

Press release: Statement by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Karen Bradley

It is a great honour to be asked to serve as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, particularly at such a decisive moment for Northern Ireland and the whole United Kingdom. I would like to pay the warmest tribute to my predecessor and friend, James Brokenshire, who did such an outstanding job. I wish him all the very best for his medical treatment and for a speedy recovery.

Northern Ireland is a very special part of our United Kingdom and has huge potential. A key part of my role will be to help build a Northern Ireland that is fit for the future and works for everyone. In seeking to achieve that I want to work closely with all parties, the Irish government as appropriate, and with all sections of the community. Be assured the UK Government remains fully committed to the Belfast Agreement, its principles and institutions.

Clearly, there are immediate challenges. It is now a year since Northern Ireland has had an effective, functioning power-sharing administration, and forming a Northern Ireland Executive, to deliver for the benefit of all, is my top priority. I believe a devolved government in Belfast is best placed to address these issues and take the key decisions which affect people's day to day lives – whether these relate to the economy, public services or issues of policing and justice.

We must also continue the work to deliver a Brexit that recognises Northern Ireland's unique circumstances and avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland while maintaining the economic and constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom.

Alongside these issues, I am conscious of the need to establish a stronger economy and a shared society, to address the legacy of the past and to keep people safe and secure.

In the coming days, I look forward to meeting many different people, parties and other groups as I take on this hugely important and exciting role in the Prime Minister's Government.