



Northern Ireland Office  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast BT4 3SS

David Trimble Esq MP  
House of Commons  
LONDON  
SW1A 0AA

10 December 1997

Dear David,

**SOMME HERITAGE CENTRE**

You will recall that I wrote to you in July about the serious financial problems of the Somme Heritage Centre.

Following an appraisal by external management consultants and advice from the Northern Ireland Museums Council we have concluded that a viable future for the Centre is possible but only if fundamental changes are made. In particular it will be necessary for a complete overhaul of its management committee and operational management to be carried out and for steps to be taken toward developing its museum role and widening its scope.

In light of these views, Tony Worthington has decided that, in addition to the £10,000 by way of emergency funding provided over the summer, he will be prepared to make available core-funding of up to £40,000 to enable the Centre to continue in operation until March 1999, by which time it is expected that the planned full review of local museum and heritage provision in Northern Ireland will have been completed. At this stage the future of the Centre will be looked at again, on its merits, in the context of whatever policy decisions are reached.

I appreciate the assistance provided too by Ards Borough Council; their continuing support will also be critical to the survival of the Centre.





An overhaul of existing management structures will however be a pre-condition of this new assistance. The whole future of the Heritage Centre will rest on the shoulders of those concerned in its management and without a great deal of ability, business acumen and dedication on their part, its future will be uncertain. Clear evidence of steps to change its approach, to widen its scope and promote itself to a wider audience will be necessary if funding is to continue and the Centre is to make a permanent place for itself.

I hope you will appreciate that we have now gone to unusual lengths for the Somme Heritage Centre. If you can use your good offices in any way to provide advice and direction to the Centre, it would much appreciate it.

I have written also to David Montgomery in similar terms.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Marjorie Mowlam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

MARJORIE MOWLAM