



Department for

**Communities**

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# Release of 1999 files at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland



PRONI

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## ***Using the documents***

When using the documents held at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), please ensure that you acknowledge PRONI's custody of the original files and give the full PRONI document reference number.

Please note that in the 1999 file list; any file reference bearing 'A' at the end denotes the open part of a file which has been partially closed.

For example, the file *CENT/1/24/14A* refers to the open part of a file, whereas *CENT/1/24/14* refers to the part of that file withheld under certain exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

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<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

## ***PRONI ON CAIN***

PRONI on CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) is a joint project between the Ulster University and PRONI which has resulted in digitised images of key documents from previous PRONI file releases being made freely available to view online for researchers and students. PRONI on CAIN includes over 4,000 public records comprising 17,000 pages of content on the troubles and political developments from 1968-1998. For further details of the documents available, please visit

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/proni/index.html>



## 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 the Act, and the Data Protection legislation.

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 year due to Covid-19 restrictions, the records of NI Departments and the NIO with terminal dates of 1999 are being brought forward for release during December 2022.

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 Data Protection legislation.

## Records Released

**512** files being deemed as suitable for release as “fully open”. A further **220** files are open but subject to blanking out of some content. **29** files remain closed in full.

The main file series being released includes Central Secretariat.

Some of the significant issues covered by the 1999 release include:

- Preparation for Devolution
- British/Irish Council meetings
- Setting up the NI Assembly
- North/South Implementation bodies
- Central Community Relations Unit
- Disposal of military property
- Funding of Political Parties
- Civil Unrest during the summer of 1998
- Policy on Abortion
- Belfast-Dublin Rail link

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 Data Protection legislation.

The catalogue of files for 1999 will be publicly available online on the PRONI website [www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni) from Thursday 29th December and the files will also be available to view at PRONI from Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> December.



## 1999 Highlighted Files

### Central Secretariat

**CENT/1/19/55A 1990 - 1999 CCRU – Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland**

Background to the meeting held between the Prime Minister and representatives from the Grand Lodges of England, Scotland and Ireland, on 7 May 1998. The Orange Order had been offered a meeting with the Secretary of State but had declined this preferring instead to seek a meeting with the Prime Minister. “Given the commitment of these individuals to keeping the Orange Order on a moderate course, Dr Mowlam thinks it would be well worth the Prime Minister’s time to meet them. A meeting would strengthen their position within the Orange Order, and would demonstrate the Government’s willingness to listen to the concerns of the representatives of grassroots opinion.” The file also covers funding and training for marshals at Orange Order events.

**CENT/1/22/82A 1992 – 1997 Cross Border Economic Co-operation (Vol 6)**

**USA Contacts and President Clinton**

Includes correspondence on the proposal to appoint a new political appointment to the US Consul General in Belfast, and the arguments for and against such an appointment. Contains a copy of a letter signed by Bill Clinton expressing thanks to the Chairman of Irish-Americans for supporting Clinton/Gore which sets out the position which a future Clinton Administration would take in working to achieve peace in Northern Ireland. The letter refers to the use of lethal force and of collusion between the security forces and paramilitary groups. In a memo dated 4 November 1992 it was noted that the “Ambassador’s was a timely intervention with Madeleine Albright. The reference to lethal force was a particularly unwelcome formulation in the Morrison letter and I am glad that the Ambassador moved quickly to register a Government view.” In the same memo it is noted “I am sure you are right to anticipate a period of turbulence now Clinton is elected and I wholeheartedly agree that it would useful to invite the Ambassador to map out a possible strategy on the handling of Northern Ireland issues.”

**CENT/1/23/45A 1994**

**Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference –  
General Vol 13**

Meetings held at Maryfield and records of the Intergovernmental conference where the British and Irish governments discussed subjects such as identity issues, confidence issues (including relations with the Security Forces, and the use of lethal force), changes in policing structures, the treatment of fugitive offenders, the boundary commission, cross-border roads, the reception of RTE television in Northern Ireland held on 28 January 1994

