



BIRKHALL

6th September, 2004

Dear Paul,

It was so good of you to put me up at Hillsborough for two nights last week and I can't thank you enough for your kind hospitality, not to mention that most illuminating dinner you gave for me. As always, it was a great pleasure to meet so many people during my visit and I am most grateful to all your people for the trouble they take over these exercises.

I much valued our discussion just before I left on Friday morning and am so glad you are going to pursue the idea of encouraging your officials – and perhaps also some planning people, road engineers and housebuilders? – to visit Poundbury, as well as Yorkshire Forward. Likewise, as we discussed, it would be splendid if some key people from the Province could attend some of my Foundation for the Built Environment's courses in London, and Michael Mehaffy is the man to contact.

I mentioned the issue of Armagh Gaol and suggested that my Phoenix Trust would be only too happy to help with any advice with regard to its conservation and re-use. And, while on the subject of gaols, I suggested that Ruithin Gaol would be a good example of the regeneration and re-use of a redundant historic site for officials to visit.

We discussed the issue of an Action-Learning Pilot Scheme which has remained in abeyance since last year, but which, if implemented, could help perhaps to break the mould of housing "ghettoes" in Northern Ireland. You may remember that both Paul Murrain, from my Foundation, and John Thompson are ready to help with this whenever you give the word!

As usual, I repeated myself – yet again – as regards the potential value to be realized from the regeneration and re-use of redundant historic landmark sites, often as catalysts for sympathetic, associated new development along the lines of Caterham Barracks in

Surrey. You said that you might consider Ebrington Barracks as a candidate for similar treatment and, if so, you might find it worthwhile to talk to Linden Homes which was the company that did the work at Caterham.

Finally, I was delighted to hear that good progress was being made in establishing a Northern Ireland version of Prime Cymru and that Julia Evans, the Chief Executive, was going to come over to talk to your officials. Hopefully, by the time of my next visit to the Province - and if I am still alive by then! - I will be able to see heartening signs of progress in all these issues we discussed...

Meanwhile, this brings you countless good wishes and, I need hardly say, apologies for pestering you about so many things.

Yours ever

Manuel

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*Sos L.B.
Angela Smith
Richard Rogers*

13 October 2004

SOS 22/10

Your Royal Highness,

Thank you for your 6 September 2004 letter as a follow-up to your visit to Northern Ireland. I am grateful to you for taking the time to write to me about the issues we discussed and for sending the contact details for your Foundation, John Thompson and Partners, and the Phoenix Trust. I have also passed on your thanks to those individuals responsible for the arrangements for your visit.

I am also grateful for the offer of support of your Phoenix Trust in relation to Armagh Gaol.

I am aware that some of my Ministers have been corresponding with you on some of the areas we talked about. Angela Smith has identified two principal architects, one in the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and another in the Department of the Environment, who will liaise with Michael Mehaffy in order to attend the appropriate courses offered by your Foundation for the Built Environment.

You will be interested to know that, following Angela Smith's visit to Caterham earlier this year, Angela will visit Ebrington Barracks shortly to help inform deliberations about the way forward for this landmark site.

Finally, with regard to establishing an NI version of Prime Cymru, I understand that Julia Evans is due to visit Northern Ireland on 14 October for further talks with Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment officials here. As you say, I hope I will be able to report some signs of progress by the time of your next visit.

Paul Murphy

RT HON PAUL MURPHY MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland