

Dear Gordon,

CASEMENT PARK & EURO 2028

You wrote to the previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 22 March and again on 4 June, regarding the funding requirement for Casement Park, in order for it to be built to the appropriate specification to host matches at EURO 2028.

As you are aware, our Departments have been engaging closely with UEFA and project partners to understand the stadium requirements, funding implications and deadlines. The Government has always been committed to ensuring that Northern Ireland could host the EUROs if there was any way to achieve that. And so, when we took office in July, we said that we would swiftly, but fully, analyse whether Casement Park could be successfully completed to the required UEFA timelines and in line with their minimum requirements.

Having sought expert advice and analysis, we have concluded that there is a significant risk that the stadium would not be built in time (including to host essential test events well in advance of the tournament). This is in part because in the period between the awarding of EURO 2028 and the election of the new Government, almost no progress was made to deliver the stadium build. The estimated build costs have risen dramatically - from £180m when the EURO 2028 bid was awarded in October 2023 to potentially over £400m - and there is a significant risk that it would not be built in time for the tournament. We have therefore, regrettably, decided that it is not appropriate for the UK Government to provide funding to seek to build Casement Park in time to host matches at EURO 2028. This has been a very difficult decision to make, given our belief in the EURO 2028 partnership, but it is the only way forward in the circumstances.

We will continue to work together with partners and UEFA regarding Northern Ireland's involvement in EURO 2028 moving forward, and remain fully committed to ensuring that the tournament positively impacts on the whole of the UK, providing a legacy for football and people across all four home nations.

As we understand it, the Executive remains committed to building Casement Park and you will no doubt want to take stock of the project in light of this decision. We will, therefore, seek engagement with NI partners, including the GAA, in the coming weeks, to discuss this decision in more detail as well as seeking views on the appropriate way forward for Casement Park.

We are copying this letter to the First and Deputy First Minister, the leaders of the Northern Ireland political parties, as well as Ulster GAA President, Ciaran McLaughlin and IFA President, Conrad Kirkwood.

Yours sincerely,

**THE RT HON HILARY BENN MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**THE RT HON LISA NANDY MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CULTURE, MEDIA & SPORT**