

NORTHERN IRELAND EVENTS COMPANY

UPDATE PAPER

To be placed in the Assembly Library

REVIEW INTO THE FINANCIAL DEFICIT OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND EVENTS COMPANY

This paper is issued in order to update the Assembly on progress being made in matters regarding the Northern Ireland Events Company.

A review by independent professional financial advisors into how the financial deficit arose in the Northern Ireland Events Company was due to report by the end of February. This work is to report on the controls and procedures within the Company. It will examine the roles and responsibilities of the Directors, and the role of the Executive Officers of the Company. Issues relating to why this was not picked by the Board and the Company Auditors and Accountants will be examined, as will the reasons and timing of the deficit. Delays have arisen due to the importance of obtaining the views of the NIEC's board and its former Chief Executive. It will then be important to consider carefully the review's findings and to seek legal and other advice on any sensitive matters arising. It is possible that the review will point to a number of areas requiring further investigation, and the Public Accounts Committee has also indicated their intention to examine this issue further.

This matter will be fully investigated, and lessons learned applied. However, as the premature publication of this report may be prejudicial to further enquiries it is unlikely that the review will be available immediately. When the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure is in receipt of the review and other reports, and has clarified the way forward as appropriate with the relevant authorities he will update the Executive Committee, the CAL Committee and The Assembly further.

FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND EVENTS' SUPPORT

In respect of the future Institutional arrangement for delivering the Events function the Executive noted at the 22 November meeting that "... the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment remains committed in principle to the transfer of the events function (but not the Events Company) to DETI / NITB, subject to due diligence enquiries satisfying him that the function will transfer on a viable basis". The transfer of the function will be subject to both me and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment being satisfied with the arrangements.

A working group of senior officials from the Departments of Culture, Arts and Leisure and Enterprise, Trade and Investment, with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, has been established to oversee the transfer of the events function to NITB, subject to both the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Minister of Enterprise Trade and Investment being satisfied with the arrangements.

In the Interim, and consistent with the Executive's decision to protect, as far as possible, the business continuity of imminent events and those in the pipeline, the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment have agreed that DCAL take on the management of the events function on an interim basis.

An interim DCAL Events Unit has been established to deal with outstanding agreements from events which ran during 2007 – 2008, deal with outstanding applications made to the NIEC up until the end of October 2007 and to issue invitations for grant funding from the Major Events Fund and the Events Growth Fund for future events.

The Events Unit will not engage in directly running events: this will be the role of appropriately experienced and qualified event promoters and organisers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwin Poots', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Edwin Poots MLA

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure