



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/100/12

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Accession Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. McHenry, 23 June 1998  
S.A. 13.7.98

10/7/98  
SEEN BY  
Mr. McHenry,  
For your files  
9.7.98

25A

Dear Bertie,

Thank you for your letter of 10 June. I take your concerns seriously, and I am grateful to you for expressing them in the way you did.

I entirely agree with you that our joint task in implementing the Good Friday Agreement is to preserve the Agreement's essential balance. That is what both Mo Mowlam and I have been doing and will continue to do. You will know for example the difficulty we have faced in Parliamentary passage of the Sentences Bill. But it is an essential part of the balance in the Agreement and, despite the difficulties, we are determined to see it through.

I also agree that we should work as closely as possible together in implementing the Agreement, in addition to our essential cooperation with the Northern Ireland parties. There are of course areas - particularly in Strand 1 of the Agreement - where the primary task of implementation is for us, working in close and direct cooperation with all the Northern Ireland parties. But our consultation should always be as close as we can make it.

Paul Murphy has, for example, just completed a round of meetings with the parties about preparations for the Assembly. Those meetings have suggested a

- 2 -

general consensus on an early first meeting of the Assembly and election of the First and Deputy First Minister, with arrangements made for taking forward the definition of Ministerial portfolios and consideration of North/South matters over the summer. This could lead to the formation of the Shadow Executive perhaps in September, with first meetings of the Shadow British/Irish Council and North/South Ministerial Council to follow quickly in order that the 31 October deadline should be met. I believe this is a workable approach but we shall obviously need to keep closely in touch after the elections.

During the election period we are doing our best to avoid contentious announcements. But once the elections are over we will need to show renewed momentum in the implementation of the Agreement. Our two systems need to be in touch about how best to get across this message.

It was good to see you at Cardiff, where I was most grateful for your help and cooperation. I am sorry we did not have more time to talk then, but I hope we can put that to rights before too long.

Yours ever  
Tony

Mr Bertie Ahern TD