

# Written Ministerial Statement

*The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Ministers. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.*

## The Executive Office

### **APPOINTMENT OF THE DIRECTOR AND FIVE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE OFFICE OF IDENTITY AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION; THE IRISH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER AND THE COMMISSIONER FOR THE ULSTER SCOTS AND THE ULSTER BRITISH TRADITION.**

*Published at 15.30pm on Tuesday 28 October 2025*

**Mrs O'Neill (The First Minister) and Mrs Little-Pengelly (The deputy First Minister):** We are pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Katy Radford (MBE) as the Director of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, Pól Deeds as the Irish Language Commissioner, and Lee Reynolds as the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition. All three individuals will take up their respective posts on 13 November 2025.

Dr Katy Radford brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role of the Director of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, having previously served as an Equality Commissioner for Northern Ireland, Vice-Chair of the Arts Council for Northern Ireland and as a member of the Commission for Flags, Identity, Culture, and Tradition. Katy was the first chair of the Racial Equality Subgroup, acting as a strong voice to Government on issues affecting minority ethnic people, migrants, and race relations. Katy was also Acting Director of the Institute for Conflict Research and was Acting Director of Policy and Research at the Commission for Victims and Survivors. Katy currently serves as an Electoral Commissioner for Northern Ireland and as Chair of the British Council Northern Ireland Advisory Committee.

Pól Deeds brings valuable experience and insight to the role of the Irish Language Commissioner, having previously held a role as CEO of An Droichead, an Irish language organisation that promotes the development of Irish language and culture. Subsequently Pól was appointed as Deputy Chief Executive of Foras Na Gaeilge, the body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout the island of Ireland.

Lee Reynolds brings leadership experience and sectoral knowledge to the role of the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition. Lee previously carried out the role of Chief Executive for the Community Convention and Development Company, Policy Advisor for the DUP, and subsequently as the Co-Head of the Ireland and Northern Ireland team of the Institute of Physics. Lee also worked for the Ulster Scots Heritage Council and was a member of the expert panel advising on the development of the Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy.

In addition, we are equally pleased to announce the appointments of the five other members of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression.

The successful appointees are

- Brian Dougherty
- Ellen Finlay
- Stephen Moore
- Dr Callie Persic
- Dr Jacqueline Witherow

They will take up their posts on 3 December 2025.

The appointments of these members, who have worked in a range of sectors including voluntary and community organisations, policy and accountancy, brings significant value and experience to the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression.

Brian Dougherty (MBE) has over 40 years' experience in the voluntary and community sectors. Brian is currently CEO with the North-West Cultural Partnership a collaborative group for 6 cultural organisations who work extensively in civic engagement and Peacebuilding across the Derry/Strabane District Council area, the province, cross-border and internationally.

Ellen Finlay has over 25 years of extensive experience within the community and voluntary sector, working across the women's, children's, and mental health fields. As the founder of Policy 360, Ellen has worked with numerous partnerships to shape policy and deliver better outcomes for communities. She is a Non-Executive Director with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, a Commissioner with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, a Board Member of USEL and a Lay Member of the SENDIST Tribunal. Ellen brings expertise in governance, policy, and strategic collaboration.

Stephen Moore has extensive experience in accountancy. He is currently Head of Finance and Corporate Affairs at the Commission for Victims & Survivors, having previously worked as a Director / Public sector Accountant with a Belfast-based professional services company.

Dr Callie Persic works as the Development Manager with the Belfast City Council, leading Belfast's Connectivity Programme and city centre project, "A Bolder Vision for Belfast". Working with cross-sector stakeholders and the community, she brings innovation and creativity to solve problems and find solutions to the challenges facing Belfast.

Dr Jackie Witherow has over 20 years of experience across the public, private, and voluntary sectors. She has held several senior leadership roles at the Royal National Institute of Blind People, including Director of UK Nations. She served as Non-Executive Director of the Community Relations Council and formerly led policy development at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. As Director of Witherow Consultancy, she currently advises organisations on strategy, research and communications.

We are confident that together, this combination of skills and experience offer a strong mix of community insight and professional expertise which will be invaluable in supporting the Director, to ensure successful delivery of the aims of the Office.

We wish them all every success in their new roles and look forward to working with them.