**Inquiry into Stormont House Agreement Consultation**



**25 May 2018**

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee launches inquiry into the Northern Ireland Office’s public consultation on Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland’s past.

* [Inquiry: Consultation on Stormont House Agreement](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/northern-ireland-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/consultation-stormont-house-agreement-inquiry-launch-17-19/)
* [Northern Ireland Affairs Committee](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/northern-ireland-affairs-committee/)
* Inquiry status: open
* Accepting written submissions; the deadline is Friday 15 June 2018.

The inquiry will examine the scope of the consultation and consider whether the department’s proposals can effectively address Northern Ireland’s past.

**Stormont House Agreement**

The Stormont House Agreement was concluded after talks between the five main political parties in Northern Ireland and the UK and Irish Governments in December 2014. It proposed four new institutions:

* A Historical Investigations Unit (HIU) to take forward outstanding investigations into Troubles-related deaths.
* An Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR) that enables family members to seek and privately receive information about the Troubles-related deaths of their relatives.
* An independent Oral History Archive (OHA) to enable people from all backgrounds to share experiences and narratives related to the Troubles.
* An Implementation and Reconciliation Group (IRG) to promote reconciliation and anti-sectarianism and to review and assess the implementation of the other legacy institutions proposed in the Stormont House Agreement.

Although the five largest parties in Northern Ireland, and the British and Irish governments, agreed to the proposals contained in the Stormont House Agreement its implementation has proved problematic. In November 2015, following a period of political deadlock at Stormont, the parties negotiated the Fresh Start Agreement in an attempt to secure full implementation of the Stormont House Agreement. However, many of the Stormont House Agreeement commitments, including creation of the the legacy institutions, remain unimplemented.

**Northern Ireland Office consultation**

The NIO has excluded the following elements of the Stormont House Agreement from the remit of the public consultation: making sure victims and survivors can access high quality services; making sure people can access advocate-counsellor assistance; setting up a Mental Trauma Service; finding a way to support severely physically injured victims in Northern Ireland through a pension; making sure that inquests have better outcomes for victims and survivors and continue to meet human rights responsibilities. To the surprise of many, there is no mention of a statute of limitations.

**Northern Ireland Affairs Committee inquiry**

The Committee’s inquiry will assess the scope of the NIO’s consultation. Stakeholders are encouraged to engage with the NIO’s consultation, and the Committee’s inquiry offers an additional avenue for comment, which we plan to feed into the Government’s consultation.

Chair of the Committee, Dr Andrew Murrison commented:

"In the continued absence of an Executive, it is right that the Secretary of State should take this consultation forward. The systems and processes currently in place to deal with legacy matters are not working well, and better ones are long overdue. We need new institutions to help Northern Ireland address the legacy of the Troubles and promote reconciliation.

We must ensure that the consultation is asking the right questions, covers the right issues and will result in meaningful contributions from all quarters. We also want to ensure that the timetable for the implementation of any changes is clear and that there will be opportunities for engagement throughout. Our inquiry will give people another route to give their views and will help to form our contribution to the consultation."

**Terms of Reference - call for written evidence**

The Committee invites written evidence on the following issues:

* How well do the proposals for the Historical Investigations Unit, the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval and the Oral History Archive meet the needs of victims and survivors?
•  Do the proposals address concerns about current arrangements for the investigation of Troubles-related deaths?
* How effectively do the proposals for the Implementation and Reconciliation Group provide for the promotion of reconciliation in Northern Ireland?
* What has not been included in the consultation that should have been?
* To what extent do the proposals reflect a broad political consensus, and are fair, equitable, and proportionate?
* How can the Government best engage with those affected by the Troubles and ensure they hear their views?
* Are there any areas where the proposals do not adequately reflect the rule of law?
* Are there any areas of the Stormont House Agreement which the proposals fail to address?
* Are there areas that have been included that should not have been?
* Should the UK Government consider implementing the areas of the Stormont House Agreement which are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive?
•  Such as; pensions for severely injured victims of the Troubles and a Mental Trauma Service?
* Has the Government committed sufficient resources to support the operation of the Stormont House Agreement institutions?
* Rationale
* To scrutinise the scope of the NIO’s public consultation on addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past and implementing the Stormont House Agreement.
* How should these proposals now be taken forward?
•  What should the timing of the proposals be?

If you do submit written evidence, we’ll keep you up to date with the progress of the inquiry.

* [Send a written submission to the Northern Ireland Office’s consultation on the Stormont House Agreement inquiry](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/northern-ireland-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/consultation-stormont-house-agreement-inquiry-launch-17-19/commons-written-submission-form/)

**Consultation on Stormont House Agreement inquiry**

Inquiry status: open

Accepting written submissions; the deadline is Friday 15 June 2018.

**Scope of the inquiry**

On the 11th May 2018, the Northern Ireland Office launched a public consultation on proposals to address the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The Consultation puts forward proposals for four new legacy institutions, which were originally proposed in the Stormont House Agreement of 2014. These are as follows:

* a new independent Historical Investigations Unit (HIU) to take forward investigations into outstanding deaths from the Troubles;
* a new Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR) to enable victims and survivors to obtain privately information about Troubles-related deaths of next of kin;
* an Implementation and Reconciliation Group (IRG) to promote reconciliation and assess the implementation of the other legacy institutions through production of a report; and
* an Oral History Archive (OHA) to enable people from all backgrounds to share experiences and narratives related to the Troubles.
The Government has also published a draft Bill, which would establish the four new legacy institutions.

The Stormont House Agreement contained a number of proposals about dealing with the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland which were never implemented. The Government has said it believes implementing the legacy institutions is the best way to meet the needs of victims and survivors. The Northern Ireland Office has excluded the following elements of the Stormont House Agreement from the remit of the public consultation: making sure victims and survivors can access high quality services; making sure people can access advocate-counsellor assistance; setting up a Mental Trauma Service; finding a way to support severely physically injured victims in Northern Ireland through a pension and making sure that inquests have better outcomes for victims and survivors and continue to meet human rights responsibilities. The Northern Ireland Office has stated these areas are excluded from the public consultation because they will be carried out by the Northern Ireland Executive.

The Committee’s inquiry is intended to examine the scope of the consultation to ensure it meets the needs of victims and survivors. We will look at resources, the implementation timetable, stakeholder engagement and remit of the consultation to make sure it is being carried out effectively. Stakeholders are encouraged to engage with the NIO’s consultation, and the Committee’s inquiry offers an additional avenue for comment, which we plan to feed into the Government’s consultation.

**Terms of Reference**

* How well do the proposals for the Historical Investigations Unit, the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval and the Oral History Archive meet the needs of victims and survivors?
o Do the proposals address concerns about current arrangements for the investigation of Troubles-related deaths?
* How effectively do the proposals for the Implementation and Reconciliation Group provide for the promotion of reconciliation in Northern Ireland?
* To what extent do the proposals reflect a broad political consensus, and are fair, equitable, and proportionate?
* How can the Government best engage with those affected by the Troubles and ensure they hear their views?
* Are there any areas where the proposals do not adequately reflect the rule of law?
* Are there any areas of the Stormont House Agreement which the proposals fail to address?
* Are there areas that have been included that should not have been?
* Should the UK Government consider implementing the areas of the Stormont House Agreement which are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive?
o Such as; pensions for severely injured victims of the Troubles and a Mental Trauma Service?
* Has the Government committed sufficient resources to support the operation of the Stormont House Agreement institutions?
* How should these proposals now be taken forward?
o What should the timing of the proposals be?