



## **ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

**2019-20**



**INDEPENDENT REPORTING COMMISSION**  
**ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2019-20**  
**(For the period ended 31 March 2020)**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Regulation 3(2) of the Northern  
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(Independent Reporting Commission) Regulations 2016

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# Performance Report

## Overview

Foreword by the Accounting Officer

In accordance with Article 10 of the International Treaty establishing the Independent Reporting Commission (“the Commission”)<sup>1</sup> the Government of the United Kingdom has requested the appointment of auditors to audit the accounts of the Commission in respect of the monies provided by the UK Government.

As Accounting Officer I am therefore pleased to present this third Annual Report and Accounts which focuses on the way in which the Commission carried out its functions during 2019-20, assesses the Commission’s performance against its business objectives, and reports on the expenditure of the Commission’s UK Secretariat.

The Commission published its first Report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity in October 2018 in which it made nine recommendations to enhance delivery of the comprehensive, twin track approach to tackling paramilitarism which was set out in the Fresh Start Agreement<sup>2</sup>. The Commission’s second Report, which was published in November 2019, made a further six recommendations<sup>3</sup>.

An assessment of the Commission’s corporate performance during the year is set out on pages 10 to 15 of this report. In summary, the Commission performed effectively against its business objectives during the year and met its statutory and business objectives in full.



**Jenny Bell**

**UK Joint Secretary & Accounting Officer**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ircommission.org/publications/irc-treaty>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ircommission.org/news-centre/irc-first-report>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ircommission.org/publications/irc-second-report>

## Purpose of Commission

The Fresh Start Agreement was finalised on 17 November 2015 between the Northern Ireland Executive, the UK Government and the Irish Government. It set out a number of commitments to bring about an end to paramilitarism, including the establishment of a body which was subsequently named as the Independent Reporting Commission (“the Commission”) to report on progress towards reaching that goal.

The Commission was founded by an International Treaty (“the Treaty”) and by corresponding legislation in the UK and Ireland<sup>4</sup>. The Treaty was signed in September 2016 and came into force on 8 August 2017 following completion of the relevant legislative processes in each jurisdiction. The Commission was fully established from that date, having operated in shadow form during the period January 2017 to 7 August 2017.

The Commission’s overarching objective is to carry out its statutory functions with a view to promoting progress towards ending paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland, and supporting long term peace and stability in society and stable and inclusive devolved Government in Northern Ireland. The Commission’s statutory functions are to report on:

- (a) progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland; and
- (b) implementation of the relevant measures of the Government of Ireland, the Government of the United Kingdom, and the Northern Ireland Executive, including the Executive’s Strategy.

The Commission is made up of four Commissioners. The Commission was established under Treaty, and as such, will continue to exist until the Treaty obligations are terminated by mutual agreement between the UK Government and the

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<sup>4</sup> The Commission’s founding legislation is set out, in the UK, in the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016, the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016 (Independent Reporting Commission) Regulations 2016 and the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act (Immunities and Privileges) Regulations 2016 and, in Ireland, in The Independent Reporting Commission Act 2017

Government of Ireland. The Commissioners' appointments run from 8 August 2017, when the Treaty came into force, until 7 August 2021. The term of the appointment is for 4 years. The reappointment of Commissioners, if necessary, is a matter for the UK and Irish Governments.

The UK and Irish Governments nominated one Commissioner each, and the Northern Ireland Executive nominated two. The Commissioners are:

### **John McBurney**

John McBurney is a well-known solicitor in Northern Ireland. He qualified in 1979 and carries a wealth of experience in major litigation, commercial transactions, conveyancing and estate management. He established his Co. Down practice, John McBurney Solicitors, with the intention of seeing it develop through the enthusiasm of his dedicated team of young lawyers. Mr McBurney was one of three persons tasked by the First and Deputy First Ministers in December 2015 to report on recommendations for a strategy to disband paramilitary groups and was subsequently nominated to the Commission by the Northern Ireland Executive to report on progress towards that goal.

