



26 June 2026

289th COMMISSION MEETING

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

Present: Alyson Kilpatrick
Helen Henderson
Mairead Holder
Jonanthan Kearney
Stephen White

In attendance: David Russell, Chief Executive
Sean Donaghy, Chairperson of Audit & Risk
Management Committee
Rhyannon Blythe, Director (Legal Services)
Lorraine Hamill, Director (Finance, Personnel, and
Corporate Affairs)
Eilis Haughey Director (Human Rights after EU
Withdrawal)
Claire Martin, Director (Engagement and
Communications)
Darren Veighey, Administrative Officer
Jhoanna Sto Domingo, Personal Secretary to the Chief
Commissioner (Online)
Jacqueline McClintock, Senior Finance, Personnel, and
Corporate Affairs Officer (Online) (Agenda Item 6)

Apologies: David Lavery
Colin Caughey

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Commissioner David Lavery and Colin Caughey, Director of Policy (Advice to Government, Research, Investigations, and International Treaties).
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Draft minutes of the 288th Commission meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the 288th Commission meeting were agreed.
Action: Minutes of the 288th Commission meeting to be uploaded to the website when finalised.

3. Chief Commissioner's Report

- 3.1 The Chief Commissioner's report was noted.
- 3.2 The Chief Commissioner highlighted the staff turnout at the Great Refugee Picnic, Ormeau Road, Belfast on Saturday 20th June 2026.

The Commission managed a stall with promotional material at the event which was well received.

4. Commissioners' Reports including update from Audit and Risk Management Committee Independent Chair

- 4.1 The Independent Chair of the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee provided an update from the last Committee meeting and stated that the main item of business was the Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26.
- 4.2 Other reports presented and discussed at the meeting included:
 - National Audit Office Completion Report 2025-26
 - Absence statistics
 - High value purchases
 - Internal Quality Assessment 2025-26
 - Follow-up of Outstanding Recommendations 2025-26
 - Budget Management Final Draft Report

- Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report
- Internal Audit Strategy and Internal Audit Plan 2026-28

4.3 The Chair noted that the NIO had questioned an aspect of the High Value Purchases and compliance with government guidance. The Commission's purchase of branded/promotional materials was highlighted. These purchases included costs relating to future financial years and therefore applicable discounts would have been availed of. It was also noted that promotion of human rights is one of the Commission's primary statutory duties.

The Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs) assured Commissioners that all necessary quotations were sourced with reference made to specific government guidance.

4.4 It was noted that a key risk to the organisation was the shortfall in funds from government to meet all objectives as outlined in the most recent Independent Review.

4.5 It was outlined that the internal audit report for the financial year 2025-26 did not raise any concerns of a material nature.

4.6 A draft Terms of Reference for proposed change of the name of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to the 'Audit Risk and Remuneration Committee' was considered at the Committee meeting and it was agreed to revert back to it at a later date.

5. Chief Executive's Report

5.1 The Commission's Risk Register had been presented to the recent Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting. It was agreed that the 'Compliance with the Paris Principles' risk should be updated to include the financial risk associated with the Chief Commissioner taking on the role of Chair for the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

5.2 Commissioners were updated on the recent staff survey which was completed in March 2026. A meeting would be arranged to update staff and the results would also be shared with Commissioners in due course.

5.3 The Chief Executive reported that the proposed new pay policy for staff had been signed off by the Secretary of State after receiving approval from both the Union and the NIO.

The new policy would commence immediately (backdated to 1 April 2026). It was noted that there would be no impact on staff pensions and terms and conditions.

- 5.4 It was hoped that recruitment could commence in the Autumn for a Human Resources post and if budget allowed to recruit to the two vacant Policy posts.
- 5.5 The Chief Executive thanked the departing Commissioners for all their work during their tenure.

6. Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26

- 6.1 The Chief Executive and Senior Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs Officer provided an overview of the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26.
- 6.2 The Senior Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs Manager and Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) were both thanked for all their work in completing the draft Accounts 2025-26. It was noted that the Annual Report and Accounts would be laid in Parliament on 9 July 2026.
- 6.3 It was agreed that the final version of the Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26 be circulated to Commissioners.

Action: Final version of the Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26 be circulated to Commissioners.

7. Finance Report May 2026

- 7.1 The Finance Report as at 31 May 2026 (for both Core and Dedicated Mechanism) was presented by the Director (Finance, Personnel, and Corporate Affairs). This paper reflected actual spend for the period April-May 2026.
- 7.2 It was noted that expenditure would be carefully monitored over the coming months to ensure any spend was not in excess of budget.

8. Any other business and Date of next meeting

- 8.1 The Chief Executive informed Commissioners that Cyber Security staff had attended a recent Senior Management Team meeting to discuss potential use of artificial intelligence.

It was noted that AI could be useful to the Commission in some areas e.g. minute taking (licences would have to be purchased to pilot this technology).

It was agreed that the use of AI would need human oversight, as there were some concerns around its ethical use, eg, accuracy, climate change and energy, data protection etc. The use of AI would require an appropriate risk management approach, that staff training would be essential and an internal policy document would need to be developed.

It was also agreed that the Commission should liaise with other NHRIs on the use of AI and how they deal with the human rights implications of this in their policies and approaches.

8.2 Commissioner White expressed his thanks to Commission staff during his term. Commissioner White was grateful for the experience. Commissioners Henderson and Kearney also offered their thanks.

8.3 The next meeting will be held at 10.00am on Monday 21 September 2026.

End of meeting 11:05am

The meeting continued in a closed session.