

Secretary of State announces the appointment of new Commissioner to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Press release

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Honourable Shailesh Vara MP, has announced the appointment of Justin Kouame to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.



Mr Kouame will take up the appointment with effect from 1 September 2022.

Mr Kouame was formerly Chair of the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers and member of the Northern Ireland Race Equality Sub-Group and Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities.

Background

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the 'NIHRC') was created by the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as part of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

The NIHRC was established in 1999 and operates as an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office.

Its powers and duties are set out in legislation, and it operates in compliance with UN General Assembly resolution 48/134 (the 'Paris Principles') on National Human Rights Institutions. The NIHRC's functions include keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness in Northern Ireland of law and practice relating to the protection of human rights and promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland.

Further information about the work of the Commission can be found [here](#).

Terms of appointment

- This position is part-time for a period of three years ending on 31 August 2025.
- The position receives a fixed annual remuneration of £7,500.
- The position is not pensionable.

Political Activity

All appointments are made on merit and with regards to the statutory requirements. Political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity in defined categories to be made public.

Mr Kouame has declared that he has not been politically active in the last five years.

Regulation

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment (OCPA) regulates appointments to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

Statutory Requirements

The Secretary of State makes appointments to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

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[Board Member Reappointments](#)

News story

Marcus Jones MP, the Minister for Housing and Planning, has reappointed Mark Rennison, Vanessa Murden and Sadie Morgan to Homes England's Board.



Homes England, the government's housing and regeneration agency, is pleased to confirm that Marcus Jones MP, the Minister for Housing and Planning, has reappointed Mark Rennison, Vanessa Murden and Sadie Morgan to Homes England's Board.

All three members first joined the Agency's Board in August 2019, and will now continue to serve until August 2025, providing continuity amongst the agency's senior leadership.

Peter Freeman CBE, Chair of Homes England, commented:

Mark, Venessa and Sadie are valued Board members and committee chairs that each bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Agency.

Their continued guidance will be as valuable as ever as the Agency adopts a more place-based approach, working strategically across the country to drive regeneration, creating homes and economic growth and supporting the Government's levelling up agenda.

You can see full details of our Board here: <https://bit.ly/3lGaFOY>

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[Community support funding announced for people of Liverpool](#)

News story

Home Secretary made the announcement on a visit to Liverpool.



The Home Secretary has today- announced a £150,000 package to support the communities of Liverpool and Knowsley in the wake of the tragic shootings in the city. This will provide specialist trauma informed support in nearby schools, as well as mental health provisions for those closely affected.

Following the horrific killings of Sam Rimmer, Ashley Dale and Olivia Pratt-Korbel in Merseyside within a week of each other, the Home Secretary also announced £350,000 to expand the 'Clear, Hold, Build' pilot to other areas in Merseyside affected by Serious and Organised Crime.

The pilot sees both a proactive policing response and multi-agency working to support communities worst affected by Organised Crime Groups to make them more resilient and less susceptible to their activities.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The whole country has been appalled at the spate of violence in Liverpool over the past couple of weeks, which has tragically left 9 people dead, including 9 year old Olivia.

The impact on the wider community is immense, which is why we are providing funding for specialist trauma and mental health support for those who need it, as well as expanding the 'Clear, Hold, Build' pilot to disrupt Merseyside's corrosive and deadly Organised Crime Groups.

We will stop at nothing to drive down serious violence and ensure that fewer families have to endure the pain of losing a loved one in this way.

Established in the Birkenhead area of Merseyside in January 2022, the pilot has focused on making sustainable reductions in firearms and knife crime offences, whilst improving community confidence and delivering preventative programmes to over 2,000 young people in the area.

Priti Patel made the announcement on a visit to Liverpool today where she met with Merseyside Police's Chief Constable, to receive an update on the investigation, and then with the local policing commander to understand the impact the violence has had on the community and what resilience plans are being put in place.

