



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

**Annual Report and Accounts
2020-21**



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**Annual Report and Accounts
2020-21**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to paragraph 5(2) and paragraph 7(3)(b) of
Schedule 7 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

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5 July 2021

Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Stormont House
Stormont Estate
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT4 3SH

Dear Secretary of State

I have pleasure in submitting to you, as required by paragraph 5(1) of Schedule 7 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the twenty first Annual Report of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. It shows how the Commission has performed its functions during the year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The Annual Report and Accounts includes the Commission's financial statements for the year ending 31 March 2021, which have been prepared in accordance with Paragraph 7 of Schedule 7 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and which were certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General on 5 July 2021.

Yours sincerely



Les Allamby
Chief Commissioner

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It is available for download at www.nihrc.org

Performance Report Overview

Chief Commissioner's Foreword

The past 12 months have been momentous as the UK government and devolved administrations have sought to chart a course through the Covid-19 pandemic. We are now well into a second year of substantial adjustment to the way we live our lives. While the roll out of vaccinations has been a notable success there are significant lessons to be learned from the preparedness and responses, both initial and beyond to Covid-19. The Commission welcomes the announcement of a public inquiry and recognises the need for it to commence as soon as possible and to be far reaching, transparent and about learning important lessons, recognising the importance of establishing accountability without becoming recriminatory. The pandemic had led to significant curtailment of hard fought for rights and freedoms and the pandemic has reminded us all about never taking those rights for granted.

The United Kingdom has now left the European Union. Under the Ireland/Northern Ireland protocol the Commission, the Equality Commission (NI) and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission now comprise the 'Dedicated Mechanism' tasked with ensuring the UK government's commitment to 'non-diminution of rights under the Rights Safeguards and Equality of Opportunities section of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement' is met in full. The Ireland/Northern Ireland protocol has become fraught and disputatious. The Commission has received a number of inquiries around the wider questions of whether the protocol creates a 'democratic deficit' around trade and movement of goods which falls outside of the scope of the Dedicated Mechanism's work. However, we have also begun to work on issues which fall squarely both within the Dedicated Mechanism while embracing other ramifications of the EU exit. These areas include the relationship between an open land border on the island of Ireland and the UK government's wider plans to take control of its borders and citizenship and family reunion rights after the end of the EU Settlement scheme and the legal solidity of arrangements governing the Common Travel Area. It is early days for the Dedicated Mechanism, nonetheless, a community engagement with cross-border civic society organisations illustrated the depth of the uncertainty felt by communities either side of the border and the psychological as well as practical impact that uncertainty has created. The three Commissions have worked productively in partnership to promote the Dedicated Mechanism and commitment to upholding the rights section of the 1998 Agreement.

A major piece of work this year was the monitoring of the implementation of the UN CEDAW Committee recommendations following the inquiry into abortion in Northern Ireland. The recommendations included giving the Commission a role to monitoring authorities' compliance with international

standards concerning access to sexual and reproductive health including access to safe abortions. While mindful that the CEDAW recommendations look at access to reproductive services more widely the Commissions' work focussed on the immediate issue of abortion given the commencement of legislation designed to ensure services were locally assessable from 31 March 2020. The report was published after extensive consultation with all those responsible for enabling, delivering and regulating services alongside Royal Colleges, unregulated providers and civic society organisations both supportive of and against the legal reform. While there is a service being provided locally, it is not being funded or commissioned by the Department of Health (NI) who were unable to secure agreement for even an emergency interim early medical abortion service through the NI Executive. Instead, health and care trusts have delivered an early medical abortion service without the commissioning framework, funding, guidance and support normally expected from the Department of Health and Health and Social Care Boards. This service falls short of the legal requirement within the Abortion (No 2) regulations 2020 passed by the Westminster Parliament. Responsibility of the full implementation of the CEDAW recommendations remain vested in the Secretary of State given the reforms stem from Westminster legislation. Services on the ground remain fragmented, prone to suspension and are being provided at the expense of other important sexual and reproductive health care services for women. This is deeply unsatisfactory. As a result, the Commission has, yet again, disappointingly, had to go to court in an attempt to resolve the political impasse. Abortion and the rights of women to personal autonomy was one of the first issues to pass across my desk when I started as the Chief Commissioner and it looks set to be one of the last issues as I leave office at the end of August 2021. Throughout this period the Commission's focus has remained unchanged namely, ensuring human rights standards are upheld.

This year has seen a marked lack of progress in dealing with Northern Ireland's legacy issues. The brief statement heralding a move away from the Stormont House Agreement proposals in March 2020 was not followed by detail of how the move towards 'investigations which are necessary are effective and thorough but, quick' can be delivered in a human rights compliant way. More than a year later, the Queen's Speech announced no more than 'measures will be brought forward to address the legacy of the past'. The fear that such proposals will fail to address comprehensively address the need for effective investigations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights remains real. The prospect of new proposals becoming mired in legal challenges is a gloomy one. Moreover, this prognosis is not in the interests of those impacted by the legacy of the past and therefore unlikely to gain a critical mass of support.

This year has seen independent reviews of both judicial review and the Human Rights Act. The former has implications for Northern Ireland as it covers issues such as immigration and asylum appeals which have a UK

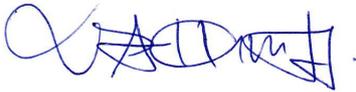
wide remit while the latter also has a particular resonance. The government has been keen to emphasise that machinery and enforcement issues rather than substantive Convention rights are under review. Human rights was central to the 1998 Agreement with its commitment to 'complete incorporation into NI Law of the Convention with direct access to the courts and remedies for breaches of the Convention including powers for the courts to overrule the Assembly legislation on grounds of inconsistency'. In effect, the Agreement covered the machinery of enforcement and remedies so the government's response to the review's outcome may touch on the important ecology of human rights protections which underpins the Agreement. The Commission has also put significant energy into working with the NI Assembly's ad-hoc Bill of Rights committee to ensure that the value of such documents elsewhere in the world are fully understood and appreciated. The committee's approach to date has been participatory and collegiate and we hope this presages an outcome which allows the case for a Bill of Rights to be significantly advanced by the Westminster government in line with the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

This year was a difficult one in resource terms as the reductions in funding over a number of years came to head impairing significantly our ability to deliver our statutory functions. I am delighted that we were able to substantially resolve the funding for both our core work and the Dedicated Mechanism. Maintaining a sufficient level of core funding moving forward as new public spending pressures emerge will be critical in order to avoid the Commission slipping slowly back to square one. This is particularly so, given that the Commission's 'A' status as a National Human Rights Institution is due for re-accreditation during 2021/2022.

This year has seen almost complete turnaround of Commissioners. I want to thank my colleagues who completed their terms of office this year and who strongly supported the negotiations to place the Commission on a more stable financial footing. They have created a platform for the new set of Commissioners to develop the work of the Commission more effectively in the forthcoming financial year. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Joe McKnight the Independent Chair of our Audit and Risk Management Committee who died after a short illness. He was a pleasure to work with combining an acute intellect with charm, wit and an independent mind. He will be sorely missed by his family, friends and colleagues at the Commission.

My own term of office finishes at the end of August 2021 and during my tenure the Commission has sought to engage widely across Northern Ireland, to build a better understanding of human rights with those who are both sceptical as well as supportive of human rights standards. It is for others to determine the achievements of the Commission under my stewardship, nonetheless, I want to put on record how important a role the Commission plays in public and political life through exercising its functions effectively and discerningly. It has been a privilege to be the

Chief Commissioner and I know that the Commission is held in high esteem on the international as well as domestic stage. I have been indebted to the support of three sets of Commissioners and a dedicated and skilled staff throughout my time in the Commission and for that I am particularly grateful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Les Allamby', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Les Allamby
Chief Commissioner

Statement of Purpose and Activities of the Organisation

Introduction

I am pleased to report on the work of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in 2020-21.

The Commission was established by the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. Our governing legislation is the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as amended by the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 and the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020.

The Commission is a National Human Rights Institution with A status accreditation from the United Nations. This recognition affords special access to the United Nations Human Rights Council and treaty bodies. It means that the organisation operates independently in full accordance with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 48/134 (the Paris Principles). Further information is available at: www.ohchr.org/english/law/parisprinciples).

The Commission is also a non-departmental public body, and receives grant-in-aid from the United Kingdom government through the Northern Ireland Office. It reports to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

What we do

The Commission's primary role is to make sure government and public authorities protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland. We also help people understand what their human rights are and what they can do if their rights are violated or abused. To pursue this objective we consider the full range of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Our work is based on the international human rights treaties ratified by the United Kingdom government, domestic legislation and relevant soft law standards.

The statutory functions of the Commission in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 are:

1. keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness in Northern Ireland of law and practice relating to the protection of human rights.
2. advising the Secretary of State and the Northern Ireland Executive of legislative and other measures which ought to be taken to protect human rights—as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a general or specific request for advice; and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.

3. advising the Northern Ireland Assembly whether legislative Bills are compatible with human rights
4. providing advice to the UK government and Westminster Parliament on matters affecting human rights in NI.
5. conducting investigations on systemic human rights issues. To do so, we may enter places of detention, and can compel individuals and agencies to give oral testimony or to produce documents.
6. promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland. To do so, we may undertake or support research and educational activities.
7. providing legal assistance to individuals and initiating strategic cases, including own motion legal challenges.
8. monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties and reporting to the United Nations and Council of Europe.
9. working in partnership with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission as mandated through the joint committee created in accordance with the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

The Commission is mandated in accordance with Article 2(1) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland of the European Union Withdrawal Agreement to ensure there is no diminution of rights protected in the 'Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity' chapter of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement as a result of United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. It is also mandated to ensure that, if certain European Union equality laws are changed after 1 January 2021 to improve the protection of human rights, then Northern Ireland will keep pace with those changes.

The Commission exercises this mandate alongside the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and through the Joint Committee of representatives of the Human Rights Commissions of Northern Ireland and Ireland.

The Commission's statutory functions for this purpose in accordance with the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 are:

1. monitoring the implementation of Article 2(1) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the EU withdrawal agreement (rights of individuals).
2. reporting to the Secretary of State and the Executive Office in Northern Ireland on the implementation of Article 2(1)—as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a general or specific request

for such a report, and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks.

3. advising the Secretary of State and the Executive Committee of the Assembly of legislative and other measures which ought to be taken to implement Article 2(1)—as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a general or specific request for advice, and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.
4. advising the Assembly (or a committee of the Assembly) whether a Bill is compatible with Article 2(1)—as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a request for advice, and on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.
5. promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of Article 2(1); and for this purpose we may undertake, commission or provide financial or other assistance for—research, and educational activities.
6. bringing any appropriate matters of relevance to Article 2(1) to the attention of the Specialised Committee on issues related to the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland established by Article 165 of the Withdrawal Agreement.
7. taking judicial review proceedings in respect of an alleged breach (or potential future breach) of Article 2(1) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the EU withdrawal agreement; or intervening in legal proceedings, whether for judicial review or otherwise, in so far as they relate to an alleged breach (or potential future breach) of Article 2(1).

