

● PRINCIPLE OF CONSENT

- The Government's position on the principle of consent is **crystal clear: Northern Ireland should not cease to be a part of the United Kingdom without the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland.**
- This is **not merely** Government policy; it is **set out in both national** (Section 1 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973) **and international law** (Anglo-Irish Agreement).
- In Article 1 of the Agreement both the British and Irish Governments recognise that the **present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland is for no change in the status of Northern Ireland.**
- In the **Joint Declaration of December 1993**, and more recently in the **Joint Framework document of February 1995** both Governments recognise that the **consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland is required** before any constitutional change could come about.
- This **doctrine of consent** is now **accepted by all of the political parties at Westminster**, in the Dail and by all the political parties in Northern Ireland, with the **sole exception of Sinn Fein.**
- I **reaffirmed** our position on the principle of consent in Belfast on 16 May and set out the consequences, perhaps more clearly than any previous Prime Minister.
- **Consent is there as a central and sacred principle.** There isn't going to be any change to Northern Ireland's status unless the majority want it.

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- Everything possible is being done to secure the lifting of the export ban.
- The Government is pursuing a twin-track approach, agreed by all Agricultural Ministers. A revised Export certified Herds Scheme has been submitted to the Commission.
- Hoping to get an opinion on this from the EU Scientific Veterinary Committee in September. Although applying to the whole of the UK, if it is accepted, this Scheme will in practice amount to a Northern Ireland first Scheme. Herds elsewhere in the UK will not be able to comply immediately because of the lack of a traceability system.
- Also, pursuing a Date-based Export Scheme under which meat from cattle born after certain date (currently 1 August 1996) and which therefore could have had no possible access to contaminated feed, would be eligible for export.
- These schemes are being pursued separately but with equal vigour.

Illegal Exports (If necessary)

- These do not help. Allegations of illegal exports of Northern Ireland beef are being investigated. The Government has introduced new legislation to control illegal exports.

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SPRINGVALE**LINES TO TAKE**

- The original proposal could not be supported on Value for Money or public expenditure grounds.
- However the revised proposal involving the university and BIFHE is an interesting one which deserves careful consideration.
- We are now initiating an economic appraisal of the revised proposal as a matter of urgency.
- Mo Mowlam will take a view on the value for money and affordability of the project, including its wider objectives, at the earliest practicable time.

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. The proposed development of a campus on the Springvale site by the University of Ulster was in direct response to a need to find a means of regenerating the derelict site in a run-down area of north and west Belfast which straddles the so-called "peace line" and to meet the university's aspirations for growth in student numbers.
2. Economic appraisal on original Springvale campus proposal (3750 full-time equivalent students at a cost of £100-120m plus capital and £10-15m pa recurrent) was clearly negative.
 - Springvale campus was an expensive way of providing additional Higher Education (HE) places
 - urban regeneration benefits were also limited and poor value for money.
3. University of Ulster (UU) and Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education (BIFHE) have developed an alternative proposal (cost c. £60-65m capital of which c. £40-45m would fall on public expenditure; c. £5 pa recurrent) containing 3 elements:
 - a) Research and Development facilities;
 - b) Community Outreach Centre;

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- c) a new style, post-Dearing Campus which would draw together further and higher education provision/
4. Discussions between the two institutions are focused primarily on the nature of the campus, the potential mix of courses and associated student numbers. It will involve art and design, hospitality and tourism, vocational social and health care, informatics and community education.
 5. An economic appraisal of this alternative proposal is now being initiated, so Government cannot take a view on its value for money at this stage
 6. No Public Expenditure provision has yet been made for the Springvale project, and its affordability will need to be considered in the context of the substantial real terms decline in the NI Block (subject to the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review and of Government's response to Dearing).

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