### **Monica McWilliams**

Monica McWilliams is an academic and former politician. She is a graduate of Queen's University Belfast and the University of Michigan and was Professor of Women's Studies and Social Policy at the Ulster University. She co-founded the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was elected to the Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland from 1998 - 2003. She is a former Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005 – 2011 and was one of three persons appointed in 2011 to a Prisons Reform Oversight Group advising the Northern Ireland Department of Justice. Ms McWilliams was one of three persons tasked by the First and Deputy First Ministers in December 2015 to report on recommendations for a strategy to disband paramilitary groups and was subsequently nominated to the Commission by the Northern Ireland Executive to report on progress towards that goal.

## **Tim O'Connor**

Tim O'Connor is a native of Kilkeedy in West Limerick. After a two-year stint as a teacher he joined the Civil Service in Dublin in 1974, moving to the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1979. Most of his time there was spent working on the Northern Ireland Peace Process and he was part of the Irish Government Negotiating Team for the Good Friday Agreement. He has also served terms as Director of the Africa Unit and of the Human Rights Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs. His foreign postings included the Embassies of Ireland in Bonn and Washington DC and from 2005-2007 he served as the Consul General of Ireland in New York, USA. He served as Secretary General to President Mary McAleese at Áras an Uachtaráin from 2007 to 2010. Since retiring from the Civil Service in 2010 he has been dividing his time between his own advisory business and voluntary work, both in the public sector and with NGOs. Mr O'Connor was nominated to the Commission by the Government of Ireland.

## **Mitchell Reiss**

Mitchell B Reiss is a former United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland. He previously served on the US National Security Council, the US Council on Foreign Relations and has held positions with the Ford Foundation, the Cambridge Institute for Applied Research, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and Los Alamos National Laboratory. He is also a former President and CEO of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Virginia, USA. Mr Reiss was nominated to the Commission by the Government of the United Kingdom.

## **Support Arrangements**

The Commission is supported by UK and Irish Secretariats. The Secretariats operate from two separate sites in the greater Belfast area but jointly assist the Commissioners in the delivery of the Commission's statutory functions.

The costs of the UK Secretariat and remuneration for Commissioners McBurney, McWilliams and Reiss are funded by the UK Government. The costs of the Irish Secretariat and remuneration for Commissioner O'Connor are funded by the Irish

Government. These Accounts relate to expenditure incurred by the UK Secretariat and to the payments made to three Commissioners during the year.

The UK Secretariat had three staff in post over the year; all were seconded from the civil service. The Commission also made use of services provided by external professionals including media services, researchers, and auditors.

## Financial Statements

These Accounts have been prepared in accordance with a direction issued by the Northern Ireland Office under Article 10 of the Treaty. They include a Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, a Statement of Financial Position, a Statement of Cash Flows and a Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Deficit, and Notes.

## Commission's activities

In carrying out its functions the Commission is required, in accordance with Article 5 of the Treaty, to consult with a range of stakeholders including the UK and Irish Governments, the Northern Ireland Executive, law enforcement in both jurisdictions and other statutory agencies, local Councils, and community and civic society organisations in Northern Ireland.

The following table sets out the number of Commission meetings held and the number of stakeholders the Commissioners met during the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. No formal Commission meetings were held in March 2020, in light of the Covid-19 crises, but the Commissioners met remotely in March 2020 to forward plan and agree how Commission business, including stakeholder engagement, would be managed during the months ahead.

	01/04/19 – 31/03/20	01/04/18 – 31/03/19	08/08/17 – 31/03/18
Number of Meetings	74	65	41
Number of Stakeholders	154	80	53

The Commission is required to report annually on progress towards ending paramilitary activity and on implementation of relevant measures of the UK and Irish Governments and of the Northern Ireland Executive, or on such additional occasions

as the UK and Irish Governments may request. No requests for additional reports were received during the reporting period.

The UK's withdrawal from the European Union does not impact on how the Commission carries out its functions.

## Our Performance

The Commission's Strategic Direction and Business Plan<sup>5</sup> sets out the major work to be undertaken by the Commission to discharge its statutory functions and those common to all public sector organisations in relation to good governance and the effective use of resources until the Treaty obligations are terminated by mutual agreement between the UK Government and the Government of Ireland. The objectives are therefore rolling in nature and are reviewed annually. All objectives were met in full during the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

The following is an analysis of performance against the Commission's Business Plan during the reporting period:

### **Business Plan Objective 1:**

To report on progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity, in particular from those paramilitary groups declared to be on ceasefire.