The Commission is also designated, with the Equality Commission, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons as the independent mechanism tasked with promoting, protecting and monitoring implementation of Convention in Northern Ireland. We also engage with other the National Human Rights Institutions in the United Kingdom on issues of common interest.

Our Annual Statement, published in December each year, records how much progress has been made towards meeting human rights obligations in Northern Ireland. This strongly informs our future work priorities.

The Commission's work is based on five priorities agreed in our Strategic Plan 2019-22. Each priority is one of substantive public interest, where we believe a real and lasting impact can be made to benefit the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

Priority 1: Building a culture of human rights -

The Commission continued to promote awareness and understanding of human rights during 2020-21. It shifted planned engagements, focusing on virtual events and digital promotion.

The organisation led through the Chief Commissioners engagement met with a wide range of stakeholders. In November 2020 the Chief Commissioner met with the former First Minister Rt. Hon. Arlene Foster MLA and deputy First Minister Michelle O’Neill.

In addition to the organisations committee appearances on legislation it met with representatives from all the five main parties in year. The Commission continued its engagement with Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords, including the NI Affairs Committee, Women and Equalities Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights.

The Commission initiated an e-newsletter for stakeholders to communicate its advice to Government and promotional work during 2020-21. It promoted its advices to government and fact sheets on issues including abortion legislative developments in Northern Ireland.

The Commission redesigned its website in March 2021 and has contracted an independent accessibility auditor to ensure compliance with level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines – WCAG 2.1, in line with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

The Commission engaged with the local media to release public statements on a range of issues including: the human rights implications of pandemic restrictions, its case supporting Máiría Cahill to challenge the law on publishing candidates’ names in local elections, and its joint role with the Equality Commission on monitoring the human rights and equality implications of Brexit.

The Commission supported a number of community led virtual festivals in year including the Pride Parade, Refugee Week, Culture Night and the Human Rights Festival. During the Human Rights Festival the Commission the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly hosted the Commissions Annual Statement event.

The Commission facilitated three virtual Business and Human Rights Forums in year. In October 2020 the Forum welcomed UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Dame Sara Thornton and Naomi Long, Minister for Justice who both highlighted the responsibilities of business in addressing modern day slavery.

The Commission continued to provide secretariat support to the Sport and Human Rights Forum. In February 2020 the Forum hosted a webinar with the Centre for Sports and Human Rights. In November 2020 the Forum hosted a webinar on impact of Covid-19 on children's access to sport and in December it hosted a webinar on access for disabled persons with Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson and Disability Sport NI. A number of training and information sessions for public authorities and representatives were delivered over this period. The Commission supported the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in developing a human rights guide for staff, it also delivered two virtual introduction to human rights sessions to Department staff in September 2020.

The Commission provided two training sessions to members from the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights in year. The Commission continued to host the NI Civil Service Interactive Guide in partnership with The Executive Office.

The Commission continued to work in 2020-21, within its available resources, to develop its communications for young people in Northern Ireland. Previous opinion surveys identified the 16-24 year old group as a hard to reach group for the organisation.

Whilst the Covid-19 affected the classroom delivery of engagement sessions with GSCE Life Learning for Life and Work students, a number of virtual engagements were provided to schools in Belfast, Newry and Omagh. In March 2021 staff worked alongside the NI Assembly Education Service to deliver a presentation on the work the Commission. The resource has been made available to post primary schools in Northern Ireland.

The Commission also hosted a virtual internship with participants from the Washington Ireland Program over July- August of 2020. The Commission worked with the Culture Night team to launch its film 'It Seems' film on climate change. The Commission partnered with Amnesty Northern Ireland, Sustainable NI and Climate Northern Ireland to produce a film featuring Belfast poet Niamh McNally. A panel event launching the film was streamed during Culture night with participation from Belfast City Council Commissioner for Resilience, Queens University and Business in the Community.

The Commission continues to work in partnership with Ulster University to award the Transitional Justice Institute / Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Dissertation Prize. This year the award was received by Yah Parwon, for her research on ending violence against women through the African Human Rights System.

The Commission engaged and funded a participative project with Queens University Broadcast Journalism Students which focused on Climate Change and Human Rights. The project enabled the students to work with the Commission and local award winning animation production company Enter Yes on a contract to produce two educational animations. The animations will be launched in 2021 and utilised during the planned United Nations Climate Change Conference in November 2021.

Priority 2: Protecting human rights as a consequence of leaving the European Union -

In Article 2 of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol to the EU Withdrawal Agreement, the UK government committed to ensuring there would be no diminution of rights protected in the 'Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity' chapter of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, as a result of its withdrawal from the EU.

As a consequence, the Commission's mandate was extended under the EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020, to provide for its role as part of the 'dedicated mechanism' to oversee implementation of the Article 2 commitment from 1 January 2021. Preparation to take on the additional statutory responsibilities absorbed significant time and effort during 2020, in terms of planning, securing resources and recruiting additional staff.

In parallel, the Commission continued to engage with government and provide advice to parliamentary committees including:

- Submission to the Public Bill Committee of the Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill, June 2020
- EU Settlement Scheme extended to the people of NI: what does it mean for me?, June 2020
- Briefing: Ministry of Justice Consultation on Retained EU Case Law, August 2020
- Briefing: Internal Market Bill, September 2020
- Submission to NI Affairs Committee Inquiry on Cross-border Cooperation on Policing, Security and Criminal Justice after Brexit, September 2020
- Submission to NI Affairs Committee Inquiry on Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, December 2020

The Commission also gave evidence alongside the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, to the Executive Office Committee of the NI Assembly (September 2020 and December 2020).

Since January, the Commission has established its new work-stream, commissioned research and undertaken extensive engagement with a range of stakeholders including: equality and human rights organisations,

the Executive Office and other departmental officials, the EU Delegation to the UK, NIO officials, the Labour Relations Agency, trade unions and the Independent Monitoring Authority; and has participated in meetings of the civil society Ad Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Co-operation.

Priority 3: Poverty, health and well-being -

Following on from the Commission's recommendations in its 2018 investigation report into Traveller Accommodation in NI, the NI Housing Executive consulted on its Draft Irish Traveller Accommodation Strategy and the Department for Communities published a Design Guide for Traveller Sites. The Commission provided further advice in relation to both of these.

In February 2021, the Commission provided advice in respect of the Draft Budget, raising continuing concerns about social security reform and mitigations; including the impact of the pandemic on unemployment. The Commission continues to advise that the New Mitigation Packages, guides by the Commission's Cumulative Impact Assessment of Tax and Social Security Reforms, is necessary to address the impact of reform. Further work on analysing the impact of public spending on income distribution, gender, disability and other areas and the consequences for economic recovery post Covid and its implications for further social security mitigations is planned for later in 2021.

Priority 4: Meeting domestic and international human rights standards and good governance -

The Commission's Annual Statement, published in December each year, records how much progress has been made towards meeting human rights obligations in Northern Ireland. This strongly informs our future work priorities. The 2020 statement was launched by the Victims Commissioner for England and Wales, Dame Vera Baird DBE QC.

As part of our role monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties, the Commission provided written evidence to the United Nations Human Rights Committee and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in respect of their List of Issues. A further written submission was made to the United Nations Committee against Torture, as part of its follow-up procedure.

The Commission continued during the year to work in partnership with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, as part of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Commissions established a Disability Forum, in line with good practice established by the UN Committee on Persons with Disabilities, which met for the first time in March 2021. This Forum is intended to enhance stakeholder engagement with the Independent

Mechanism and support our engagement with the periodic reporting process.

The Commission continued throughout the year to monitor and advise on dealing with the legacy of the NI conflict. Advice was provided to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on its Inquiry into new Government proposals on Addressing the Legacy of NI's past. The Commission also provided a written submission to the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on the supervision of the cases concerning the actions of the Security Forces in Northern Ireland.

Priority 5: Protecting human rights in a digital age -

Due to budget constraints and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commission has delayed planned work in this area.

Core activities -

In fulfilment of and in compliance with its statutory obligations and the strategic objectives for 2019-22, the Commission identified and delivered the following core activities:

Preparatory work commenced in January 2020 on the fit-out of the new premises at Alfred Street, Belfast with construction work and the final fit-out completed in August 2020. Due to the Covid pandemic staff continue to work from home and access to the office is restricted following government guidance.

Work also commenced to develop the Commission's new website which was completed in-year.

Throughout the year, the Commission has continued to advise government on legislative measures necessary to ensure compliance with human rights obligations. Examples include our responses to the Northern Ireland Office in respect of draft language provisions including a number of proposed amendments under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our advice to the Northern Ireland Executive on hate crime, the Domestic Abuse and Daily Proceedings Bill, educational underachievement and a traveller accommodation strategy. The Commission also monitored the impact of the legislative response to Coronavirus, responding to the Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry on the human rights implications of the Government's Response to Covid-19, the Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry into the unequal impact of Covid-19 and the Department of Health (NI) modifications to the Children's Social Care Regulations.

Following the introduction of the Abortion (NI) (No.2) Regulations 2020, the Commission has continued to monitor the implementation of abortion provision, including through a monitoring project on the provision of

reproductive healthcare in NI. This was conducted across 2020 and included direct engagement with a range of stakeholders between July 2020 and January 2021. Further advice has been provided in respect of the Commissioning of abortion services, which has led to the Commission initiating legal action.

The Commission suspended its weekly advice clinics between August 2020 and March 2021 due to staff capacity issues. During this time the Commission endeavoured to respond to all queries it received, providing human rights information where possible or appropriately sign posting to other relevant organisations for assistance.

Through the clinics, the Commission continues to assist approximately 600 individuals each year on a broad range of issues. A number of people were also supported in legal proceedings. In January 2020, the Commission resolved its challenge to election law in Northern Ireland following a change in the law. The law had previously required an individual's address to be published when standing as a candidate in local council elections even where the candidate was the victim of domestic violence. The UK Government subsequently amended the law to remove the requirement to publish an address in order to stand for election. The Commission also received leave to apply for judicial review in a challenge to the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978, namely the 30 month cut off where convictions can never become spent and its compatibility with Article 8 ECHR.

The Commission further initiated own motion judicial review proceedings against the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the NI Executive and Department of Health in respect of failings to fund and commission abortion services in Northern Ireland. This case was granted leave in March 2021.

