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**The Rt. Hon. Conor Burns MP
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Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of State of 17 December, to which I have been asked to reply. I appreciate the time the Committee has given to considering issues in relation to the Dedicated Mechanism, and am grateful to you for passing back the matters that were raised by the three commissions in your recent briefing with them. I apologise for the delay in responding.

With regard to the deferral of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's 'A' status, the Government values the important work that the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission does to champion and guard the rights of all those who live in Northern Ireland. I am aware of the recent decision, and report, by GANHRI, and I can confirm to the Committee that I have discussed this report with the Chief Commissioner and I have asked my officials to work with NIHRC to consider the issues raised in this.

The UK Government provides funding to the NIHRC both for their work in the protection of rights set out in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and also for their role within the Dedicated Mechanism. We are committed to continually assessing the NIHRC's ability to carry out its role, and are in constant communication with the Chief Commissioner and staff regarding the important work that the NIHRC carries out.

I wish to assure the Committee that the UK Government is fully committed to the Common Travel Area (CTA), and the Nationality and Borders Bill respects the reciprocal rights and entitlements that the CTA provides to British and Irish citizens. The Bill contains a provision to establish an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme, but this will not apply to British and Irish citizens.

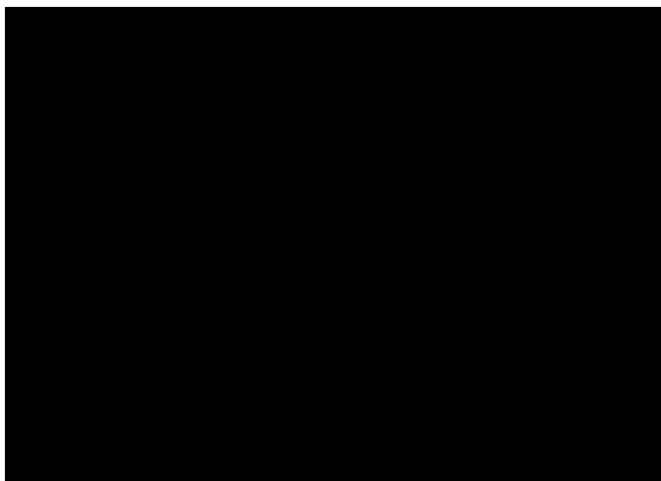
Under the Nationality and Borders Bill, those arriving in the UK, including those crossing the land border into Northern Ireland, will need to continue to enter in line with the UK's immigration framework. This includes any ETA requirement when it is introduced, if it is applicable to them. However, as now, the UK will not operate routine immigration controls on journeys from within the CTA, with no immigration controls whatsoever on the Ireland-Northern Ireland land border.

Once granted, an ETA will be valid for multiple journeys over an extended period, minimising the burden on those making frequent trips, including those across the Ireland-Northern Ireland border, whilst protecting the CTA from abuse as far as possible.

Your letter also raised the Committee's discussion of legal measures to ensure the rights and privileges enjoyed by British and Irish citizens under the CTA. It is precisely for this reason that the UK Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Irish Government on the CTA in May 2019, which codified our commitment to it and provided further clarity and certainty.

On a related note, I very much hope that the Committee welcomes the measures the UK Government took to further strengthen the CTA over the summer by signing an additional MoU with the Irish Government in respect of education. This again demonstrates the UK Government's strength of commitment to the CTA.

I would be most grateful if you could convey to the rest of the Committee my thanks for taking the time to consider these issues, and for writing.





Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Executive Office

The Rt. Hon. Brandon Lewis CBE MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Office
Stormont House
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17 December 2021

Dear Brandon,

DEDICATED MECHANISM BRIEFING – ISSUES RAISED

At its meeting on 15 December 2021, the Committee for the Executive Office received an oral briefing from the Chief Commissioners of the three commissions that form the Dedicated Mechanism. The Committee agreed that I should write to you raising three key issues that emerged during this briefing. Namely:

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) accreditation

The Committee was concerned to hear that the United Nations Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions sub-committee on accreditation has deferred a decision on renewing the NIHRC's A-status accreditation until June 2022 due to concerns regarding the financial status of the NIHRC.

The Committee wishes to express its support for the valuable work of the NIHRC, particularly (but not limited to) the additional workload resulting from its Dedicated Mechanism role, and calls upon the UK government to commit to a level and period of funding adequate to allow re-accreditation to proceed as a matter of urgency.

Nationality and Borders Bill

The Committee wishes to highlight the unique circumstances due to the land border on this island and ask for details of provisions being made for individuals likely to be

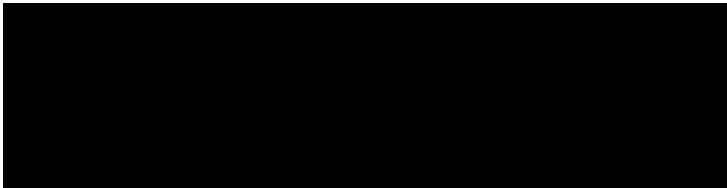
affected by this bill e.g. individuals who live in one territory and work in the other and vice versa, etc.

Common Travel Area Rights and Protections

The Committee also wishes to support the Dedicated Mechanism in calling upon both the British and Irish governments to enact legislation to ensure the rights and protections currently available under the Common Travel Area.

I look forward to your earliest response.

Yours sincerely,



Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

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