



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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Dear John,

Prime Minister's Meeting with Mr Ahern, 12 December:
Briefing

The Prime Minister will meet the Irish Prime Minister (Taoiseach), Bertie Ahern on Friday 12 December for a bilateral meeting in the margins of the European Council. It seems likely that most of the brief discussion will focus on the **Northern Ireland talks process**. The Taoiseach will want to say he has discussed freedom of transit for **Irish beef exports**. There should also be an endorsement of the **East/West Interdepartmental cooperation exercise**, and the associated **communique** and summary paper which it is planned to issue from the meeting.

Our key objectives are:

- To hold a constructive discussion on **Northern Ireland** (see Flag B for specific objectives and steering brief); *- a possible, draft statement is attached;*
- To issue a **joint statement** reaffirming the **programme of cooperation** between Britain and the Republic of Ireland;
- To underline that everything possible is being done to guarantee free movement of **Irish beef** through British ports;
- To listen constructively to, and seek to assuage where possible, any **Irish concerns on bilateral issues** (eg "Bloody Sunday", prisoners etc)

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I attach the following briefing:

- A A steering brief and points to make on **Northern Ireland** political issues;
- B A checklist of points to make and/or background on the following bilateral issues:



- East/West cooperation
- Irish beef exports/farmers' protests
- (defensive) "Bloody Sunday"
- (defensive) Roisin McAliskey
- (defensive) Prison transfers
- (if raised) BSE
- (if raised) Duty Free

yours bwr,

Dominick

(Dominick Chilcott)
Private Secretary

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