Key risks facing the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

EU withdrawal – The Commission has been mandated under Article 2(1) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland of the European Union Withdrawal Agreement to ensure there is no diminution of rights protected in the 'Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity' chapter of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement as a result of United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. This new role carries reputational risk to the organisation and has resulted in significant restructuring between November 2020 and April 2021. It also carried resource implications which had been resolved by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, working closely with the NIO.

Coronavirus - Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commission has continued to following government direction and guidance from its sponsor branch to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all staff. Processes are in place to ensure business continuity and these are being

monitored on a daily basis. All of the Commission's staff continue to work from home and governance requirements are being met by remote Commission and Audit and Risk Management Committee meetings. The Commission has not required additional support from government.

Budget and staffing – The Commission's resource budget had been reduced over the last decade to £1.074 million. This was worth less in real terms in 2020 than the initial funding provided to establish the institution following the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement 1998.

A review conducted in 2001, when inflation is taken into account, would suggest that the budget to support the Commission's core work should be a minimum of £2.039 million. This figure does not account, however, for the substantive changes to the Commission's mandate since that time. In 2007, the investigatory and legal powers were enhanced, and in 2009, the Commission was designated as the Independent Monitoring Mechanism for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The Commission has received no finance for any of these additional functions despite increased operating pressures.

The Commission's reduced budget to perform its core functions has caused significant and increasing stress on the organisation. The Board, Audit and Risk Committee and independent internal auditors have all identified that the Commission is compromised in its ability to fulfil statutory obligations and appropriately utilise its powers.

By November 2020, the Commission believed its budget may have been partly resolved, with an increase to £1.68 million for the new financial year 2021-22. This remained considerably less than the last independent review suggested should be the minimum. But it was nonetheless agreed, given the pressures faced across the public sector. However, recent indications suggest that further cuts may be imposed in future years with the risk of resuming the difficulties previously faced.

In 2020-21, the UN is due to complete the periodic review process of the Commission's A status. The UK government has sought to provide reassurance that it recognises the importance of retaining 'A status' under the UN Paris Principles, and that the Commission's "independent and effective mandate is needed for it to be able to operate most effectively as the national human rights institution for Northern Ireland." To realise this commitment in practice the Commission's budget needs to stabilise at a minimum required level to enable it to fulfil its duties and utilise its powers.

Sustainability Report

As the Commission's staff complement is below the threshold (250 employees), a full sustainability report is not produced.

Beyond engagement in UN initiatives and the Business and Human Rights Forum work, the Commission continues to be committed to helping to protect the environment. We seek to do this by operating a paperless office; recycling of dry office waste, printer cartridges, plastic bottles and cans; and the use of recycled paper.

Performance Analysis

The Commission reports on its performance to the United Nations through the periodic re-accreditation process, to the Northern Ireland Office as its sponsor branch as well as to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

We have continued to adopt a robust performance management system to ensure regularity, propriety and value for money. This year we operated with six part time Commissioners and one Chief Commissioner. In addition to the eight permanent staff, two temporary staff were made permanent and seven new posts were filled bringing the complement of staff to 17 at the year-end along with two temporary agency staff.

For 2020-21 the Commission had a core budget of £1,169,000 and £225,253 for its new role as the Dedicated Mechanism. We also received additional capital of £305,000 to complete the fit-out of the new premises in Alfred Street, as well as £48,000 to update the Commission's website and database. This was funded by grant-in-aid from Parliament through our sponsor branch, the Northern Ireland Office.

The Commission responded throughout the year to a number of requests for assistance from the government and members of the public relating to the pandemic. In addition, we welcomed the appointment of a new set of Commissioners and delivered a substantive programme of planned work, protecting and promoting the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland.



Dr David Russell
Accounting Officer

Date: 1 July 2021

Accountability Report

Corporate Governance Report

Director's Report

Entity

The Commission is a non-departmental public body established as part of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement through the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and in accordance with the United Nations Paris Principles as a National Human Rights Institution.

The Commission's powers and duties are derived from sections 69 and 70 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, sections 14 to 16 of the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007, and Schedule 3 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020.

The Commission is located at 4th Floor, 19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED and its sponsor branch is the Northern Ireland Office located at Stormont House, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SH.

Commissioners and Management Team

The Commission is governed by its Commissioners. The following served as Commissioners during 2020-21:

- Les Allamby
- Eddie Rooney
- Helen Ferguson (until 31 August 2020)
- Helena Macormac (until 31 August 2020)
- Paul Mageean (until 31 August 2020)
- John McCallister (until 31 August 2020)
- Graham Shields OBE (until 31 August 2020)
- Helen Henderson (from 1 September 2020)
- Jonathan Kearney (from 1 September 2020)
- David A Lavery CB (from 1 September 2020)
- Maura Muldoon (from 1 September 2020)
- Stephen White OBE (from 1 September 2020)

The Commission's Director is its Chief Executive, Dr David Russell. As Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive is responsible for maintaining a sound system of internal control. The Governance Statement sets out how this responsibility has been discharged in 2020-21.

Details of remuneration can be found in the Remuneration Report. A register of interests of the Commissioners and the Management Team can be found on our website: www.nihrc.org

Audit and Risk Management Committee

The Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee met twice during the year. The Committee normally meet at least four times a year but the unexpected passing of the Chairperson in July and the recruitment of new Commissioners meant the Committee were unable to meet again until December 2020. Recruitment for a new independent Chairperson was delayed and the date had to be extended due to an insufficient number of applications. A new Chairperson, Sean Donaghy, has now been appointed and will attend his first meeting in June 2021.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee 2020-21 comprised:

- Joe McKnight, Independent Chairperson (until July 2020)
- Eddie Rooney
- Helen Ferguson (until 31 August 2020)
- Graham Shields, OBE (until 31 August 2020)
- David A Lavery CB (from 1 September 2020)
- Maura Muldoon (from 1 September 2020)

The Chief Executive, Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs), Director (Communications, Information and Education, Public and Political Affairs), Director (Legal, Research and Investigations, and Advice to Government), Internal Auditor, External Auditor and a representative from the NIO attend Audit and Risk Management Committee meetings.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee supports the Accounting Officer, and the Commission, by monitoring and reviewing the risk, control and governance systems, and the associated assurance processes. This is achieved by providing an independent perspective and through a process of constructive challenge. The Chairperson or nominated Committee member reports on the activities of the Audit and Risk Management Committee at Commission meetings. Minutes of Audit and Risk Management Committee meetings are circulated to all Commissioners.

Risk management

The Commission is committed to ensuring a high standard of corporate governance. We have identified our risk appetite as well as defining strategy and determining resource allocation to ensure the delivery of the Commission objectives. The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk. The Audit and Risk Committee oversee this work under an independent Chair.

All Commissioners have received training in the role and responsibilities of National Human Rights Institution Commissioners and as board members of non-Departmental public bodies as well as induction and follow up training on the work of the Commission. The Audit and Risk Management Committee reviews its effectiveness by assessing its operation and

constitution against good practice guidelines issued by the National Audit Office. It also benchmarks itself against practice in sister organisations, through discussion between the Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and his counterparts. A member of the Audit and Risk Management committee reports to the full Commission board following a committee meeting. The independent chairperson normally reports annually to the full Commission board, usually in August, however due to the passing of the chairperson in July 2021 this did not take place.

Overall responsibility for ensuring that risks are identified and an appropriate framework is in place to manage those risks down to an acceptable level rests with the Commission's Accounting Officer. Individual staff members can be nominated as 'risk owners' with responsibility delegated from the Accounting Officer. The risk register is reviewed monthly by the management team who are also responsible for reviewing the Business Continuity Plan.

The Commission's risk register is presented to the Commission bi-monthly and to each Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting for scrutiny and discussion. The Commission uses a bespoke software package for the recording of any risks, and identifies the likelihood of occurrence and the impact of the risk. Any controls that are put in place to mitigate the risk are recorded and, if necessary, any remedial action. Changes to the assessment and evaluation of risk are noted by the Audit and Risk Management Committee and the full Commission.

There were no complaints to the Parliamentary Ombudsman in 2020-21 (2019-20: One, which was not upheld).

Personal data related incidents

We are committed to safeguarding all retained personal data and follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as it applies in the UK, tailored by the Data Protection Act 2018. A Commissioner has been appointed as the Data Protection Officer and a member of staff provides support in the role of the Data Protection Practitioner.

Risks in this area are recorded in the Commission's risk register and the Audit and Risk Management Committee receives regular reports on activities to minimise the likelihood of the occurrence of these and other risks.

There were no personal data related incidents formally reported to the Information Commissioner's Office in 2020-21 (2019-20: None).

Register of Interests

The Register of Interests and Related Party Declarations for the Chief Commissioner, Commissioners, Chief Executive and senior management can be found on the Commission's website at www.nihrc.org

Auditors

The financial statements are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The audit fee for this year is £16,500 (2019-20: £15,500).

The Commission's internal audit was provided independently by Grant Thornton until 17 December 2020. After a tendering process ASM were appointed and commenced work with the Commission in March 2021.

Creditor payment, policy and performance

Monthly statistics submitted to the Northern Ireland Office highlight that the Commission has paid 100 per cent of all undisputed invoices within five working days against the Government target of paying 80 per cent of such invoices within this time period (2019-20: 100 per cent).

Days lost due to absence

The Commission encourages a culture where good attendance is expected and valued. However, we recognise that from time to time absences for medical reasons may be unavoidable. We aim to treat staff who are ill with sympathy and fairness and where possible provide them with support, which will enable them to recover their health and attend work regularly.

Staff absence arising as a result of illness, including injuries, disability or other health problems, was approximately 2.4 days per employee in 2020-21 (2019-20: 14.7 days). The significant decrease in the number of days sick per employee is due to the fact that there was no long term sick absence in 2020-21. The size of the Commission means that small changes in absence can appear to have a disproportionate impact on reporting statistics.



Dr David Russell
Accounting Officer

Date: 1 July 2021

Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

Under Section 7(2)(a) of Schedule 7 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (with the consent of HM Treasury) has directed the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's state of affairs at the year-end and of its income and expenditure, changes in Taxpayers' Equity, and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the HM Treasury's *Financial Reporting Manual* and, in particular, to:

- confirm that the annual report and accounts as a whole are fair, balanced and understandable and that he takes personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgements required for determining that they are fair, balanced and understandable;
- observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the HM Treasury's *Financial Reporting Manual* have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements, and;
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

The Accounting Officer of the Northern Ireland Office has designated the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. The Accounting Officer is responsible for ensuring that, as far as he is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the entity's auditors are unaware. The Accounting Officer is required to take all steps to ensure he is aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the entity's auditors are aware of that information.

The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's assets, are set out in *Managing Public Money*, published by HM Treasury.

