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Mr A Green  
Department of Education  
Rathgael House  
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Dear *Arthur,*

**RESPONSES TO JOY-RIDING**

During the past year, Marcus Dodds and Ken Wallace have been in touch with Jimmy Kearney and Bill Smith of this Department on several occasions to discuss the development of a joint approach to projects in which both our Departments have an interest. These discussions have mainly concentrated on measures designed to counteract the problem of joy-riding in the Belfast area.

As you may know this the Department and the Probation Board were for some years involved in funding the West Belfast Auto Project as a pilot scheme established in response to the growing problem of joy-riding. Studies of the Project indicated that any future developments of schemes in this field should be smaller, decentraised and community-based, and should ideally offer approaches other than auto-based activities for the young people (both offenders and non-offenders) who might participate. There was a Ministerial commitment to consider successor projects sympathetically.

A number of submissions were received from possible successor projects - in Newtownabbey, Lower Falls, Lenadoon and Twinbrook (copies of which are enclosed). In all cases, the projects intended to develop a wide range of activities although, as development would obviously take time, they would have to concentrate initially on auto-based activities.

Discussions involving DHSS, DENI, the Probation Board, the Education and Library Boards and the Health and Social Services Boards were held to consider the submissions. Our hope was that these agencies would agree to share the funding of the successor projects. In the event, agreement on this was not reached but, rather than face a gap in provision between the closure of the West Belfast Auto Project at the end of March and the beginning of the successor projects, this Department and the Probation Board agreed in principle to fund the Lower Falls and the Lenadoon projects and to consider, sympathetically, funding Lagan Valley and Newtownabbey. DHSS and the Probation Board has each committed £60,000 this year for the funding of the successor projects. However, the annual budgets of the four projects amount to £173,000, and it is quite likely that various

unforeseen costs could arise in the course of the operation of the projects. Additional costs will also be incurred in the evaluation of the progress of the schemes which we will want to have carried out. We are, therefore, well short of the amount needed to ensure the viable operation of the projects. The purpose of this letter is to raise with you the question of funding for the projects being made available by DENI or the Education and Library Boards.

When we held discussions on the successor projects, we had hoped that some funding might come from the Youth Service, in view of the type of service which the projects hope to offer. I could perhaps best illustrate this by reference to the Newtownabbey Project. The proposal for this project came spontaneously from the local community, and the group wishing to organise the project intended to offer a service which would be preventive, social and recreational for the young people involved. Marcus Dodds took part in a meeting with representatives of the project. Subsequently, Mr Davidson, a member of your Inspectorate, visited the project and reported in generally favourable terms. Mr Davidson noted that the group's objectives ~~was~~ similar to those promoted by the Youth Service, and felt that a positive response to the project was desirable, particularly as it offered an opportunity to reach young people to whom traditional youth activities had not been attractive, even though it fell outside the hitherto accepted remit of the Youth Service.

These views appeared to reflect the tenor of the recent consultative document on future development of the Youth Service, which drew attention to the need to foster voluntary initiatives arising from within the community, and suggested that the Youth Service should broaden its traditional role, perhaps to include programmes of a preventive nature. I note, too, that the consultative document referred to new programmes of a specialist nature and suggested that, in association with the relevant agencies, the Youth Service could consider the general question of crime prevention, addressing such problems as vandalism, joy-riding, solvent abuse etc.

The Youth Service response to the application was that funding could only be considered for groups which had already become established, had demonstrated a particular line of development and had shown that they were well-managed. The Youth Service would, therefore, not offer grant-aid to any of the suggested successor projects. The Education and Library Board representatives explained that their Boards would be unable to fund the projects, given the present policy which did not permit funding of single activity clubs, which the projects would be in their early stages before developing a range of activities other than those which were auto-based.

The Education and Library Boards concerned indicated their willingness to continue to participate in discussions with the applicants for grant-aid. However, the views expressed at past discussions give little ground to expect a change of attitude on the part of the Boards. We therefore face a situation where projects which aim to cater for young people who do not wish to participate in traditional youth clubs, or who are excluded from them, are unable to attract funding from the educational sector, and it is left to DHSS and the Probation Board to try to meet the costs.

I feel that there is a question here which we need to explore further, and I would be glad of an opportunity to discuss the situation with you, in particular

the possibility of your Department participating in the joint arrangements for financing these projects. I will be on leave until 24 June but I would be pleased to meet you on my return. I think it would be helpful, if you are agreeable, to include a representative of the Probation Board in any discussion which we have.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

George

G BUCHANAN