### **Target:**

To provide a considered assessment of progress adopting a twin pillar approach to:

- the impact of criminal justice interventions, and
- broader societal impact.

### **End of year assessment:**

The Commission, during the reporting period, met with 154 different stakeholders, including representatives of statutory and non-statutory bodies, community and civic society organisations and political representatives. Some of these stakeholders are charged with taking forward criminal justice responses to paramilitarism, some are addressing the societal impacts, and others are service users of the measures which are being implemented. The information gleaned from these meetings, together with other data, assists the Commissioners in formulating their analysis of progress being made to end paramilitarism. The Commission's second Report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity, which was published in November 2019, drew upon these and other sources of information as appropriate.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ircommission.org/publications/strategic-direction-and-business-plan>

**Business Plan Objective 2:**

To report on the implementation of the relevant measures of the Government of Ireland, the Government of the United Kingdom, and the Northern Ireland Executive, including the Executive's Strategy.

**Target:**

To provide:

- valuable visibility on progress,
- ongoing impetus to implementation of the Executive's Action Plan ("EAP"), and
- valuable visibility on the relevant measures of the Government of Ireland and the Government of the UK.

**End of Year assessment:**

The Commission engaged regularly throughout the year with representatives of Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments and other statutory agencies tasked with implementing the EAP, and reporting mechanisms are in place. The Commission also received updates from the UK and Irish Governments on the implementation of relevant EAP measures. In addition, there was regular engagement with community and civic society organisations and with stakeholders who have taken part in, or been impacted by, EAP measures. The Commission's analysis of implementation of relevant measures was set out in Section C of its second Report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity which was published in November 2019.

**Business Plan Objective 3:**

In carrying out its functions, consult the UK Government and relevant law enforcement agencies.

**Target:**

To inform the work of the Commission and understand the issues under its consideration.

**End of Year assessment:**

The Commission met and corresponded with senior representatives of the Northern Ireland Office and law enforcement agencies in Northern Ireland during the reporting period. The Commission used its engagement with these stakeholders to inform its analysis of progress towards ending paramilitary activity which was published in November 2019.

**Business Plan Objective 4:**

In carrying out its functions, consult the Government of Ireland and relevant law enforcement agencies.

**Target:**

To inform the work of the Commission and understand the issues under its consideration.

**End of Year assessment:**

The Commission met and corresponded with senior representatives of the Department of Justice and Equality, Department of Foreign Affairs and law enforcement agencies in Ireland during the reporting period. The Commission used its engagement with these stakeholders to inform its analysis of progress towards ending paramilitary activity which was published in November 2019.

**Business Plan Objective 5:**

In carrying out its functions, consult the Northern Ireland Executive, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), statutory agencies, local Councils, communities and civic society.

**Target:**

To inform the work of the Commission and understand the issues under its consideration.

**End of Year assessment:**

In accordance with its Stakeholder Engagement Plan the Commission met and corresponded with senior representatives of Northern Ireland Civil Service

Departments, PSNI, statutory agencies, local Councils, communities and civic society organisations throughout the reporting period. The Commission used its engagement with these stakeholders to inform its analysis of progress towards ending paramilitary activity.

**Business Plan Objective 6:**

Make recommendations to the Northern Ireland Executive in order to inform future Programme for Government priorities and commitments through to 2021.

**Target:**

To make recommendations, where appropriate, that influence the Programme for Government.

**End of Year assessment:**

The Commission's second Report, which was published on 4 November 2019, made six recommendations to enhance delivery of the comprehensive, twin track approach to tackling paramilitarism which was set out in the Fresh Start Agreement. These were in addition to the nine recommendations which were set out in the Commission's first Report which was published on 23 October 2018.

**Business Plan Objective 7:**

Supporting long term peace and stability in society and stable and inclusive devolved Government in Northern Ireland.

**Target:**

To report on practical, comprehensive and effective measures which contribute to a society free of paramilitary activity and highlight areas of good practice in this regard.

**End of Year assessment:**

The Commission's second Report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity, published on 4 November 2019, included commentary on the Commission's observations, including on relevant issues such as the Panel Report<sup>6</sup> and EAP. The second Report also commented on attitudes of communities on the ground and the requirement for a whole of government approach to tackling the systemic issues facing communities where paramilitaries operate.

**Business Plan Objective 8:**

To maintain high standards of corporate governance and ensure value for money is achieved.