Disclosure of audit information

As Accounting Officer, I confirm that I have taken all steps to ensure that I am aware of any relevant audit information and to ensure the Commission's auditors are aware of that information. As far as I am aware, there is no relevant information of which the Commission's auditors are unaware. The auditor has not received any remuneration for non-audit work.

As Accounting Officer, I confirm that the annual report as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and that I take personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

Governance Statement

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's policies, aims and objectives, as set by Commissioners, and approved by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whilst safeguarding the public funds and the Commission's assets for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in *Managing Public Money*. Our focus is upon outcomes and robust governance procedures, which are designed to ensure that risk and opportunity are clearly identified and responded to. The Commission complies materially with the guidance provided in HM Treasury's corporate governance code for central government departments (April 2017).

As a non-departmental public body (NDPB), sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office, responsible to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the governance framework of the organisation includes a Financial Statement and Management Agreement, which was reviewed and formalised in September 2018. The Commissioners also operate in accordance with Standing Orders and guidance on corporate governance as well as agreed principles of public service in the Nolan Principles. The Chief Commissioner and Commissioners have corporate responsibility for promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources by the Commission, demonstrating high standards of corporate governance at all times. This role includes ensuring that they receive and review regular financial information concerning the management of the Commission, are informed in a timely manner about any concerns about the activities of the Commission, and provide assurance to the sponsoring Department that appropriate action has been taken on such concerns.

Discussions on financial matters and risk are normally held with officials at the NIO, rather than directly with Ministers. The NIO has, in ongoing

formal meetings confirmed the Commission’s fulfilment of assurances. The Chief Commissioner and Commissioners have access to the Secretary of State on request.

Governance Framework

As Accounting Officer, I function with the support of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and the Senior Management Team.

Commissioners’ Meetings

The Commission met 11 times during the reporting period.

The following served as Commissioners from 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021

	Meetings attended
Les Allamby	11/11
Eddie Rooney	11/11
Helen Ferguson (until 31 August 2020)	4/4
Helena Macormac (until 31 August 2020)	4/4
Paul Mageean (until 31 August 2020)	4/4
John McCallister (until 31 August 2020)	4/4
Graham Shields OBE (until 31 August 2020)	4/4
Helen Henderson (from 1 September 2020)	7/7
Jonathan Kearney (from 1 September 2020)	7/7
David A Lavery CB (from 1 September 2020)	7/7
Maura Muldoon (from 1 September 2020)	6/7
Stephen White (from 1 September 2020)	7/7

Audit and Risk Management Committee Meetings

The Audit and Risk Management Committee met twice during the reporting period. The Committee normally meet at least four times a year but the unexpected passing of the Chairperson in July and the recruitment of new Commissioners meant the Committee were unable to meet again until December 2020. Recruitment for a new independent Chairperson was delayed and the date had to be extended due to an insufficient number of applications. A new Chairperson has now been appointed and will attend his first meeting in June 2021.

	Meetings attended
Joe McKnight (until July 2020)	1/1
Helen Ferguson (until 31 August 2020)	1/1
Eddie Rooney (Interim Chair from 1 September 2020)	2/2
Graham Shields OBE (until 31 August 2020)	1/1
David A Lavery CB (from 1 September 2020)	1/1
Maura Muldoon (from 1 September 2020)	0/1

The Audit and Risk Management Committee comprised an independent Chairperson, who had extensive financial management experience at a senior level in the private sector, and was appointed following an open recruitment competition, and up to three Commissioners with a range of experience in corporate governance. Both the Commission's internal and external auditors also attend Audit and Risk Management Committee meetings, as well as a representative of the Northern Ireland Office. The Commission is currently recruiting for a new independent Chairperson and in the interim the chair is a Commissioner who sits on the Committee.

As outlined, a Commissioner from the Audit and Risk Management Committee provides an update on the meetings to the Commission meeting and the Committee reports annually to the Commission. Furthermore, the Chairperson has direct access to the Chief Executive and Chief Commissioner as appropriate.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee reviews its effectiveness by assessing its operation and constitution using the National Audit Office's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Effectiveness Checklist, which condenses the good practice principles of *HM Treasury's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook*. The Committee noted that it was performing effectively against the core elements of the principles and concluded that on an ongoing basis the Committee should consider utilisation of external specialist resource where appropriate. In the absence of an Independent Chairperson and the Audit and Risk Management Committee being unable to meet, the Commission Board continued to receive monthly financial reports and the Commission's Risk Register for scrutiny at each of its meetings, which were presented by the Chief Executive and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs). Any corporate issues of concern were also brought to the Commission Board for discussion and approval. The Committee are due to review its effectiveness in 2021-22.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee report as required and at least annually to the full Commission board through the Independent Chair of the Committee. Audit and Risk Management Committee papers are available to all Commissioners. The Commission works through a monthly Commission meeting, though there is provision for additional meetings if required. It has no separate standing Committees other than that of Audit and Risk Management. The Commission is also represented by Commissioners and staff on the joint Independent Monitoring Committee for the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in Northern Ireland with the Equality Commission.

During this year, the Commission Board has met eleven times. Members of the Committee provided updates on the Audit and Risk Management Committee throughout the year.

With a reliance on robust recruitment processes and performance appraisals, the Commission satisfies itself as to the quality of professional advice provided to it.

Commission's Performance

Throughout 2020-21, the Commission effectively discharged its statutory functions and duties. In line with best practice, the operational procedures of the Commission and the quality of data used by the Commission is kept under continuous review to ensure that the Commission is content that it is provided with all requisite information to enable it to make informed decisions.

The Commission's Strategic Plan for 2019-2022 was published in April 2019 and can be found on the Commission's website at <http://www.nihrc.org/publication/detail/northern-ireland-human-rights-commission-strategic-plan-2019-22>

Risk management and control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Commission's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The system of internal control has been in place in the Commission for the year ended 31 March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts, and accords with Treasury guidance.

The Commission's risk management framework, involves Commissioners and staff in reviewing and assessing risk on a regular basis, so that risk is an integral part of the ongoing planning and monitoring processes of the Commission.

The Chairperson of the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee, who is independent of the Commission, also provides an additional source of expertise for management and Commissioners to consult on specific issues as they arise.

The Commission has a continuous, proactive and systematic approach to understand, manage and communicate risk across the organisation. The risk management framework is comprehensive and involves Commissioners, managers and staff as follows:

- overall responsibility for ensuring that risks are identified and an appropriate framework is in place to manage those risks down to an acceptable level rests with the Commission's Accounting Officer
- individual members of staff can be nominated as 'risk owners' delegated with responsibility from the Chief Executive for monitoring and reporting on specific risks within their area of work
- the risk register, and the effectiveness of activities to manage identified risks, is reviewed by the Management Team
- the Audit and Risk Management Committee, which ordinarily meets quarterly, reviews the risk register and reports to the Commission, through the Chief Executive, on the effectiveness of activities to manage identified risks following each meeting
- the Commission reviews the risk register and the effectiveness of the risk management framework
- the external environment is assessed for any opportunistic new risks as part of the annual business planning process and in addition for the new strategic plan
- information risk is managed by the Commission within the context of the risk management framework. The Commission seeks to manage down the likelihood of the risk materialising through an Information Assurance Policy and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) policies and procedures, supported by training for staff on these.

The Commission has liaised closely with the NIO network to ensure compliance. Commissioners and staff also complete annual information assurance e-learning courses.

During the course of 2020-21, the main risks were financial and reputational risks, including failure to operate within budget given the reductions in grant-in-aid and the subsequent impact on staffing and operating costs.

- The Commission provides approximately 40-50 pieces of advice per year to government and the Northern Ireland Assembly and has indicated to the Northern Ireland Office, and the demand on its services in this regard have been increasing.
- The Commission had no budget or staff during 2020-21 to support its investigations function and for the third year in a row was therefore unable to exercise its investigatory powers.
- The Commission's legal advice service and ability to support strategic litigation was increasingly compromised during the year.

The impact of budgetary pressures led to a situation in which the Commission was left with no suitably qualified legal staff. By the middle of 2020-21, the Commission had to suspend its legal clinic to support the public. This was reinstated when the budget for 2021-22 was agreed.

The Commission continued to update its risk register in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and initiated its business continuity plan to ensure operations continued.

As the Commission has been identified as the dedicated mechanism under Article 2 (1) of the withdrawal agreement this risk continued to be monitored during 2020-21. The risk has been managed and the Commission continues to liaise with its sponsor department. No significant control issues have materialised.

In addition to the mechanisms outlined above, as Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of the system of internal control. Reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors, who were present for part of the financial year, and comments made by the external auditors in their management letter and other reports. The Commission Board continued to receive monthly financial reports and the Commission's Risk Register for scrutiny at each of its meetings, which were presented by the Chief Executive and the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs). Any corporate issues of concern were also brought to the Commission Board for discussion and approval. The Commission's own management controls such as its financial management procedures and the appointment of a Commissioner as interim chair and point of contact (in the absence of an independent chair) ensured that the Commission continued to operate throughout the period without any significant concerns being identified. I have been advised on the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Commission (the Board), the Audit and Risk Management Committee and a plan to address identified weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

Review of effectiveness

The Audit and Risk Management Committee reviews the effectiveness of the Commission's internal control mechanisms, including receiving and approving internal audit plans and reports, approving the Commission's Financial Procedures Manual and any significant changes to it. The Committee also oversees the risk management framework and reporting to the Commission on the effectiveness of activities to manage the occurrence or impact of identified risks. The Committee furthermore reviews all international travel undertaken by Commissioners and staff, expenses claims submitted by the Chief Commissioner and the Chief Executive, and purchases over £1,000, with a particular focus on any contracts let by single tender action. As an additional reputational

safeguard, the Chair of the Committee discharges the role of Authorising Officer for the Chief Commissioner's travel and expenses claims.

Commissioners and senior management completed fraud awareness e-learning during 2020-21.

The Committee contributed an audit, risk management and value perspective to the development of the Commission's strategic and business plans, and of its policies across a range of issues including managing difficult members of the public.

Internal Auditors

The Commission's Internal Auditors were Grant Thornton until 17 December 2020. The services provided by Grant Thornton operate to standards defined by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Through a tender process ASM were appointed as the Commission's new Internal Auditors and commenced in March 2021. The services that will be provided by ASM will operate to standards defined by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. A Strategic Internal Audit for their 3-year appointment and an Internal Audit Plan for 2021-22 was presented to the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee in June 2021 for approval.

Internal Audit's work plan is informed by an analysis of the risk to which the Commission is exposed.

An Annual Audit Plan for 2020-21 (to cover the period until the end of December 2020) was presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting in March 2020 for approval.