**CENT/1/25/17A 1995 - 1996**

**CCRU Equality – Public Marches**

Policy towards public marches, in light of disturbances in Portadown and on the Ormeau Road during the summer of 1995. Discussions about policy concerning marches and whether they should remain an operational matter for the RUC or should involve Ministers. “It could be assumed that peace might reduce the problem [Orange parades passing off peacefully] further. Not so, mainly because Sinn Fein spotted an opportunity to provoke clashes between the RUC and the Nationalist community – an integral part of their current strategy. Given the Sinn Fein intervention ... I think that the RUC did remarkably well. The Portadown situation was very unpleasant but there was an eventual agreement, which the dreadful Trimble did his best to obstruct and spoil.” Includes a note of a meeting which was held between Sir John Wheeler, David Trimble and Ken Maginnis on 27 March 1996, covering a number of issues including Trimble’s personal security, the overall security situation, Decommissioning, border roads, as well as the Orange Parade on the Ormeau Road on Easter Tuesday which was likely to be contentious. The summary of the meeting concluded that Mr Trimble was in very approachable and friendly form. His undertakings to use influence on the parades issue might be taken with a pinch of salt. However, he was using compromise language and the fact that he sees the importance of doing so might be significant.”

**CENT/1/25/70A 1998 - 1999 Secretary of State's meeting: Miscellaneous Vol 2**

The file includes: a note for the record dated 28 October 1998 of a meeting with a Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) delegation led by David Ervine, who gave an assessment of David Trimble '...rarely talked to anyone in the PUP...Trimble had to try and arrive at a form of words which would be sufficiently acceptable to keep Sinn Fein in the frame, permit him to form a Shadow Executive and keep most the UUP Assembly Party with him: A tall order...'.

**CENT/1/26/5 1997 – 1998 Policy Coordinating Committee Minutes and related papers Vol. 7**

The file contains minutes of the Policy Coordinating Committee held on 21 November 1997 in Parliament Buildings with an update on political developments, progress on the Talks 'Sinn Fein were under pressure and frustrated by the UUP's refusal to engage. However, the bones of a settlement were evident...', 'Some within the DUP wished to return to Talks. Mr Steele briefed PCC in some detail on what was known about the position within PIRA and Sinn Fein, and on the threat from the Continuity Army Council, INLA and the LVF.'

**CENT/1/26/57A 1997 – 1998 Confidence Building Measures – Unionist Community**

Checklist of "measures to build confidence within the pro-Union community" which was passed to Dr Mowlam by Mr Trimble. The responses made by NI government departments to specific issues raised in the document, which included greater openness and transparency of the Intergovernmental Conference and the Secretariat; Community and Cultural Development (including recognition for the Ulster-Scots language and funding for the national war memorial at Thiepval); implementation of the Cooper and Lybrand report on school funding; the composition of

Quangos; greater openness and fairness in the review of Fair Employment legislation and the role of SACHR; assurance on legally held firearms; implementation of assurances on parades legislation; and vigorous implantation of decommissioning timetable. Includes letter written by Paul Murphy to David Trimble addressing each point in turn, and subsequent progress reports. Also includes Secretary of State briefing on these points in advance of a meeting with Jeffrey Donaldson on 22 October 1997.

**CENT/1/26/59A 1997 – 1999 Bloody Sunday Part 2**

Includes an options paper presenting options available to Mo Mowlam, who had just been appointed as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, relating to Bloody Sunday. Options were set out relating to setting up an Inquiry, and also to the wording of any government apology. The Secretary of State's decision to announce a review "with two prongs, and an overriding limitation". The first prong would be to address the Widgery Tribunal in process terms, and the second to address the "substantive significance for Widgery's findings of new material, but without attempting to re-run the whole inquiry process. The overriding limitation would be (if it can be secured) that no soldier or other crown servant should be placed in jeopardy of legal action by whatever the reviewer might find or by what might flow from his findings." A letter from Mo Mowlam to the Secretary of State for Defence, dated 16 June 1997 sets out her decision to initiate the review along these lines, but noting that "it will not be possible to deliver an absolute guarantee on that override...it will be for the Attorney General to determine whether in the public interest there should be no criminal proceedings." Also contains notes of meetings with the Irish government, which had presented a dossier of evidence in relation to Bloody Sunday.

**CENT/1/27/17 1997 – 1999 PPCU – Programme of Government**

Development of a programme of Government which could be taken forward under the new Northern Ireland Executive, and the difficulties faced by senior civil servants in determining how to construct a draft programme for the newly devolved administration.

A briefing paper on the preparation of a programme for government, dated 12 January 1999 states “In seeking to formulate a programme for government one enters uncharted waters: the Executive itself will be an involuntary coalition with internal political tensions that could degenerate into continual attrition between and within unionist and nationalist blocs... Assembly members have up to now been in “permanent opposition” mode. They have not had to confront the hard decisions associated with priority-setting and resource allocation. The primary motivation of Assembly members will be to seek advantage for their particular constituencies rather than advancing the interests of the region as a whole... Like the ‘Starship Enterprise’, the Executive is tasked to go where man has not gone before – to formulate and implement and agreed comprehensive manifesto for the future of Northern Ireland...”.