**Targets:**

To promote the highest standards of corporate governance; ensure value for money; establish a website in line with Commission requirements; and ensure all information and information assets are managed and stored by the Commission in line with relevant policy.

**End of Year assessment:**

A comprehensive suite of Corporate Governance documents is in place and all documents are reviewed in line with a review schedule; procurement undertaken by the Commission follows public procurement policy; the Commission's website reflects its requirements; information and information assets are managed and stored in line with current statutory requirements, policies and relevant guidance including those relating to General Data Protection Regulation.

**Business Plan Objective 9:**

Maintain an effective Secretariat to enable the Commission to deliver on its statutory duties and objectives.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/fresh-start-panel-report-disbandment-paramilitary-groups-northern-ireland>

**Targets:**

Ensure that the necessary staff and resources are secured to meet the full requirements of the Commission within budget allocation; the provision of an efficient and effective service to the Commission; and the protection of the good reputation of the Commission.

**End of Year assessment:**

The UK Government made a commitment in the Fresh Start Agreement to provide funding of up to £3million over four years to establish and run the Commission and financial management and accounting arrangements are in place to ensure the Commission operates within its budget allocation. UK Secretariat staff were in post during the reporting period. The services of a media adviser, to ensure the good reputation of the Commission and to manage all media relations work, were procured in accordance with procurement rules. All Secretariat staff and Commissioners are required to comply with the Commission's governance regime. No significant internal issues were identified during the reporting year.

**Sustainable Development:**

The Commission is a Non-Departmental Public Body of the Northern Ireland Office and is therefore exempt from complying with HM Treasury guidance on sustainability reporting. The Commission fully supports 'Greening Government' commitments, however, and mirrors the Northern Ireland Office's best practice in relation to sustainability and environmental issues to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. This includes the use of video and teleconferencing facilities to reduce our energy "footprint" and by reducing our energy consumption through the introduction of modern and more efficient technology.

**Key Issues and Risks**

The Commission maintains a corporate risk register in line with Government guidance. Risks are identified, assessed in terms of likelihood and impact, and ranked in terms of priority. The corporate risk register is reviewed by the Joint Secretaries on a regular basis and by the Commissioners on a quarterly basis. It is also reviewed regularly by the Northern Ireland Office's Audit and Risk Committee.

The principal risks identified relate to issues that would prevent the Commission from discharging its statutory duties in respect of reporting on progress to end paramilitary activity and on the implementation of relevant measures by the Governments of the UK and Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive, including the Executive Action Plan.

The greatest risk to the successful delivery of the Commission's statutory functions relates to the ability of the Commission to consult with Northern Ireland Ministers given the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive from 2017 until 11 January 2020 when the Executive was restored<sup>7</sup>. The Commission took action to manage this risk to an acceptable level during this period through the introduction of control measures which included establishing a regular cycle of briefings from the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Team, and meetings with senior Northern Ireland Civil Service Departmental officials, the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, local Councils and political parties.

Another risk to the successful delivery of the Commission's statutory functions is the impact of Covid-19 on the Commission's ability to engage with stakeholders. The Commission has put in place arrangements to mitigate the risk by conducting its meetings with stakeholders remotely, using online video-telephony software where appropriate, and by engaging with them in writing and by telephone. The ability of the Commission to deliver its statutory functions as a result of the Covid-19 crises was added to the register in March 2020 and mitigating actions were identified.

The UK's withdrawal from the European Union does not present a risk to how the Commission carries out its functions.

The Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2020 shows net liabilities of £22,399 (2019: net liabilities of £13,841). The Commission will continue to exist until the Treaty obligations are terminated by mutual agreement between the UK Government and the Government of Ireland and the future financing of the Commission's liabilities will

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2020/january/statement-on-northern-ireland-executive-formation/>

continue to be met by the Northern Ireland Office in relation to the costs of the UK Secretariat and remuneration of three Commissioners. The Commission's 2020-21 budget has been approved by the Northern Ireland Office. It has accordingly been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the 2019-20 financial statements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Bell', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Jenny Bell**  
**UK Joint Secretary & Accounting Officer**

**9 July 2020**

# **Accountability Report**

# Corporate Governance Report

## Director's Report

### Introduction

The UK element of the Commission is sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office. For accounting purposes the Commission is treated as a Non-Departmental Public Body. Fully established on 8 August 2017 the Commission's statutory responsibilities are set out in the Treaty between the UK and Ireland and in corresponding legislation in both jurisdictions. In the UK the relevant statutes are the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016, the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016 (Independent Reporting Commission) Regulations 2016 and the Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Act 2016 (Immunities and Privileges) Regulations 2016.