The internal audits planned in-year were to focus on the following areas:

- Business Continuity
- Change Management

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and staff working from home the Business Continuity plan was in operation and the audit along with that of Change Management did not take place. Grant Thornton also ceased their contract as internal auditors for the Commission from December 2020 and new internal auditors were not appointed until March 2021.

Internal audit findings are presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee and copies of all final reports are provided to me, in my role as Accounting Officer. In addition, Internal Audit provided an Annual Assurance Report to the Audit and Risk Management Committee in June 2020, confirming that the Commission's systems in relation to risk management, control and governance were adequate and operated

effectively, thereby providing an overall satisfactory assurance. Grant Thornton ceased their contract and a new internal auditor was not appointed until March 2021. In the interim period the Commission assured itself in terms of financial controls and risk management by the presentation of financial reporting and the risk register to the monthly Commission meetings, as well as the ongoing scrutiny by members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Commissioners continue to receive monthly reports on financial performance and audit activity, and regular updates on the risk register.

External Auditors

Representatives from the National Audit Office (NAO) and Ernst Young (EY), who were appointed by the NAO to conduct the external audit on their behalf, attended all of the Committee's meetings. During this reporting period, the Committee had a positive engagement with auditors in respect of the completion report for the 2019-20 accounts and the preparation of the 2020-21 accounts.

The Committee has continued to work closely with the external auditors in this reporting period and will continue to do.

Corporate Governance

The Commission conducts its affairs in accordance with a Code of Governance prepared in line with the Cabinet Office 'Code of Best Practice for Board Members of Public Bodies'. It also reflects the principles set out in the Corporate Governance in central government departments: Code of Good Practice; the outcome of internal governance reviews; good governance principles developed by the Independent Commission on Good Governance and current best practice principles in corporate governance.

The Commission has a comprehensive Framework document with the NIO which sets down its value and principles and lines of accountability.

Stewardship Statements are completed bi-annually and submitted to the NIO. The 2020-21 statement was provided at the end of the year following a temporary change in the reporting cycle in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of the statements is to provide assurance that the Commission maintains a sound system of internal control within its business area to support the achievement of the NIO's policies and objectives, whilst safeguarding public funds and assets. These statements also inform the content of this Governance Statement.

Personal data related incidents

No personal data related incidents were reportable to the Information Commissioner's Office in 2020-21 (2019-20: None).

Significant internal control weaknesses

There were no significant weaknesses in the Commission's systems of internal controls in 2020-21 that affected the achievement of the Commission's key policies, aims and objectives.



Dr David Russell
Accounting Officer

Date: 1 July 2021

Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration policy

The remuneration of the Chief Commissioner and Commissioners is determined by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive's posts are graded within the Senior Civil Service (SCS). Pay and performance management arrangements for this post are in line with guidance issued by the Cabinet Office: *Guidance for Approval of Senior Pay* (applicable from January 2018). Increases in the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive's pay are in line with the parameters of the Senior Salaries Review Board.

The remuneration of Commission staff aligns with those of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, in common with its sister organisations. These pay arrangements continue to be performance-related. Performance is appraised by line managers in respect of achievement of agreed objectives.

The Chairperson of the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee was appointed through open competition. The Chairperson is remunerated at a rate of £350 per meeting (the Committee usually meets four times per year) and £350 per day (pro rata) for other work undertaken on behalf of, and at the request of, the Commission.

The other members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee were Commissioners Eddie Rooney; Helen Ferguson and Graham Shields (until 31 August 2020); and David A Lavery CB and Maura Muldoon (from 1 September 2020). They do not receive any additional remuneration for attendance at Committee meetings.

Contracts of employment

The Chief Commissioner and Commission members are appointed for a period of five years and three years respectively by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Appointments comply with the principles of the Code of Practice of the Office of the Commissioner on Public Appointments (OCPA) (www.ocpa.gov.uk) and in line with the Cabinet Code of Practice of Corporate Governance in central government departments.

The Secretary of State may extend the appointment of the Chief Commissioner for a further term or terms. Such extensions may not exceed a maximum term in office of ten years. The Secretary of State will normally give three months' notice if an appointment is terminated.

Staff appointments are made in accordance with the Commission's recruitment and selection policy, which requires appointments to be made strictly on merit and through fair and open competition. Early

termination, other than for misconduct, would normally result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

The Commission's age retirement policy enables members of staff who have reached the age at which they are entitled to draw their Commission pension (which for most staff is their sixtieth birthday) to choose the age at which they will retire.

Remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements (audited information)

The following section provides details of the remuneration and pension interests of the Commissioners and the Commission's Management Team.

Single total figure of remuneration (audited information)								
	Salary (£'000)		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension benefits (to nearest £1,000) ¹		Total (£'000)	
	2020-21	2019-20	2020-21	2019-20	2020-21	2019-20	2020-21	2019-20
Mr Les Allamby Chief Commissioner	75-80	70-75	-	-	31,000	29,000	110-115	100-105
Mr Eddie Rooney Commissioner	5-10	5-10	-	-	-	-	5-10	5-10
Ms Helen Henderson Commissioner (from 1 September 2020)	0-5 ²	-	-	-	-	-	0-5 ²	-
Mr Jonathan Kearney Commissioner (from 1 September 2020)	0-5 ²	-	-	-	-	-	0-5 ²	-
Mr David A Lavery CB Commissioner (from 1 September 2020)	0-5 ²	-	-	-	-	-	0-5 ²	-
Ms Maura Muldoon Commissioner (from 1 September 2020)	0-5 ²	-	-	-	-	-	0-5 ²	-
Mr Stephen White Commissioner (from 1 September 2020)	0-5 ²	-	-	-	-	-	0-5 ²	-

¹ The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus the real increase in any lump sum, less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases excludes increases due to inflation or any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.

² The figure quoted is for the period 1 September 2020 to 31 March 2021. The full year equivalent is £5-10k.

Ms Helen Ferguson Commissioner (until 31 August 2020)	0-5 ³	5-10	-	-	-	-	0-5 ³	5-10
Ms Helena Macormac Commissioner (until 31 August 2020)	0-5 ³	5-10	-	-	-	-	0-5 ³	5-10
Mr Paul Mageean Commissioner (until 31 August 2020)	0-5 ³	5-10	-	-	-	-	0-5 ³	5-10
Mr John McCallister Commissioner (until 31 August 2020)	0-5 ³	5-10	-	400	-	-	0-5 ³	5-10
Mr Graham Shields OBE Commissioner (until 31 August 2020)	0-5 ³	5-10	-	400	-	-	0-5 ³	5-10
Mr Joseph McKnight Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee (until July 2020)	0-5 ⁴	0-5 ⁴	-	-	-	-	0-5 ⁴	0-5 ⁴
Dr David Russell Chief Executive	70-75	70-75	-	-	33,000	34,000	105-110	105-110
Mr Colin Caughey Director <i>Career Break from 10 September 2019</i>	0	25-30 ⁵	-	-	-	11,000 ⁵	-	40-45 ⁵
Mrs Lorraine Hamill Director	50-55	50-55	-	-	25,000	26,000	75-80	75-80
Ms Claire Martin Director	60-65	50-55	-	-	37,000	22,000	100-105	70-75
Ms Rhyannon Blythe Director	55-60	20-25 ⁶	-	-	22,000	8,000 ⁶	80-85	30-35 ⁶
Dr Hannah Russell Director <i>(Until 4 November 2020)</i>	30-35 ⁷	20-25 ⁸	-	-	13,000 ⁷	8,000 ⁸	45-50 ⁷	30-35 ⁸
Ms Eilis Haughey Head of Service (Dedicated Mechanism) <i>(from 2 February 2021)</i>	5-10 ⁹	0	-	-	4,000 ⁹	0	10-15 ⁹	0

³ The figures quoted is for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 August 2020. The full year equivalent is £5-10k.

⁴ Charges a fee, which is processed through the Commission's payroll.

⁵ The figure quoted is for the period 1 April 2019 to 10 September 2019. The full year equivalent is £45-50k.

⁶ The figure quoted is for the period 1 November 2019 to 31 March 2020 – date of joining the management team. The full year equivalent is £45-50k.

⁷ The figure quoted is for the period 1 April 2020 to 4 November 2020. The full year equivalent is £55-60k

⁸ The figure quoted is for the period 4 November 2019 to 31 March 2020 – date of joining the management team. The full year equivalent is £45-£50k.

⁹ The figure quoted is for the period 2 February 2021 to 31 March 2021 – date of appointment. The full year equivalent is £60-£65k.

No performance related pay or bonus payments have been made in 2020-21 (2019-20: £nil).

Fair Pay Disclosure – (audited information)

	2020-21	2019-20
	£'000	£'000
Band of highest paid employee’s total remuneration	75-80	70-75
Median Total Remuneration	44.4	30.5
Median Ratio	1.75	2.38

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation’s workforce.

The calculations exclude the remuneration to the part-time Commissioners as their employment terms and conditions, including rates of remuneration are determined by the United Kingdom Government and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is unable to influence those rates. Details of their remuneration are provided above.

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in the organisation in the financial year 2020-21 was £75,000-£80,000 (2019-20: £70,000-£75,000). This was 1.75 times (2019-20: 2.38) the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £44,385 (2019-20: £30,526). The increase in the median was due to an increase in salaries of some staff due to a job evaluation grading exercise.

Remuneration ranged from £23,843-£76,445 (2019-20: £21,642-£73,470).

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay and benefits in kind. It does not include employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

There was no severance pay in 2020-21 (2019-20: £nil)

Salary

‘Salary’ includes gross salary, overtime; and any other allowance subject to UK taxation. No performance related pay or bonus payments were

made in year (2019-20: £nil). This report is based on accrued payments made by the Commission and thus recorded in these accounts.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument (salary). Mileage Allowance Payments for Commissioners are classed as a benefit in kind and relate to the use of their own vehicles for travel to the Commission's office for meetings.

Benefits in kind paid during the 2020-21 financial year were £120 (2019-20: £739).

There were no non-cash benefits made during the 2020-21 financial year (2019-20: None)

Pension benefits (audited information)

Commissioners

The Chief Commissioner is eligible to join the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme and the Commission paid employer pension contributions of £21,328 (2019-20: £21,052). An additional amount of £425 has been accrued for pension contributions due to back pay payable from 1 August 2020.

No further pension contributions were made for Commissioners in the year ended 31 March 2021 (2019-20: £nil).

Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Management Committee

No pension contributions were made for the Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Management Committee in the year ended 31 March 2021 (2019-20: £nil).