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Closed revised financial health notice to improve: Greater Brighton Metropolitan College

Published 18 November 2020

Last updated 26 August 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 26 August 2022

We have closed the financial health notice to improve for Greater Brighton Metropolitan College.

2. 28 March 2022

A revised financial health notice to improve for Greater Brighton Metropolitan College has now been added.

3. 18 November 2020

First published.

Toughest targets ever introduced will crack down on sewage spills

Water companies will face the strictest targets on pollution from sewage ever under a new plan to tackle sewage discharges in our waters, set out by government today.

The government's plan will require them to deliver their largest ever environmental infrastructure investment – £56 billion capital investment over 25 years – into a long term programme to tackle storm sewage discharges by 2050. The plan frontloads action in particularly important and sensitive areas including designated bathing waters and high priority ecological sites.

The targets will mean they need to take measures such as increasing the capacity of their networks and treating sewage before its discharged to

protect public health and prevent pollution, whilst massively reducing all discharges. Failure to meet these targets could see them face substantial fines or having to return money to customers.

[The Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#) is the most significant investment and delivery programme ever undertaken by water companies to protect people and the environment.

We are the first government to require water companies to take action to address these discharges, and the plan follows ongoing work by government, the Environment Agency and the regulator Ofwat to drive up water companies' performance and monitoring and increase accountability. This includes a massive expansion in monitoring frequency and duration of discharges, from approximately 5% in 2016, to nearly 90% in 2021, which has been used to hold companies to account.

Under the plans announced today, water companies will have to achieve a number of targets, so that discharges only happen when there is unusually heavy rain and when there is no immediate adverse impact to the local environment.

1. By 2035, water companies will have to improve all storm overflows discharging into or near every designated bathing water; and improve 75% of overflows discharging to high priority nature sites.
2. By 2050, this will apply to all remaining storm overflows covered by our targets, regardless of location.

We will review this plan in 2027 to consider where we can go further, taking account of innovation and efficiencies.

The plan also sets out that water companies will be required to publish discharge information in near real time as well as committing to tackling the root causes of the issue by taking steps to improve surface water drainage.

In addition, the plan sets out our wider expectations for the water industry, to ensure their infrastructure keeps pace with increasing external pressures, such as urban growth and climate change, to ensure our water supplies remain clean and secure for the future.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

“This is the first government to take action to end the environmental damage caused by sewage spills. We will require water companies to protect everyone who uses our water for recreation, and ensure storm overflows pose no threat to the environment.

“Water companies will need to invest to stop unacceptable sewage spills so our rivers and coast lines can have greater protection than ever before.”

These plans strike the right balance between the need for investment and the impact on consumers. Under this plan there will be no changes to bills until 2025. The Government has ruled out options which could add up to £817 a year to average household water bills. The government will continue to monitor

water affordability and take further action if needed, and will consult on a new water affordability scheme to help less well-off households.

A raft of measures have also been brought forward in our Environment Act to tackle sewage discharges, including the requirement for greater transparency from water companies on their storm overflow data.

As a result of this government's policies to increase monitoring and transparency, the regulators (Environment Agency and Ofwat) last year launched the largest criminal and civil investigations into water company sewage discharges ever, at over 2200 treatment works, following new data coming to light as a result of increased monitoring. The investigations will look at where sites may be breaching their permits, and ensure that companies found to be acting illegally are held to account, up to and including prosecution, which can lead to unlimited fines and companies having to reimburse customers.

This follows 54 prosecutions against water companies since 2015, securing fines of nearly £140 million. We will not let companies get away with illegal activity and where breaches are found, regulators will not hesitate to hold companies to account.

The government has also been clear that companies cannot profit from environmental damage. Ofwat have outlined that water companies must be transparent about how executive pay and dividends align to delivery of services to customers, including environmental performance. The government supports Ofwat's recent proposals which would provide extra powers for enforcement action against companies that don't link dividend payments to their environmental performance, or who failed to be transparent about their dividend pay-outs.