**CENT/1/27/18      1998 – 1999      PPCU – Inter-Departmental Planning Group – Vol 1**

The file includes a paper dated 17 April 1998 on accommodation for a new political body, options discussed were Parliament Buildings and Castle Buildings; note of a working dinner held in Parliament Buildings; on Monday 20 April 1998 discussing progress towards a new administration, the referendum, a shadow Assembly, North South cooperation; notes of subsequent meetings covering the same issues; and a note of 28 January 1999 on progress towards a local administration.

**CENT/1/27/19      1998 - 1999      PPCU – Workplan for Assembly**

The file includes a paper dated 7 January 1999 from John Semple, Head of the NI Civil Service to the Private Secretary of the Secretary of State for NI on the need for consultation/liaison arrangements with the officials of the First and Deputy First Minister in the period before devolution and that arrangements at Ministers and official level should be agreed.

**CENT 1/27/68      1998 - 1999      Bull points and constituency briefs**

Bull points were written and distributed for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to distribute to posts

abroad. It's main purpose was to supply Information Officers with current information for speeches, and answers on which they could draw. The bull points included the operation of the Belfast Agreement, race relations, community relations, Targeting Social Need, Irish Language and Ulster Scots, Education, and the International Fund for Ireland.

**CENT/1/27/71      1998 - 1999      Secretary of State's Meetings- Miscellaneous Vol 3**

Briefing notes on a meeting held by Mo Mowlam, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Includes a note of a meeting held with a US Congressional Delegation in July 1999 in which Dr Mowlam was questioned about her political future, the future of the

Good Friday Agreement, the marching issue, and her decision to talk to the prisoners in 1998. The note concludes, "This is a meeting that will be remembered for the wrong reasons. It was both embarrassing and awkward for the Secretary of State to be kept waiting the best part of 30 minutes, to brief a delegation who seemed a little unfocussed."; note of a meeting with Alliance Party representatives, dated 26 October 1999, about 'designation of identity' under Assembly Standing Orders and discussions about changing designations; and note of a meeting with the NI Women's Coalition, dated 9 February 1999 about the current political situation, Dr Monica McWilliams, '...added that [Sinn Fein's] anxiety... was generated by the inevitability of having to do something on weapons and retain their members.'

**CENT/1/27/92                      1998 - 1999      Implementation bodies – language**

Discussion of the functions of an All-Island Language Board, which was one of the six implementation bodies proposed by the Good Friday Agreement. Includes a draft memorandum of understanding between the Department of Finance

and Personnel, Department of Education of Northern Ireland, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, and Department of Education in relation to the North-South Implementation Body for Irish Language, Ullans and Ulster Scots Culture.

**CENT/1/28/1**

**1999**

**Office of First/Deputy First Ministers**

Discussions around the proposed structures and functional areas of OFMDFM. Functions of the Equality Unit and anticipated specific policy areas which would form part of its remit, including Fair Employment, Sex Discrimination, Women's Issues

Race Relations, Disability, and the establishment of the Equality Commission. Also includes discussion about the arrangements for Special Advisors and a note of a meeting which took place on 4 March 1999 between the First Minister (Designate), David Trimble, the Deputy First Minister (Designate) Seamus Mallon, and senior civil servants regarding the establishment of the Office of First and Deputy First Ministers, ensuring that staff would be in post as close to devolution as possible, and the question of where the First and Deputy First Ministers envisaged having their office in Stormont Castle rather than Parliament Buildings.

**CENT/1/28/3**

**1999 North/South Implementation Bodies – Treaty Vol 2**

Drafting the text of the agreement between the UK Government and the Government of Ireland, establishing Implementation Bodies. Includes draft responses to a letter from Gerry Adams in which

he stated that it would be contrary to the Belfast Agreement to say that if the Assembly fails, so too will the Implementation Bodies. "This issue has been one of the major sticking points in finalizing the draft treaty establishing the initial implementation bodies. David Trimble and the UUP have been insisting that a clause be inserted to make clear that the bodies will cease to function if the Assembly falls...The Irish, as well as the SDLP and Sin Fein, have resisted such a clause. [It is intended to resolve this disagreement by including in the treaty a preambular reference to the interlocking and interdependent nature of the institutional arrangements in the Belfast Agreement. This will give sufficient cover to Trimble without committing ourselves to the immediate shutdown of all the bodies in the event of a breakdown of the Assembly.]"

