

# Press release: Secretary of State pledges action on vital public appointments

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, has today set out important action to ensure vital public appointments can be made in Northern Ireland, in the continued absence of an Executive or a sitting Assembly at Stormont.

The Secretary of State has instructed officials to work on legislation over the summer that would allow UK Government Ministers to make pressing appointments to leading public bodies.

The legislation would address crucial appointments needed for the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC) and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland to function.

The Policing Board has not been properly constituted since the 2017 Assembly election, as it has not had the political members it requires. NIJAC has fallen to a very low membership, particularly in its legal and judicial representation, affecting its capacity to operate. And the Probation Board's entire membership will expire in November unless new appointments are made.

If there is no Northern Ireland Executive in place in the autumn, the Secretary of State will introduce the legislation at Westminster.

The Secretary of State said:

The UK Government's priority is to restore the devolved institutions at Stormont. In the meantime, I have been clear that I will continue to take any urgent and necessary action to protect good governance and the delivery of public services in Northern Ireland.

I hope that an accommodation can be reached and an Executive formed so that Northern Ireland Ministers can make these important appointments in the autumn. If not, I am prepared to bring forward legislation to enable these appointments to be made to ensure that these bodies can continue their vital work.

Existing legislation confers responsibility for the most significant public appointments in Northern Ireland on Northern Ireland Ministers. In the absence of Northern Ireland Ministers, new legislation will be needed in the UK Parliament to enable certain key Northern Ireland appointments and a small number of appointments to UK-wide bodies to be made. The Northern Ireland

appointments include a number of nominated members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission, in which the ministerial role is a formal one.

While work on this legislation continues over the summer, the UK Government will continue to engage closely with the political parties, and the Irish Government as appropriate, to encourage and support work towards an accommodation to restore the Executive.

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