitation: West Belfast – Events following Police investigations includes papers prepared by officials such as Kenneth Bloomfield for NIO ministers on allegations about paramilitary involvement in housing contracts, the role of the Housing Executive, etc.

ENV/8/1/39 1977-1978 NIHE – Allegations of Contract and Other Irregularities – Request for an Inquiry – includes papers to Roy Mason, Secretary of State, on the best way to proceed; ministerial concern about the accusations, etc.

ENV/10/1/14 1978 Economic Activities of Paramilitary Organisations - includes minutes of meetings and papers prepared for the Steering Group covering topics such as the political efforts of PIRA, community influence, etc.

ENV/19/2/2 1976-1977 Paramilitary influence in the building industry – contains papers highlighting official concern that housing contracts were coming under the influence of paramilitary groups and how this could be tackled by government. It include a paper on intimidation from the Steering Group on Economic Activities of Paramilitaries, 9 June 1977.

Department of Manpower Services

DMS/5/3 1977-1978 Ford Motor Company, Dunmurry– includes papers relating to allegations of discrimination and intimidation at the Ford Factory, Dunmurry

Department of Finance

FIN/18/58/1 **1977-1978** **Inter-departmental Group on Shipbuilding** – reveals the Government's future plans for Harland & Wolff and the importance of ensuring its survival.

FIN/30/R/1/11 **1977** **Administrative Devolution**– includes views of Government and senior civil servants on the creation of a form of administrative devolution for Northern Ireland

Policy Co-Ordinating Committee

PCC/1/7/2 **1978** **PCC Minutes** – contains a report on 'The Problem of Belfast' by Ken Bloomfield; discussion by Heads of Northern Ireland departments on the way ahead for the city.

PCC/1/7/4 **1978** **PCC Minutes** – further discussions about the problems of Belfast; and a request from the Peace People for planting fir trees presented to them by Norway.

PCC/1/7/8 **1978** **PCC Minutes** – report and discussion on comprehensive education in NI and the discontinuance of the 11+ selection procedure.

PCC/1/7/14 **1978** **PCC Minutes** – report and discussion on how to improve co-ordination between NIO and NI departments with the likelihood that Direct Rule would continue for some time.