



15 December 2025

283rd COMMISSION MEETING

**Held in the Commission's Offices,
Alfred House, 19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED**

Present: Alyson Kilpatrick
Helen Henderson
Mairead Holder
Jonathan Kearney
Justin Kouame (Online)
David Lavery
Stephen White

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal Services)
Colin Caughey, Director (Advice to Government,
Research, Investigations, and International Treaties)
(Online)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel, and
Corporate Affairs)
Eilis Haughey, Director (Human Rights after EU
Withdrawal) (online)
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and
Communications)
Jhoanna Sto Domingo (Personal secretary to the Chief
Commissioner)
Darren Veighey (Administrative Officer)
Sean Donaghy (Independent Chairperson of Audit and
Risk Management Committee) (Agenda Item 8)

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 There were no apologies or declarations of interest.

2. Draft minutes of the 282nd Commission meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the 282nd Commission meeting were agreed.
Action: Minutes of the 282nd Commission meeting to be uploaded to the website when finalised.

3. Chief Commissioner's Report

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner's Report was noted.

4. Commissioners' Reports

- 4.1 Commissioner Henderson reported on her recent fellowship with the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship. This enables UK citizens to travel to other parts of the world to facilitate learning and undertake research which can benefit their local community. It was noted that Commissioner Henderson would be conducting an online presentation on this subject in February 2026.

5. Chief Executive's Report

- 5.1 The Chief Executive reported that the Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs) and himself had met with the recently appointed internal auditors to discuss the mapping exercise on the proposed pay policy, as agreed with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). A draft report should be available in early January 2026, the outcome of which will then be shared with NIPSA, the Commission's recognised Trade Union. The Chief Executive will also meet with all staff on an individual basis to discuss the process and Commissioners will be kept updated on progress. The outcome will also be shared with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) for approval.

Action: Commissioners to be kept updated on the mapping exercise for the new pay policy.

- 5.2 The Chief Executive confirmed that drafting of the Commission's Business Plan for 2026-27 had commenced and

that a draft would be brought to the February 2026 meeting for discussion and approval.

Action: Draft Business Plan 2026-27 to be brought to the February 2026 Commission meeting for discussion and approval.

- 5.3 It was noted that the Commission was still awaiting approval of the recently submitted Business Case to the NIO for the spending review settlement. It was agreed that this would be followed up.

Action: NIO to be contacted regarding the spending review settlement.

- 5.4 The Commission had also taken part in a meeting of Ministry of Justice human rights working group, alongside the other UK NHRIs and NGOs. It has also engaged with the UK FCDO in relation to current and future work with the Global Alliance of NHRIs.

- 5.5 It was further reported that the Commission had received a complaint in relation to comments made by the Chief Commissioner regarding legacy. A response to the complaint will be provided by the middle of January 2026.

6. Finance Report November 2025

- 6.1 The Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) presented the Finance Report for the period to 30 November 2025 for Core and the Dedicated Mechanism. The paper reflected actual spend for period April-November 2025 and the budget going forward to the end of the financial year.
- 6.2 It was noted that additional costs had been incurred in relation to professional fees for recruitment and legal fees for the McCloud case.

7. Legal Update

- 7.1 Commissioners were updated on the legal proceedings commenced by Gary Murray regarding public comments made by the Chief Commissioner on legacy.

It was noted that on 3rd December 2025, the hearing was adjourned and the appellant encouraged to utilise the NIHR's complaints process.

8. Chair of Audit and Risk Management Committee Report

- 8.1 Commissioners welcomed Sean Donaghy, Independent Chair of the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee to the meeting and thanked him for his work.
- 8.2 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee noted that it had been a challenging time as the Commission had to renegotiate its budget settlement and he commended the Chief Executive and staff on their ongoing efforts with the NIO.
- 8.3 It was noted that the term of office for Commissioners who are members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee was due to end on 31 August 2026. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee proposed that other eligible Commissioners consider joining the Committee to ensure a smooth transition when the outgoing Commissioners tenure ends.

Action: Membership of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to be discussed at the January 2026 Commission meeting.

- 8.4 The Chair reported that he had completed the National Cyber Security Centre online Cyber Essentials Readiness assessment along with the Chief Executive and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs). This online session generated an action plan which would assist in discussions with the Commission's IT provider to ensure cyber security.

9. Any other Business and Date of next meeting.

- 9.1 It was agreed that the Troubles Bill would be an agenda item for the January 2026 Commission meeting.

Action: The Troubles Bill to be discussed at the January 2026 Commission meeting.

- 9.2 Commissioner White recorded his thanks to Emma Osborne and Colin Caughey for their work with the Equality Commission in organising meetings of the UNCRPD Joint Committee and Disability Stakeholder Forum.
- 9.3 As the term of office of two current Commissioners who are members of the joint Independent Monitoring Committee for the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in Northern Ireland with the Equality Commission NI is due to

end in August 2026, there will be a need for new Commissioners to be appointed to the Committee. It was agreed to discuss this further at the January 2026 Commission meeting.

Action: Membership of the Independent Monitoring Committee to be discussed at the January 2026 meeting.

9.4 The Director of Engagement and Communications reminded Commissioners that the Dedicated Mechanism event on 'Enforcement & Remedies' would take place at the Europa Hotel, Belfast on Tuesday 16 December 2025.

9.5 There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.30pm.

9.6 Date of next meeting was arranged for Monday 26 January 2026 at 10.00 am.

End of meeting 12:30pm