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The Amalgamation of Official Northern Ireland Supporters Clubs

The Amalgamation of Official NISCs

NEWS RELEASE - IMMEDIATE

FANS HAIL RESULT IN SEARCH FOR INFORMATION

The Amalgamation of Official Northern Ireland Supporters Clubs has declared a victory for 'fan power' following the publication of the Site Selection Study which led to the nomination of the Maze site for a National Stadium.

A spokesman for the group said: "**We welcome the publication of this information, which has occurred as the result of ongoing work carried out by the Amalgamation of Official NISC on the stadium issue. In October 2005, the AONISC submitted a request under the Freedom of Information Act for the release of information regarding the criteria and processes used to select the site of a future National Stadium in Northern Ireland as well as the Business Plan for the proposed 42,500-capacity at the site of the former Maze Prison.**

The information requested was repeatedly denied to us and our organisation subsequently complained to the Information Commissioner. Following a lengthy investigation by the Commissioner, she upheld the fans' complaint thus requiring the Government to release the information today.-The outcome of the Commissioner's investigation confirms that this information should have been in the public domain all along, but was illegitimately withheld by a Government unwilling to pursue a fair and open process.

The Site Selection study itself poses many questions and raises a number of inconsistencies. Among these is the disclosure that Titanic Quarter was ruled out

on the grounds of cost, yet the Strategic Investment Board intends to develop this site for a new educational facility. Locating a stadium at this site would have the potential to serve as an economic driver and would have provided the opportunity for the facility to link in with existing infrastructure.

It is clear that the process used to select the site of the stadium was flawed and that the information contained within the Site Selection study serves only to further diminish confidence in the current process. We believe that a further, fully independent study should be carried out to assess this issue. The present process, which we believe is driven by political and parochial interests, can no longer retain public confidence."

The complaint against the withholding of the business plan remains under investigation, but fans are hopeful that the Commissioner will also require this to be released.

ENDS

For further information please contact:

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