

DRAFT ANNOUNCEMENT

The Secretary of State today announced the appointment of Mr Alistair Graham as Chairman of the Parades Commission established in response to the recommendations of the North Report. The other four members of the Commission will be Frank Guckian CBE, David Hewitt CBE, the Reverend Dr Roy Magee MBE and Mrs Berna McIvor.

Commenting on the appointments, the Secretary of State said

"In my statement to the House I announced the establishment of a Commission with mediation, conciliation and education roles. I believe Mr Graham will be an ideal chairman. He has strong personal qualities which he has used to very good effect in a number of high level appointments in his past career. He will importantly also bring a neutral and detached perspective. The members are individually highly qualified for the task ahead, and collectively represent a useful balance of background and experience. I believe the Commission can play a valuable role in encouraging and assisting those looking for local agreement, which everyone agrees is the surest basis for a successful outcome to this year's marching season.

These appointments, together with the recent amendments to the Public Order Order, demonstrate the Government's deep concern to secure that the extremely damaging public disorder of last summer shall not recur. The wider powers for the Commission recommended by the Report are of course currently the subject of a consultation exercise. Any further responsibilities for the Commission will be decided in the light of this exercise, and will be reflected in the Terms of Reference."

The North Report, which was commissioned following the widespread disorder associated in particular, but not exclusively, with a parade at Drumcree in 1996, recommended the establishment of a Commission with education, mediation and adjudicatory powers. The latter function, and the proposed expansion of the criteria under which restrictions can be imposed on parades, are currently the subject of a consultation exercise, which will run until the end of March.

In addition to the establishment of a Commission, a number of the Report's other recommendations have also been implemented, in particular through the recent Public Order (Amendment) Order. This extends the period of notice for parades from one week to three, and gives the police new powers to demand the surrender of alcohol from people in the vicinity of or on their way to parades.

The terms of reference of the Commission will be:

- i) to identify processes which have the potential to build a greater mutual understanding at local level in respect of parades, and to develop and implement proposals for enhancing and promoting such understanding;
- ii) to examine existing mediation processes (including their resourcing); to identify best practice; and to develop and implement proposals for promoting and facilitating mediation in connection with contentious parades;
- iii) to publish for consultation a draft Code of Conduct covering the behaviour both of participants in parades and protesters, with a view to the early promulgation of the Code and the establishment of ways in which adherence to it could best be monitored;
- iv) to take on such other tasks, whether laid down in statute or determined by the Secretary of State, as may be decided following the consultation exercise announced on 30 January;

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to publish an Annual Report on its activities.

NOTE TO EDITORS

The Independent Review of Parades and Marches reported on 30 January. It recommended amongst other things the establishment of a Parades Commission with the following remit:

- a) education, ie working for greater understanding at the local level,
- b) promoting and facilitating mediation and the search for local accommodation in respect of contentious marches,
- c) if mediation fails, considering what conditions might be imposed in respect of individual parades where such conditions are merited under the statutory criteria, and, after consultation, notifying the interested parties of its conclusions,
- d) keeping under review and amending the Code of Conduct that we shall also propose, and
- e) arranging for contentious parades and protests to be monitored.

The remit of the Commission announced today will cover the first two of these recommendations, pending the outcome of the consultation exercise.

The CVs of the Chairman and Members are as follows:

ALISTAIR GRAHAM

Former General Secretary of the Civil and Public Services Association. He also served on the TUC's General Council.

In July 1986, he joined the Industrial Society as its Director, moving on to become Chief Executive of Calderdale and Kirklees Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) in 1991. Currently Chief Executive of Leeds Training and Enterprise Council.

He is a member of the Council of the Open University and a member of the BBC Educational Broadcasting Council. He is also a member of the Restrictive Practices Court, a Director of Opera North and Chair of its Finance Committee and Chairman of Yorkshire Youth and Music.

MR DAVID HEWITT, CBE

A senior partner in a well known firm of solicitors, Mr Hewitt is approaching the end of his term as Independent Assessor of Military Complaints Procedures.

He is a trustee and chairman of the steering group of ECONI, and is on the board of Belfast YMCA. He is a leading member of Northern Consensus, a cross-community think-tank. During the late 1950's and early 60's, Mr Hewitt was capped for Ireland 19 times in Rugby, touring with the British Lions in 1959 and 1962.

MR FRANCIS GERARD GUCKIAN CBE, DL JP

Mr Guckian is the Director of Londonderry Chamber of Commerce. He has previously held a number of public appointments; these include Chief Commissioner of the Planning Appeals Commission and Chairman of the Western Health and Social Services Board. He is also a past President of the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce.

REVEREND DR. ROY MAGEE MBE

Senior Minister of Dundonald Presbyterian Church. Chairman of Farset Youth and Community Development Ltd.

Rev Dr. Magee has had extensive pastoral experience in the Belfast area, and in the past 2-3 years he has been prominent through close association with Loyalist paramilitaries in the run up to the 1994 ceasefire. Rev Dr Magee has been a member of INCORE for the past year.

MRS BERNA McIVOR

Vice-Chairperson of the Western Education and Library Board and Chairperson of the SDLP Foyle Constituency Council in Derry.

Mrs McIvor has 25 years experience in teaching and business, and was formerly chairperson of the Western Education and Library Board for four years, having been a member since 1988. Mrs McIvor was also a member of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland for seven years. In February 1996 Mrs McIvor was appointed a Non Executive Director of Foyle Health & Social Services Trust.

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