Management Team

	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/3/21	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age	CETV at 31/3/21	CETV at 31/3/20	Real increase in CETV
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Les Allamby Chief Commissioner	10-15	0-2.5	189	153	24
David Russell Chief Executive	20-25	0-2.5	275	246	15
Lorraine Hamill Director	10-15	0-2.5	206	181	16
Claire Martin Director	10-15	0-2.5	162	136	18
Rhyannon Blythe Director	5-10	0-2.5	68	55	8
Eilis Haughey Head of Service (Dedicated Mechanism)	0-5	0-2.5	3	0	2
Hannah Russell Director (until 4 November 2020)	0-5	0-2.5	34	27	4

The pension information for the senior management team follows guidance in the Employer Pension Notice EPN626 issued by the Civil Service Pensions.

Pension benefits are provided through the Civil Service pension arrangements. From 1 April 2015, a new pension scheme for civil servants was introduced – the Civil Servants and Others Pension Scheme or alpha, which provides benefits on a career average basis with a normal pension age equal to the member’s State Pension Age (or 65 if higher). From that date, all newly appointed employees and the majority of those already in service joined alpha. Prior to that date, employees participated in the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). The PCSPS has four sections: three providing benefits on a final salary basis (classic, premium or classic plus) with a normal pension age of 60; and one providing benefits on a whole career basis (nuvos) with a normal pension age of 65.

These statutory arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted by Parliament each year. Pensions payable under classic, premium, classic plus, nuvos and alpha are increased annually in

line with Pensions Increase legislation. Existing members of the PCSPS who were within 10 years of their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 remained in the PCSPS after 1 April 2015. Those who were between 10 years and 13 years and 5 months from their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 moved to alpha from 1 April 2015. Those who were between 10 years and 13 years and 5 months from their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 will switch into alpha sometime between 1 June 2015 and 1 February 2022. All members who switch to alpha have their PCSPS benefits 'banked', with those with earlier benefits in one of the final salary sections of the PCSPS having those benefits based on their final salary when they leave alpha. The pension figures quoted show pension earned in PCSPS or alpha. (The pension figures quoted show pension earned in PCSPS or alpha – as appropriate. Where the employee has benefits in both the PCSPS and alpha, the figure quoted is the combined value of their benefits in the two schemes.) Members joining from October 2002 may opt for either the appropriate defined benefit arrangement or a 'money purchase' stakeholder pension with an employer contribution (partnership pension account).

Employee contributions are salary-related and range between 4.6 per cent and 8.05 per cent for members of classic, premium, classic plus, nuvos and alpha. Benefits in classic accrue at the rate of 1/80th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years' initial pension is payable on retirement. For premium, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike classic, there is no automatic lump sum. Classic plus is essentially a hybrid with benefits for service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per classic and benefits for service from October 2002 worked out as in premium. In nuvos, a member builds up a pension based on his pensionable earnings during their period of scheme membership. At the end of the scheme year (31 March) the member's earned pension account is credited with 2.3 per cent of their pensionable earnings in that scheme year and the accrued pension is uprated in line with Pensions Increase legislation. Benefits in alpha build up in a similar way to nuvos, except that the accrual rate is 2.32 per cent. In all cases, members may opt to give up (commute) pension for a lump sum up to the limits set by the Finance Act 2004.

The partnership pension account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8 per cent and 14.75 per cent (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee from the appointed provider – Legal and General. The employee does not have to contribute, but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3 per cent of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5 per cent of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally-provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are already at or over pension age. Pension age is 60 for members of classic, premium and classic plus, 65 for members of nuvos, and the higher of 65 or State Pension Age for members of alpha. (The pension figures quoted show pension earned in PCSPS or alpha - as appropriate. Where there are benefits in both the PCSPS and alpha the figure quoted is the combined value of the benefits in the two schemes, but note that part of that pension may be payable from different ages.)

Further details about the Civil Service pension arrangements can be found at the website: <http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/>.

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The figures include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement, which the member has transferred to the Civil Service pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their buying additional pension benefits at their own cost. CETVs are worked out in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and do not take account of any actual or potential reduction to benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

Staff Report

Staff numbers and related costs (audited information)

	2020-21 total	Commissioners	Permanently Employed	Others ¹⁰	2019-20 total
	£	£	£	£	£
Wages and salaries	744,428	122,967	481,032	140,429	644,832
Social security costs	69,057	9,560	53,365	6,132	61,530
Other pension costs	174,156	21,753	135,006	17,397	157,976
Total Staff Costs	987,641	154,280	669,403¹¹	163,958	864,338

There were no inward seconded staff during 2020-21 (2019-20: None).

Staff detailed as 'Others' includes temporary staff directly employed by the Commission, temporary agency staff and the Chair of the Commission's Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Details of the pension contributions of £21,753 payable in respect of Commissioners (2019-20: £21,052) are described in the Remuneration Report.

The Commission's staff are covered by the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) and the Civil Servant and Other Pension Scheme (CSOPS) – known as 'alpha'. PCSPS and CSOPS are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but the Commission is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. The scheme actuary valued the scheme as at 31 March 2016. Details can be found in the resource accounts of the Cabinet Office: Civil Superannuation (www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/about-us/resource-accounts/).

For 2020-21, employers' contributions of £174,156¹² (which includes an accrual of £3,379 as a result of a back pay award and £4,068 for the costs of untaken leave) were payable to PCSPS (2019-20: £157,976) at one of four rates in the range 20 per cent to 24.5 per cent of pensionable pay, based on salary bands. The Scheme Actuary reviews employer contributions usually every four years following a full scheme valuation. The contribution rates are set to meet the cost of the benefits accruing during 2020-21 to be paid when the member retires and not the benefits paid during this period to existing pensioners.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. There were no employers' contributions made to one or more of the panel of three appointed stakeholder pension providers (2019-20: £Nil). Employer contributions

¹⁰ The figure quoted includes staff who were on temporary fixed term contracts until October 2020 and were made permanent from November 2020 and were included in the permanent employed section from that date.

¹¹ Includes staff costs for Dedicated Mechanism staff of £69,242

¹² Includes employer pension costs for Dedicated Mechanism staff of £11,607

are age-related and ranged from 8 per cent to 14.75 per cent (depending on the age of the member). Employers also match employee contributions up to 3 per cent of pensionable pay. There were no additional employer contributions at 0.5 per cent of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally-provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill-health retirement) (2019-20: £Nil).

The expected employer pension contributions to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme for 2021-22 is estimated at £344,049.

There were no staff who retired early on ill-health grounds during 2020-21 (2019-20: None).

Number of Senior Civil Service Staff

Grade of Senior Civil Servant	2020-21 Number of Staff	2019-20 Number of Staff
5	2	2

Average number of persons employed (audited information)

The average number of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the year was as follows:

	2020-21 total	Commissioners	Permanently Employed	Others¹³	2019-20 Total
Directly employed	24	7	17	0	20
Other	0	0	0	0	1
Total	24	7	17	0	21

The Commissioners are expected to devote approximately three days per month to Commission business over the course of a year.

¹³ There are zero staff reported as 'Others' as the staff on temporary fixed term contracts were made permanent with others resigning before their temporary fixed term contracts came to an end.

Staff composition

	2020-21			2019-20		
	Total average number of Persons Engaged	Average number of Female Persons Engaged	Average number of Male Persons Engaged	Total average number of Persons engaged	Average number of Female Persons Engaged	Average number of Male Persons Engaged
Commissioners	7	2	5	7	2	5
Permanently Employed	17	14	3	9	7	2
Others	0	0	0	5	3	2
Total	24	16	8	21	12	9

Staff Turnover

The annual turnover rate of staff for the period 2020/21 was 13.8%. Two members of staff left the Commission during the year to take up posts elsewhere and two members of staff who were on temporary contracts were made permanent. The increase in the staff headcount is due to vacant core posts being filled during the year and the Commission’s new role under the Dedicated Mechanism. Staff numbers will continue to increase during 2021/22 when the recruitment for the Dedicated Mechanism is completed.

Managing Attendance

Staff absence arising as a result of illness, including injuries, disability or other health problems, was approximately 2.4 days per employee in 2020-21 (2019-20: 14.7 days).

Disabled Employees

The Commission aims to ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of disability and that access to employment and career advancement in the Commission is based solely on ability, qualifications and suitability for the post. All disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for posts advertised at the Commission are guaranteed an interview. The Commission complies with all existing legislation in regard to its disabled employees.

Equal Opportunities

The Commission is committed to equality of opportunity and promoting good relations in accordance with our Equality Scheme, prepared in compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. We strive to promote equality of opportunity and good relations within the organisation as well as in our activities. The Commission complies fully with its statutory obligations and we liaise closely with the Equality

Commission for Northern Ireland to ensure we work together effectively.

Employee Consultation

The Commission recognises the benefits of keeping employees informed of the progress of the business and of involving them in the Commission's performance. During the year, employees were regularly provided with information regarding the financial and economic factors affecting the performance of the Commission and on other matters of concern to them, as employees, through regular staff meetings. Meetings were also held with employees on the drafting of the Commission's business plan objectives for 2021-22.

Health and Safety

We recognise and accept our legal responsibilities in relation to the health, safety and welfare of our employees and for all people using our premises. In line with this commitment, the Commission has complied with the relevant legislation.

Expenditure on Consultancy

There was no expenditure on consultancy in 2020-21 (2019-20: £nil).

Off-payroll engagements

There were no off-payroll engagements in 2020-21 (2019-20: £nil).

Reporting of Civil Service and other compensation schemes – exit packages (audited information)

There were no exit packages in 2020-21 (2019-20: £nil).