### Commission membership

The following served as Commissioners during the reporting period:

- John McBurney
- Monica McWilliams
- Tim O'Connor
- Mitchell Reiss

### Recruitment Practice

The UK Secretariat had three staff in post over the year; all were seconded from the civil service in line with civil service recruitment and selection policy which requires appointments to be made strictly on merit and through fair and open competition. The Commission also made use of services provided by external professionals including media services and researchers who were appointed using public sector procurement procedures.

### Audit and Risk Committee

The Northern Ireland Office's Audit and Risk Committee provides a challenge and assurance function for the Commission. During the reporting period, the Northern Ireland Office's Audit and Risk Committee comprised:

- Dawn Johnson, Chair
- Ian Summers
- Rosanna Wong

### Risk Management

The Commission is committed to ensuring high standards 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's objectives. The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk. The Northern Ireland Office's Audit and Risk Committee oversee this work under an independent Chair.

### Personal Data Related Incidents

We are committed to safeguarding all retained personal data. Risks in this area are recorded in the Commission's risk register. There were no personal data related incidents formally reported to the Information Commissioner during the reporting period.

### Register of Interests

The Commissioners and staff are required to provide information of personal or business interests that might be perceived by a reasonable member of the public to influence their judgment in the exercise of their statutory functions. The Commission maintains a register of declared interests which is available for public inspection if requested. The register is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Commission and is updated if required. No interests were declared by Commissioners or staff during the reporting year which conflict, or may be perceived to conflict, with exercising their statutory responsibilities.

## Auditors

The financial statements are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The audit fee for this period is £7,300 (plus VAT). The audit fee for 2018–19 was £7,000 (plus VAT).

During 2019-20, the Commission was able to avail of internal audit services provided by the Government Internal Audit Agency.

## Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

In accordance with Article 10 of the Treaty the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with the consent of HM Treasury ("the Treasury"), has directed the UK Joint Secretary to prepare, for each financial year, a statement of accounts in respect of the monies provided by the UK Government in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction which the Treasury has approved. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Commission and of its net expenditure, financial position, cash flows and changes in Taxpayers' Deficit for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts the Accounting Officer of the Commission is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued with the consent of the Treasury, 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 the applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts;
- prepare the accounts on a going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

This Annual Report and Accounts has been prepared in line with these requirements and as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Northern Ireland Office, with the consent of the Treasury, has appointed the UK Joint Secretary of the Commission as the Accounting Officer. 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 Commission's assets are set out in Managing Public Money published by the Treasury.

### **Statement on the disclosure of relevant audit information**

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Commission's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware. I confirm that the Annual Reports and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable. I take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

## **Governance Statement**

### **Introduction and Context**

The Commission is an independent body corporate established by Treaty between the UK and Irish Governments and by corresponding legislation in each jurisdiction. The Treaty was signed in September 2016 and came into force on 8 August 2017 following completion of the relevant legislative processes in the UK and Ireland.

For administrative purposes the Commission is treated as a Non-Departmental Public Body. On the UK side, the Commission is sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office.

The UK Secretariat consists of three seconded staff, including myself, the UK Joint Secretary. The UK and Irish Secretariats meet weekly and the Commission meets on a monthly basis. As the UK Secretary, I am also appointed as Accounting Officer in respect of funds provided by the UK Government.

I meet with the Sponsor Team within the Northern Ireland Office on a quarterly basis to discuss corporate governance issues, and with the Finance Team within the Northern Ireland Office on a quarterly basis to review finance issues.

### **Scope of Responsibility**

As Accounting Officer I have personal responsibility for the robustness of the control and governance arrangements operated by the Commission. In this, the third year of the Commission's existence, I have continued to maintain a sound system of internal governance that supports the achievement of the Commission's policies, aims and objectives whilst safeguarding the public funds and Departmental assets for which I am personally responsible in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me as Accounting Officer. As such, I am responsible for ensuring propriety and regularity in the handling of those public funds.