**CENT/1/28/4            1998 - 1999    PPCU – Funding for Political Parties Vol 2**

Financial assistance for Assembly parties post-devolution and the payment of travel expenses; the legal basis of “short-money” (the allocation of public funds intended to enable Northern Ireland Assembly members to fulfil their Assembly duties). Includes

a briefing on the New Northern Ireland Assembly (Salaries and Allowances) Order 1999 which sets out the background to the payment of salaries and allowances which had been in place since the Assembly elections had been held. “So far these have been paid without full statutory cover. The reasoning for this seems to be that no-one was entirely sure whether it was worth giving such cover to something which might come to a premature end. However, we are now approaching the point where devolution might take off and we should, as the Northern Ireland (Elections) Act provides, give ourselves retrospective cover and cover payments up to devolution.”

**CENT/1/28/32            1999            First Day Briefs for NIO Ministers 1999, Vol 2**

Summaries of major current issues on NI Departments, with specific briefing notes for the Secretary of State from the DOE on the proposed sale of Belfast Harbour; the “City Vision Process” (creating a widely acceptable vision of what sort of

cities Belfast and Derry could be in 25 years time); and “Shaping Our Future (the draft regional strategic framework for Northern Ireland which was published in December 1998\_”. A First Day Brief from DFP sets out the major issues for the department: Public Expenditure Block issues; The Structural Funds Plan, including the allocation of funds from the EU; Emergency Planning for the millennium period. Department of Education NI: Education Funding; Strategy 2010 – Building the Knowledge-based economy; Culture of Tolerance; Irish Medium Education.

**CENT/3/251A**      **1998 - 1999**      **North/South Implementation Bodies –**

Draft text for the Treaties which were to give effect to the Implementation Bodies under Article 2 of the British-Irish Agreement. A memo dated 11 February 1999 sets out the question as to whether there should be contingency arrangements for the possible collapse of elements of the Agreement. “The emphatic reply then from both the UUP and SDLP ... was that we should not plan for failure ... Having taken that line (rather perhaps against the interests of HMG), it would be hard to explain if we now made an exception for implementation bodies ...”. Further discussion about the negotiations between the British and Irish governments around the wording of the treaties and about the operation of the North South Ministerial Council.

**CENT/3/255**      **1999**      **Office of First/Deputy First Ministers**

The file contains a note of meeting with Professor Paul Bew, dated 3 March 1999 about the First Ministers Office and advisers; a paper about consultants for the First and Deputy First Minister from John Semple Head of the NI Civil Service and dated 28 January 1999; and a note of a meeting dated 1 February 1999 between First Minister Designate David Trimble and NIO Minister, Adam Ingram of a meeting on 26 January 1999, ‘This was a turbulent meeting where Mr Trimble and Mr Maginnis made the Minister aware of their view that there should have been consultation with the UUP over our ‘Normalisation’ policy’.

**CENT/3/282A**      **1998**      **Implementing the Settlement – Referendum Planning**

The file contains a paper entitled ‘Political Agreement: Planning an announcement and publication’, dated 7 April 1998; a paper from Richard Wilson, Cabinet Secretary to the Prime

Minister, Tony Blair about the NI Campaign and what position Government Ministers should take in relation to the Agreement being put to the people of NI, dated 22 May 1998; letter from Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for NI to Prime Minister Tony Blair dated 30 March 1998 about an NI referendum and election, and the funding required for local parties.

**CENT/3/294A**

**1998-1999**

**PPCU Ministerial Meetings Vol 1**

The file contains minutes of meetings between the Secretary of State for NI, NIO Minister and officials, recordings details about meetings with political parties, implementation of the GFA (Good Friday Agreement), and the security situation.



**Department of the Environment**

**ENV/13/4/40      1995 – 1998      Reintegration of ex-prisoners – PSV licensing issues**

Background to a meeting between Project 2000 (an Ex-prisoners group) and officials from the Department of the Environment, The Training and Employment Agency, and the Department for Economic Development, to discuss PSV licensing and in particular the problems experience by ex-prisoners in this field.

**ENV/13/4/46      1997 - 1998      Belfast-Dublin Rail Upgrade – launch of New Service**

File contains details about the official launch of the 'Enterprise' service on Tuesday 21 October 1997 by NIO Minister Lord Dubs, with briefing, guest lists, table plans, etc.