Dr David Russell
Accounting Officer

Date: 1 July 2021

Parliamentary Accountability and Audit Report

- 1.1 The accounts of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The audit fee charged was £16,500 (£15,500 in 2019-20). The auditors received no fees for non-audit services (2019-20: £nil). The auditors have been provided with all relevant audit information necessary to complete their audit and the Accounting Officer has taken all the necessary steps to ensure that the auditors are aware of any relevant information.
- 1.2 All expenditure was applied to the purpose intended by Parliament (audited).
- 1.3 No fees or charges were paid by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (audited) (2019-20: £nil).
- 1.4 The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission has no remote contingent liabilities (audited) (2019-20: £nil).
- 1.5 The Commission had no losses or special payments (audited) (2019-20: £nil).
- 1.6 The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's total expenditure in 2020-21 was £1,635,837. The net expenditure for prior years was as follows:

Expenditure and income

	2020-21 £000	2019-20 £000	2018-19 £000	2017-18 £000
Expenditure	1,636	1,282	1,135	1,210
Income	<u>0</u>	<u>(36)</u>	<u>(34)</u>	<u>(33)</u>
Net Expenditure	1,636	1,246	1,101	1,177



Dr David Russell
Accounting Officer

Date: 1 July 2021

The Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission for the year ended 31 March 2021 under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The financial statements comprise: Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes, including the significant accounting policies. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and International Accounting Standards as interpreted by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's affairs as at 31 March 2021 and of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's net operating expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Secretary of State directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects, the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis of opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2019. I have also elected to

apply the ethical standards relevant to listed entities. I am independent of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit and the financial statements in the UK. My staff and I have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Commission and the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

Other Information

The other information comprises information included in the annual report, but does not include the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited, the financial statements and my auditor's certificate thereon. The Commission and the Accounting Officer are responsible for the other information. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement

in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regards.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions made under the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
- the information given in Performance and Accountability Reports for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance and Accountability Reports. I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Commission and Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Commission and the Accounting Officer are responsible for:

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- Internal controls as the Commission and the Accounting Officer determine are necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- Assessing the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Commission and the Accounting Officer anticipate that the services provided by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included the following:

- Inquiring of management, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's head of internal audit and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's policies and procedures relating to:
 - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of

non-compliance;

- detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud; and
 - the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations including the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's controls relating to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as amended by the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 and the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 and Managing Public Money.
- discussing among the engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the following areas: revenue recognition and posting of unusual journals.
 - obtaining an understanding of Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's framework of authority as well as other legal and regulatory frameworks that the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission operates in, focusing on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. The key law and regulations I considered in this context included the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as amended by the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 and the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020, Managing Public Money, Employment Law and tax legislation.

In addition to the above, my procedures to respond to identified risks included the following:

- reviewing the financial statements disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations discussed above;
- enquiring of management and the Audit Committee concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the Board; and
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and

evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

I also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the income and expenditure reported in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Gareth Davies
Comptroller and Auditor General

Date 5 July 2021

National Audit Office
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London, SW1W 9SP

Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	Notes	2020-21 £	2019-20 £
Expenditure			
Staff costs	3	987,641	864,338
Other operating costs	4	564,178	402,967
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	4	81,834	14,604
Loss on disposal of asset	4	2,183	0
Total operating expenditure		<u>1,635,836</u>	<u>1,281,909</u>
Income			
Other income	5	0	(35,504)
Total operating income		<u>0</u>	<u>(35,504)</u>
Net operating expenditure for the year ended 31 March		<u>1,635,836</u>	<u>1,246,405</u>
Other comprehensive net expenditure			
Net (gain)/loss on revaluation of property, plant and Equipment	6	0	(30)
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		<u>1,635,836</u>	<u>1,246,375</u>

All amounts above relate to continuing activities.

The notes on pages 61 to 74 form part of the financial statements.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2021

		31 March 2021		31 March 2020	
	Notes	£	£	£	£
Non-current assets:					
Property, plant and equipment	6		583,698		53,797
Intangible assets	7		<u>7,306</u>		<u>15,229</u>
Total non-current assets			591,004		69,026
Current assets:					
Trade and other receivables	9	47,409		27,762	
Cash and cash equivalents	10	<u>340,337</u>		<u>611,905</u>	
Total current assets			387,746		639,667
Total assets			<u>978,750</u>		<u>708,693</u>
Current liabilities:					
Trade and other payables	11		278,415		194,775
Total current liabilities			<u>278,415</u>		<u>194,775</u>
Non Current Liabilities					
Provisions – Dilapidations	12		75,000		0
			75,000		0
Total assets less current and non current liabilities			625,335		513,918
Assets less total liabilities			<u>625,335</u>		<u>513,918</u>
Taxpayers' equity					
General and Revaluation Reserves			625,335		513,918
			<u>625,335</u>		<u>513,918</u>

The notes on pages 61 to 74 form part of the financial statements.

The financial statements on pages 57 to 74 were approved by the Commission on 28 June 2021:

Dr David Russell
Accounting Officer

Date: 1 July 2021

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	Notes	2020-21 £	2019-20 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating expenditure		(1,635,836)	(1,246,405)
Increase in trade and other receivables	9	(19,647)	(4,289)
Increase in trade payables	11	83,640	59,425
<i>Movements in payables relating to items not passing through the Net Expenditure Account</i>			
Movements in payables relating to purchase of property, plant and equipment	11	35,648	(35,648)
Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	4	81,834	14,604
Adjustment for loss on disposal of asset	4	2,183	0
Increase in provisions	12	75,000	0
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(1,377,178)	(1,212,313)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	6	(641,643)	(10,968)
Purchase of intangible assets	7	0	(2,400)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(641,643)	(13,368)
Cash inflow from financing activities			
Funding from parent department		1,747,253	1,517,063
Net cash inflow from financing activities		1,747,253	1,517,063
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents in the period	10	(271,568)	291,382
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	10	611,905	320,523
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	10	340,337	611,905

The notes on pages 61 to 74 form part of the financial statements.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	General and Revaluation Reserves £	Total Reserves £
Balance at 31 March 2019	243,230	243,230
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year	(1,246,405)	(1,246,405)
Net gain on revaluation of property	30	30
Grant-in-aid from NIO	1,517,063	1,517,063
Balance at 31 March 2020	513,918	513,918
Changes in taxpayers' equity for 2020-21		
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year	(1,635,836)	(1,635,837)
Grant-in-aid from NIO	1,747,253	1,747,253
Balance at 31 March 2021	625,335	625,334

The notes on pages 61 to 74 form part of the financial statements.

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

1. Statement of accounting policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) for 2020-21, issued by HM Treasury. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission for the year ending 31 March 2021 are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention, modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment.

The accounts comply with the accounting standards issued or adopted by the Accounting Standards Board, FReM and accounting and disclosure requirements issued by HM Treasury and are in Sterling.

1.2 Critical accounting estimates and key judgements

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with IFRS requires the use of accounting estimates and assumptions. It also requires the Commission to exercise judgement in the process of applying the accounting policies. We continually evaluate our estimates, assumptions and judgements based on available information and experience. As the use of estimates is inherent in financial reporting, actual results could differ from these estimates. The estimates and assumptions which have the most significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities are discussed below.

(i) Depreciation of property, plant, equipment and intangibles

Depreciation is provided in the accounts so as to write-down the respective assets to their residual values over

their expected useful lives and as such the selection of the estimated useful lives and the expected residual values of the assets requires the use of estimates and judgements. Details of the estimated useful lives are as shown in Note 1.7 and Note 1.8.

(ii) Impairment of property, plant and equipment

Where there is an indication that the carrying value of items of property, plant and equipment may have been impaired through events or changes in circumstances, a review will be undertaken of the recoverable amount of that asset.

(iii) Provisions

The Commission provides for legal or constructive obligations, which are of uncertain timing or amount at the reporting date on the basis of the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation.

1.3 Accounting standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards adopted in the year ended 31 March 2021

The Commission has reviewed the standards, interpretations and amendments to the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) included in the 2020-21 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and which are relevant to its operations. The Commission considers that the adoption of these standards has not had a significant impact on its results or financial position.

1.4 Accounting standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards not yet effective

The Commission has not adopted any Standards or Interpretations from the IFRS in advance of the required implementation dates. The following standards or interpretations were issued by the International Accounting Standards Board but have not been adopted:

IFRS 16 – Leases replaces IAS 17 Leases and related interpretations and had an effective date of 1 January 2019. The new standard provides a single lessee accounting model, requiring lessees to recognise assets and liabilities for all leases unless the lease term is 12 months or less or the underlying asset has a low value. Lessors continue to classify leases as operating or finance, with IFRS 16's approach to lessor accounting substantially unchanged from its predecessor, IAS 17. The new standard was due to be applied

from 1 April 2019, however, the Financial Reporting Advisory Board took the decision to delay the implementation of IFRS 16 for bodies applying the Government Financial Reporting Manual until 1 April 2022.

The Commission expects IFRS 16 to have a material impact on future accounts, as we bring the new operating lease for Alfred Street, which has a lease term of 10 years, on to the Statement of Financial Position. The Commission will continue to work with its sponsor department to determine the financial impact and any further disclosures required before implementation in 2022/23.

IFRS 17 – Insurance contracts supersedes IFRS 4 Insurance contracts and related interpretations. This new standard was due to be applied from 1 January 2021. In March 2020, the IASB deferred the effective date until 1 January 2023.

1.5 Income

At times, the Commission receives income from sources other than the NIO, for specific projects. The Commission will seek to recover any associated costs for the project in line with the contract.

The Commission had recognised income from contracts with a number of organisations including local government, which is recognised when the obligations associated with the contract have been satisfied.

In line with its accounting policy, the Commission applies the requirements of IFRS 15 to income earned from other sources. The Commission received no income from other sources during the year 2020-21. It did, however, receive income from other sources in 2019-20.

1.6 Grant-in-aid

Grant in aid is credited directly to the General Reserve as it is regarded as contributions from a controlling party, which gives rise to a financial interest in the residual interest in the Commission.

1.7 Property, plant and equipment and depreciation

Property plant and equipment comprises leasehold improvements to Alfred Street, fixtures and fittings and information technology equipment at fair value.

Items of property, plant and equipment are capitalised if they are intended for use on a continuous basis and their individual original purchase cost is £1,000 or more. Items with an individual cost of less than £1,000 but, when taken together, represent a significant investment will be grouped.

Leasehold improvement expenditure has been capitalised and is restated at current cost using professional valuations. Valuations are carried out annually using indices compiled by the Office for National Statistics, and normally every third year by professional external valuers employed by the Land and Property Services (Valuations) in accordance with the Appraisal and Valuation Manual prepared and published by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, as at 31 March 2021. The current lease was negotiated in March 2020 and is for a period of ten years until 18 March 2030 with a break clause after five years.

Any surplus/loss on revaluation is treated as follows:

- Unrealised surplus arising from revaluation of property, plant and equipment is credited to the Revaluation Reserve unless it reverses a revaluation decrease of the same asset previously charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure;
- Losses arising from the revaluation of property, plant and equipment are debited to the Revaluation Reserve to the extent that gains were recorded previously, and otherwise to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

IAS 37 – Provision, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets – Under IAS 37.14, a provision shall be recognised when:

- “An entity has a present obligation (legal or constructive) as a result of a past event;
- It is probably that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation; and
- A reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation.”

As the Commission's lease contains a clause under which, at the expiration of the lease, there is an obligation to repair the property and return it to the lessor in a specified condition, a provision for dilapidation costs is recognised in the accounts.

The provision for dilapidation costs is based on a reliable estimate of the amount that would need to be paid to discharge the obligation at the end of the lease.

All property, plant and equipment are reviewed annually as part of an inventory check against the Commission's asset register.

All other property, plant and equipment is valued on the basis of historical cost less depreciation as an approximation of fair value due to short life or low value of the individual assets.

