

MINUTE TO BE LAID AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI) stipulates that departments wishing to make a gift over £250,000, who have been unable to include it in their Estimates, should notify the Assembly by laying a Minute.

The Department for Social Development (DSD) has transferred ownership of the SS Nomadic to the Nomadic Charitable Trust (NCT) with effect from 2 April 2012. The value of the Nomadic at the date of transfer was £1.9m. At the time of the transfer it was mistakenly understood that as the transaction was to be treated as a 'capital grant-in-kind' in budgeting and accounting terms, it did not require advance notification to the Assembly as a gift. However, in preparing the Department's June Monitoring submission it has emerged that the transaction was in fact a gift and should have been notified to the Assembly in line with MPMNI. The Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) has recommended that the Department should correct the position and notify the Assembly before Summer recess.

Background to this Gift

When DFP approved DSD's acquisition of the SS Nomadic in 2006 it stipulated that the transfer of the vessel to the proposed charitable trust takes place as soon as possible after the acquisition. The NCT was established some months following this approval on the basis that ownership of the Nomadic would be transferred to the Trust at no cost to the Trust once sufficient progress had been made with the fundraising and restoration of the vessel. DSD advised the Trust in April 2011 that it was of the view that the Trust had made significant progress with the fundraising and restoration and would transfer ownership of the vessel subject to several conditions being met, including the award of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to complete the current stage of restoration. The HLF funding was subsequently approved with the condition that the NCT had to have ownership of the Nomadic in order to draw down this funding from HLF. NCT having met the

DSD's conditions the Department subsequently transferred ownership of the vessel on 2 April 2012 to the Trust.

The Nomadic is a ferry ship built in 1911 by Harland & Wolff as a tender vessel to the Titanic. She has a gross tonnage of 1,273 and is 221 feet in length. The tender transported first and second class passengers to and from the large White Star liners such as Titanic and Olympic and is an important historical artefact of Northern Ireland's maritime industrial heritage with the potential to make a significant contribution to the Titanic Quarter visitor attraction. Nomadic is the last surviving White Star Line vessel and is one of only 60 ships included on the "Core Collection" of the UK National Historic Ships register. She is berthed at Hamilton Dock, in Titanic Quarter, and the current stage of her restoration is due to be completed by November 2012. The vessel will then operate as a heritage visitor attraction within Titanic Quarter.

The Department of Finance and Personnel have approved the transfer in principle. DSD apologises to the Assembly for not following the procedure set out in MPMNI for notifying gifts to the Assembly and will ensure that this is adhered to in future.