

Q&A MATERIAL

Q Is this a political decision?

A The decision has been taken in accordance with the relevant public order legislation and on the advice of the Chief Constable and at his request. The Chief Constable remains in full operational control of the situation in Londonderry.

Q Why was the same decision not taken at Drumcree?

A In this instance the Chief Constable decided to ask the Secretary of State specifically to use his powers because of the excessive demands that would be placed on the security forces if the parades went ahead. This request was made in the light of different operational circumstances relevant to the Apprentice Boys parade; in particular that the policing of the western section of the walls over a prolonged period was unreasonable requiring several hundred police officers to allow the parade to pass.

Q If the circumstances of this parade are "operationally different", why is the Secretary of State involved in the decision?

A The powers available to the Secretary of State are wider than those available to the Chief Constable. The decision was taken by the Secretary of State in order to meet a particular operational requirement by the security forces.

Q Did the Chief Constable then make the wrong decisions at Drumcree?

A The Government is already on record as fully supporting the decisions made by the Chief Constable at Drumcree. The situation in Londonderry is entirely different and decisions have been governed by the particular circumstances prevailing there.



- Q Have lessons from Drumcree been learned?
- A Drumcree was a quite different situation operationally. However, the experiences learned at Drumcree, not least the strains it imposed on the security forces have been taken into account in this situation.
- Q Is this not a surrender to mob rule?
- A Absolutely not. The decision has been taken in the interests of all concerned. HMG and the security forces prepared to take firm, even-handed action to protect both sides of the community and to maintain public order.
- Q The Government seems to be completely inconsistent in its handling of potential and actual public order situations?
- A HMG seeks to ensure that the handling of parades and public order situations are handled with fairness and consistency. No two situations are identical and all decisions must be made in the light of circumstances. The RUC remain in charge of operational policing matters and will continue to discharge their duties in a professional manner.
- Q Will this decision like that at Drumcree be reversed?
- A The Secretary of State has made clear that in the event of agreement the order can be rescinded. Otherwise the security forces will take all steps necessary to protect life and maintain order.
- Q Surely Unionists will see this as HMG caving into pressure from the Irish govt. and other sources after Drumcree?
- A This is not the case. The Irish Government have been informed of the background to and reasons for the decision but it is one taken by the Secretary of State on the basis of RUC advice.



- Q What if the Unionist community don't like the decision and widespread disorder again occurs?
- A No excuse whatever for disorder or lawlessness as a result of this decision from any quarter. Disorder will be met firmly and resolutely by the security forces. Partial closure of the walls preserves the ability of the Apprentice Boys to continue their long historical association with the walls.
- Q A weak compromise?
- Q As the decision does not address Nationalist concerns about consent is there potential for further disorder in Londonderry?
- A There would be no excuse for such disorder and if it occurs it will be met with resolution. The decision means that the part of the walls which overlook the Bogside will not be open to the Apprentice Boys; therefore a major concern of Nationalists will be met.
- Q Did the Govt. consult with others before making the decision?
- A In line with the relevant legislation, HMG consulted with the Police Authority for Northern Ireland before the Order was made.
- Q Did the Police Authority support the decision?
- A Yes.
- Q Does this decision set a precedent in relation to other marches?
- A Each set of circumstances will be considered on their merits and the relevant operational policing decisions made in this light.



Q Why take this decision now when local negotiations not completely exhausted?

A Clearly prefer that the matter be sorted out at a local level. If this can still be done, then the order will be lifted. However, timely decisions needed on operational grounds to assist the police in their task of maintaining order and protecting the community over the coming days.

Q A weak compromise?

A In the absence of agreement, HMG believes that this step is a sensible and proportionate one which addresses the concerns of both sides. Believes that all people of goodwill will recognise it as such.