**Department of Economic Development**

**DED/3/705            1996 – 1999            First Day Briefing**

This file commences in relation to the creation of a first day brief for an in-coming Secretary of State following the election that was being held in May 1997. Officials from the Department of Economic Development in Northern Ireland issued guidance about the creation of the brief, noting that “[the review of the material supplied to Ministers after the last election]...was generally found to be both voluminous and very detailed. We believe that a more valuable service can be provided to the minister if the volume of briefing is reduced to a more “user friendly” level...It is our opinion that an incoming minister’s view of his/her department, and his/her subsequent relationship with its officials, will be heavily influenced by the initial service he/she receives...”. The First Day Brief for the department sets out the major issues facing the department, including the Scottish Interconnector, high profiles IDB cases such as De Lorean, Hualon, Europa Tool, Gallagher Ltd, Sean Quinn Group; Training and Employment programmes; Equality. The file continues in 1998 with the creation of First-Day briefs in the context of the NI Assembly and the initial involvement of the First and Deputy First Ministers in Departmental matters. This includes briefings on the Chancellor’s Initiative, Northern Ireland Science Park, and Euro preparations. Also includes copies of First Day briefing material compiled by the Department of Further and Higher Education Training and Employment.

**DED/3/1099            1997 – 1999 Northern Ireland Affairs Committee**

File relates to the inquiry by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee into the operation of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. Includes a memorandum produced by DED which sets out its role in relation to the Act, the history and background of equality policy and legislation, the legislative achievements to date, and the difficulties with the 1989 Act.



**Department of Health and Social Services & Public Safety**

**DHSSPS/2/3/66 1992 – 1993**

**Abortion – Policy in Northern Ireland**

Background on Abortion law and policy in Northern Ireland, including the views of professional bodies, politicians, churches, and the view of the public.

Includes a submission which was drafted by the Health Policy Division in November 1992 which details the background issues and options for change to the law on abortion, concluding that “all of the options developed are fraught with difficulty. Any Government or Departmental initiatives to clarify or change the law would inevitably be highly controversial”.



**Northern Ireland Office**

**NIO/28/1/15A      1997-1998      Civil Unrest (Summer 98)**

The file contains situation reports during the first week of July 1998 detailing, violence, number of incidents, damage, disorder; separate paper dated 3 July from the Compensation Agency providing estimates of damage to 9 churches of over £1m; papers about contingency planning and the tour of the north parade, dated 16 June 1998.

**NIO/28/1/16A      1998      Civil Unrest (Summer 98)**

The file contains situation reports about Drumcree and disorder across NI, dated 11 July 1998; note for the record about the murder of the Quinn children in Ballymoney, dated 12 July 1998 and situation reports following the Omagh bomb dated 17 August 1998.



Department of Finance and Personnel

**DFP/19/185**      **1998 1999**      **Supply- NIO – The Bloody Sunday Inquiry**

The file contains correspondence between Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for NI, dated 28 January 1999 to Alan Milburn, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, about the costs of the Inquiry, and a reply expressing his concerns that the Ministry of Defence had decided to put forward as potential witnesses, ‘the names of some 3000 military personnel [that] will add some £1 million to the cost of the Inquiry.

**DFP/19/186**      **1998-1999**      **Supply (NIO) – New Political Arrangements for the NIO**

The file contains a paper dated 25 March 1998 about preparing the NIO for the end of direct rule, further papers and notes of a meetings between officials on this issue; future use of Hillsborough Castle and Stormont Castle dated 4 September 1998; and post devolution working arrangements:

Concordat between NIO and the NI Executive Committee, dated 26 November 1998, setting out the framework for working arrangements between the NIO and the NI administration after devolution.

Department of Agriculture

**AG/31/56/1**

**1998**

**Briefing for Minister**

File contains correspondence cases relating to the state of agriculture in NI from MPs, local councils, Presbyterian Church, etc ., including note of a meeting on 8 October 1998 with an Assembly delegation on the pig crisis between Lord Dubs, Rev William McCrea, Edwin Poots , Jim Shannon and briefing for a follow up meeting, dated 20 November 1998.

**AG/34/6**

**1997**

**BSE General**

File contains papers about support for NI farmers due to the impact of BSE and includes a briefing for Lord Dubs for a meeting UK Minister of Agriculture to discuss a forthcoming statement on

BSE, dated 12-13 May 1997. Concordat between NIO and the NI Executive Committee, dated 26 November 1998, setting out the framework for working arrangements between the NIO and the NI administration after devolution.