

From: David [Redacted] by the RHI Inquiry
 Subject: Re: Today's firefighting
 Date: 18 December 2016 at 10:06
 To: Richard Bullick [Redacted] by the RHI Inquiry
 Cc: Timothy Johnston timothyjohnston@dup.org.uk, Simon Hamilton simonhamilton@dup.org.uk, John Robinson johnrobinson@dup.org.uk



I think the key point about the note for the record and paper trail is that the facts as independently provided are seriously at odds with Bell's account. That goes to the heart of his credibility

If SF are made aware of that, it could assist their deliberations for tomorrow

Sent from my iPad

On 18 Dec 2016, at 10:02, Richard Bullick [Redacted] by the RHI Inquiry wrote:

I'm working on amending statement re whistleblower in terms suggested.

DG - does the sf involvement in correcting note add much - working on other issues with them and unclear how helpful they would be on this .

Sent from my iPhone

On 18 Dec 2016, at 09:38, David [Redacted] by the RHI Inquiry wrote:

* What happened to the idea of a Peter Robinson statement? If it issued today, it could fill the news vacuum in the build-up to tomorrow. If Bell has been telling the BBC Peter is backing him, then the impact could be pretty strong - especially on Bell himself. Isn't it time Frankenstein put the monster he created to sleep?

Statement could say - I appointed JB as Minister to take Ministerial decisions and to take responsibility for them; he accepted that when he accepted the job, the salary and the other trappings; he never discussed with me these RHI concerns he says he had in 2015; I've known him a long time and he's no shrinking violet - if he had concerns about anything, it's hard to believe he wouldn't have knocked on my door.

* the paper trail and attached explainer from Department needs careful handling. To usefully issue it today for tomorrow's papers would mean a fairly tight timetable. Given recent experiences, we don't want anything in it to come back and bite us, no matter how small a detail. I would think the first port of call with the material when finalised would be to get it to Aidan - it could give dFM side some space to say tomorrow that Bell's credibility is now in serious doubt.

* when it's issued, the paper trail and attached explainer should be accompanied by a short, fairly reserved statement from Simon - maybe in run-up to Assembly session tomorrow. We could give it to selected journalists with an eye for detail in advance of embargo eg John Campbell, Sam McBride. I'll knock out first draft of statement for Simon this morning.

* you have to find a way to contain that second whistleblower email to Arlene problem. It could well be raised in questions or subsequent debate. Her statement will have to be rewritten. I would suggest an acknowledgement that email records and memories have not served us well in the attempts to get to the bottom of this. There has been no attempt to mislead - indeed it would have been in Arlene's interest if she could have established from the start that the original correspondence from the lady did not include substantive detail on her RHI concerns. This lady is owed a double apology - for her concerns not having been taken seriously by Department and for having been thrust into the centre of this storm through no fault of her own. FM happy to meet her to apologise in person, but will understand if she slams the door in her face.