Depreciation is provided on a straight-line basis at rates calculated to write-off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its expected useful life. The estimated useful lives for depreciation purposes are:

Leasehold improvements:	10 years (or the life of the lease, whichever is least)
Computer equipment:	3 years
Fixtures, fittings and equipment:	5 years

1.8 Intangible Assets

The Commission follows the criteria set out within IAS 38 when recognising an asset as intangible.

1.9 Operating leases

Rentals payable under operating leases are charged against the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure on a straight-line basis over the lease term. The lease for the Commission's premises in Alfred Street commenced on 18 March 2020 for a period of ten years, with a break clause after five years.

1.10 Pensions

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Principal Civil Service Pension Schemes (PCSPS), which are described in the Remuneration and Staff Report. The defined benefit schemes are unfunded. The Commission recognises the expected cost of these elements on a systematic and rational basis over the period during which it

benefits from employees' services by payment to the PCSPS of amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Liability for payment of future benefits is a charge on the PCSPS. In respect of the defined contribution schemes, the Commission recognises the contributions payable for the year.

1.11 Value Added Tax

The Commission is ineligible to reclaim input VAT on expenditure. Therefore, all irrecoverable VAT is included in expenditure or included in the capitalised purchase cost of non-current assets.

1.12 Legal casework expenditure

Section 70 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 enables the Commission to support legal cases in relation to the protection of human rights. Some of these cases can span several years.

In some cases, costs are recoverable from the respondent if the applicant is successful. Given this, while the Commission decides to support cases, contingent on the outcome, payments are not normally made until judgment is passed, and the judge decides on a cost order (i.e. whether the 'losing' side should pay all costs or each side should bear their own costs). Given that a criterion for Commission support is whether a case has a 'reasonable chance of success', it does not expect to incur costs in many cases. However, cases can be lost. In these cases, it is possible that the applicant could be asked to pay the respondent's costs. Where this happens, the Commission may pay these costs on behalf of the applicant. Any such potential liabilities are noted in the financial statements as contingent liabilities or provisions.

1.13 Staff costs

Under IAS19 Employee Benefits legislation, all staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as the Commission is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave as at the year-end, which is estimated at £43,172 (2019-20: £23,073).

1.14 Going concern

The Commission's sponsoring body is the Northern Ireland Office as laid out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission's budget for 2021-22 has been approved by the Northern Ireland Office. At the date of this report, the accounting officer has no reason to believe that further

support beyond 31 March 2022 will not be forthcoming due to the protections laid down in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Therefore, it has been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the 2020-21 financial statements.

2. Analysis of net expenditure by segment

In line with the provisions of IFRS 8, Operating Segments, the Commission does not normally analyse its net expenditure by operating segments. However, as the Commission received ring-fenced funding for the dedicated mechanism we have disclosed this expenditure as a footnote throughout the annual report and accounts.

3. Staff costs¹⁴

	2020-21 total	Commissioners	Permanently Employed	Others	2019-20 total
	£	£	£	£	£
Wages and salaries	744,428	122,967	481,032	140,429	644,832
Social security costs	69,057	9,560	53,365	6,132	61,530
Other pension costs	174,156	21,753	135,006	17,397	157,976
Total Staff Costs	987,641	154,280	669,403¹⁵	163,958	864,338

¹⁴ Average number of persons employed can be found in the staff report on page 44.

¹⁵ Includes staff costs for Dedicated Mechanism staff of £69,242

4. Other expenditure

	2020-21	2019-20
	£	£
Advertising, publicity and publications	84,534	28,611
Auditor's (NAO) remuneration	16,500	15,500
Building maintenance and expenses	57,485	15,943
Commonwealth Forum	0	25,497
Conferences and seminars	5,693	17,736
Education	0	2,520
Insurance	7,399	5,344
Internal audit	2,162	4,747
Investigations & Research	1,000	28,680
IT	74,892	25,048
Joint Committee	0	30,477
Legal casework (non-recoverable)	50,874	39,073
Light and heat	8,266	15,258
Other expenses	(1,114)	739
Printing, postage and stationery	4,531	10,196
Professional fees	134,074	35,689
Rates	26,672	19,078
Rentals under operating leases	57,467	41,538
Rental for car park	255	1,020
Staff training and recruitment	12,989	5,327
Telephone	14,294	15,554
Travel, subsistence and hospitality	6,205	19,392
	564,178 ¹⁶	402,967
Non-Cash Items:		
Depreciation, Amortisation and Impairment	81,835	14,604
Loss on disposal of asset	2,183	0
	648,196	417,571

There were no payments made to the auditors during the year for non-audit services (2019-20: £nil).

¹⁶ Includes costs for Dedicated Mechanism expenditure of £174,124

5. Income

The Commission had no recognised income from other sources in 2020-21. Income for recognised sources during 2019-20 were as follows:

	2020-21 £	2019-20 £
Joint Committee funded work (funding received from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission)	0	6,993
Sports and Human Rights Event in Kigali, Rwanda (funding received from the Equality and Human Rights Commission)	0	20,732
Sports and Human Rights Event in Kigali, Rwanda (contribution from Institute for Human Rights and Business)	0	4,556
Litigants in Person Roundtable (funding received from Department of Justice)	0	3,223
Total	0	35,504

6. Property, plant and equipment

2020-21	Leasehold Improvements	Information technology	Furniture & fittings	Assets under construction	Total
Cost or valuation	£	£	£	£	£
At 1 April 2020	194,323	75,949	168,916	35,648	474,836
Additions	514,387	4,572	87,036 ¹⁷	0	605,995
Disposals	(194,323)	0	(162,559)	0	(356,882)
Transfers	35,648	0	0	(35,648)	0
At 31 March 2021	550,035	80,521	93,393	0	723,949
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2020	193,104	65,085	162,850	0	421,039
Charged in year	61,178	3,777	8,956	0	73,911
Disposals	(194,323)	0	(160,376)	0	(354,699)
At 31 March 2021	59,959	68,862	11,430	0	140,251
Net book value at 31 March 2021	490,076	11,659	81,963	0	583,698
Net book value at 31 March 2020	1,219	10,864	6,066	35,648	53,797
Asset financing:					
Owned	490,076	11,659	81,963	0	583,698
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-
Net book value at 31 March 2021	490,076	11,659	81,963	0	583,698

¹⁷ Includes costs for Dedicated Mechanism of £6,645

6. Property, plant and equipment (continued)

2019-20	Leasehold Improvements	Information technology	Furniture & fittings	Assets under construction	Total
Cost or valuation	£	£	£	£	£
At 1 April 2019	194,293	64,981	168,916	0	428,190
Additions	0	10,968	0	35,648	46,616
Revaluation	30	0	0	0	30
At 31 March 2020	194,323	75,949	168,916	35,648	474,836
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2019	192,697	64,172	158,742	0	415,611
Charged in year	407	913	4,108	0	5,428
At 31 March 2020	193,104	65,085	162,850	0	421,039
Net book value at 31 March 2020	1,219	10,864	6,066	35,648	53,797
Net book value at 31 March 2019	1,596	809	10,174	0	12,579
Asset financing:					
Owned	1,219	10,864	6,066	35,648	53,797
Finance leased	-	-	-	-	-
Net book value at 31 March 2020	1,219	10,864	6,066	35,648	53,797

7. Intangible Assets

Cost or valuation	Software & Licences 2020-21	Software & Licences 2019-20
	£	£
at 1 April	44,103	41,703
Additions	0	2,400
at 31 March	44,103	44,103
Amortisation		
at 1 April	28,874	19,698
Charged in year	7,924	9,176
at 31 March	36,798	28,874
Net book value at 31 March	7,305	15,229

8. Financial instruments

As the cash requirements of the Commission are met through grant-in-aid provided by the Northern Ireland Office, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Commission's expected purchase and usage

requirements and the Commission is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

9. Trade receivables and other current assets

	2020-21	2019-20
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade Receivables	774	3,996
Prepayments and accrued income	46,635	23,766
	47,409	27,762

10. Cash and cash equivalents

	2020-21	2019-20
	£	£
Balance at 1 April	611,905	320,523
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	(271,567)	291,382
Balance at 31 March	340,338	611,905
The following balances at 31 March were held at:		
Commercial banks and cash in hand	340,338	611,905
Balance at 31 March	340,338	611,905

11. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	2020-21	2019-20
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Taxation and social security	24,310	15,987
Trade payables	8,613	3,780
Capital payables	0	35,648
Other payables	2,552	156
Accruals	242,940	139,204
	278,415	194,775

12. Provisions for liabilities and charges

	2020-21 Other £	2020-21 Total £	2019-20 Other £	2019-20 Total £
Balance at 1 April	0	0	0	0
Provided in- year	75,000	75,000	0	0
Provisions written off in-year	0	0	0	0
Balance at 31 March	75,000	75,000	0	0

The amount of £75,000 provided for in 2020-21 is a provision made for the estimated dilapidation costs at the end of the Commission's ten year lease for its premises in Alfred Street, Belfast.

13. Commitments under leases

13.1 Operating leases

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases are given in the table below for each of the following periods.

	2020-21 £	2019-20 £
Buildings		
Not later than one year	47,261	99,395
Later than one year and not later than five years	472,608	359,182
Later than five years	378,086	445,840
	<u>897,955</u>	<u>904,417</u>

The Commission was due to move to its new premises at Alfred Street, Belfast in August 2020. Due to the Covid pandemic this has been delayed and Commission staff continue to work from home. The lease for the Alfred Street premises ends in March 2030 with a five-year break clause.

13.2 Finance leases

The Commission does not have any finance leases.

14. Contingent liabilities disclosed under IAS 37

The Commission has no contingent liabilities for 2020-21 (2019-20: £113,017). The contingent liability for 2019-20 was for a

benchmarking exercise, which took place during 2019-20 and which was followed up by a job evaluation exercise in 2020-21. The payment of this liability was contingent on securing budgetary cover on an ongoing basis to implement the outcome of a job evaluation and re-grading exercise completed in year. The Commission settled this liability in 2020-21 at £66,017 and returned the unused amount of £47,000 to its sponsor branch.

15. Capital Commitments

The Commission has no capital commitments for 2020-21 (2019-20: £368,703). The capital commitment for 2019-20 was for the fit-out of the Commission's new premises in Alfred Street, Belfast, which was completed in August 2020.

16. Related-party transactions

The Commission is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

The NIO is regarded as a related party. During the year, the Commission had various transactions with NIO, associated with the receipt of grant-in-aid.

In addition, the Commission has had various transactions with other Government departments.

None of the Commissioners, Management Team or other related parties has undertaken any material transactions with the Commission during the year.

17. Events after the reporting period

The Annual Report and Accounts are authorised for issue on the same date as the Comptroller and Auditor General signed the audit certificate.

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