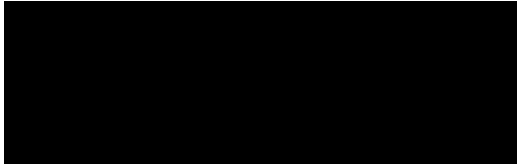


Stormont Castle
BELFAST
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**Michael Potter
Committee for TEO
Room 412
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4 February 2021

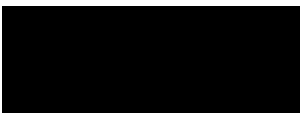
Dear Michael

TEO COMMITTEE – UPDATE ON DEDICATED MECHANISM FUNDING

The TEO Committee has requested an oral briefing on funding for the Dedicated Mechanism.

The attached paper is intended to provide the update on the current position of funding for the Dedicated Mechanism and officials have agreed to attend the Committee Meeting on 10 February.

Yours sincerely



Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

RIGHTS AND DEDICATED MECHANISM

1. As the Committee will be aware, Article 2 of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol reflects the commitment made by the UK Government to uphold the Belfast/GF Agreement. In particular, that the UK withdrawal from the EU will not lead to any diminution of rights, safeguards and equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland, as set out in the GFA. This commitment is to be implemented by a “dedicated mechanism”, i.e. by providing new oversight powers to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland so that they may undertake a scrutiny and monitoring role to ensure there is no diminution in rights, safeguards and equality of opportunity. To facilitate this role the UK Government has agreed to provide both Commissions with adequate resources.
2. Discussions between ECNI and NIO, and in turn between NIO and Treasury have taken place regarding the appropriate level of funding to allow ECNI to discharge this role. TEO as sponsor for ECNI has been involved in these discussions and has agreed the mechanics for the payment from HM Treasury through DoF and appropriate governance structures. Funding for the Human Rights Commission is a matter for NIO as it sponsors NIHRC.
3. The NIO funding commitment is for a 3 year period. Broadly this is to establish and support a new team of around 10/11 people and to cover costs of awareness raising, research and legal work. The funding has been allocated as below:

£	20/21	21/22	22/23	Total
Resource	£280,000	£793,000	£805,000	£1,878,000
Capital	£20,000	0	0	20,000
Total	£300,000	£793,000	£805,000	£1,898,000

4. In light of the resources committed by the NIO to cover staffing and other associated costs of the dedicated mechanism, ECNI formally agreed to act as part of the dedicated mechanism. The Commission has begun the process for

recruiting staff and most key positions have now been filled including a director to head the new unit. ECNI expects to spend around £300k this year.

5. NIO has made clear that its commitment to the Dedicated Mechanism is enduring and advised that TEO should, in line with normal government practice, apply for the funds for the period post 2023 in line with normal Spending Review processes. Future funding levels will therefore be discussed with HMT at the appropriate time.

6. On 9th July, NIO officials, facilitated by TEO, delivered an awareness raising webinar for staff across departments on Article 2 and the Dedicated Mechanism. More than 200 staff participated. The Department has also been in contact with the Dedicated Mechanism to offer assistance with awareness raising across the NICS.