My assessment of the Commission's internal controls is informed by the work of the Government Internal Audit Agency, the National Audit Office, the Commissioners, the sponsor Department and the Northern Ireland Office's Audit and Risk Committee.

In my role as UK Secretary to the Commission I am responsible for the effective operation of the UK Secretariat. I have personal responsibility for managing the Commission's financial and other resources made available by the UK Government. I am jointly responsible with my Irish Secretariat counterpart for the provision of advice and support to the Commissioners in delivering their aims and objectives and in undertaking their statutory responsibilities.

### Governance Framework

As Accounting Officer I have agreed a Framework Document with the Northern Ireland Office which sets down the Commission's values and principles, and lines of accountability.

The Commission conducts its affairs in accordance with a comprehensive Code of Governance. The Code is reviewed annually. It is based on best practice in both the UK and Ireland and covers matters such as corporate responsibility, accountability for public funds, and handling conflicts of interest. The Code is supported by internal governance policies that draw on best practice and guidance on matters such as Anti-Fraud and Whistleblowing; the acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality; Financial Management; Risk Management and Information Assurance. Although not part of central government the Commission is expected to follow the Corporate Governance Code (*Corporate governance in central government departments, code of good practice, published by HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office in April 2017*) as far as applicable. This is reflected in the Commission's Code of Governance.

I complete Stewardship Statements bi-annually, based on my own knowledge of the Commission's corporate governance regime. These statements are sent to the UK Secretariat's sponsor Department and to the Northern Ireland Office's Audit and Risk Committee. The purpose of the statements is to provide assurance to the sponsor Department that specific responsibilities have been exercised with due care and attention.

## Commission's Performance

A Strategic Direction and Business Plan setting out the Commission's key objectives and how the Commission will discharge its statutory functions was in place for the reporting period. This was made available to the public on the Commission's website. The Strategic Direction and Business Plan and the Commission's performance against its objectives were reviewed during the year.

As noted on pages 10 to 15 of this Report the Commissioners are satisfied that the end of year assessment is that the Commission's overall performance was effective and that all objectives were met in full during the year.

## Risk Management and control

As Accounting Officer I take assurance from a range of external sources on the Commission's governance, risk and control arrangements.

## Work of the Audit and Risk Committee

Due to the size of the Commission it would not be proportionate for it to be supported by an independent Audit and Risk Committee. It was therefore agreed that the Northern Ireland Office's Audit and Risk Committee would provide this advisory function to the Accounting Officer and monitor the system of internal controls operated by the Commission.

During the reporting year the Audit and Risk Committee received updates on the management of the Commission's governance arrangements. As part of the stewardship statement process I reported to the Audit and Risk Committee that the established internal controls had operated effectively and that no significant weaknesses had been identified.

On the basis of the issues discussed and the evidence presented at its meetings during the reporting period the Audit and Risk Committee concluded that the assurances it received throughout the year were satisfactory, and no significant internal control issues were identified.

### Work of Internal Audit

During 2019-20 internal audit services were available to the Commission under agreement with the Government Internal Audit Agency. Although it was not deemed necessary to conduct any standalone audits of the Commission in-year, the Northern Ireland Office's public bodies were included in the scope of audits on Business Continuity and Contract Management, where relevant, during the reporting period. Recommendations from audits carried out were made available to sponsored bodies, including the Commission, as necessary.

In the next reporting period the Commission will continue to work closely with the sponsor team within the Northern Ireland Office and Government Internal Audit Agency to identify areas of risk and consider its forward audit plan.

### Capacity to manage risk

The Commission's corporate governance controls are 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. Risks are managed on an ongoing basis in a process that is designed to identify and prioritise the risks, evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact they would have, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

Throughout the year the Commission had a risk register in place that has been assessed and reviewed by the Joint Secretaries and by the Commissioners on a quarterly basis.

The Commission operates a "traffic light" corporate risk register in line with the Northern Ireland Office's risk management policy. The register is kept under review by the Secretariat, with a formal quarterly review by Commissioners, and an update by the Joint Secretaries as necessary.

### Information Assurance

During the year information assurance and information security updates were provided to the Commissioners. No issues were reported to the Audit and Risk Committee.

There were no significant breaches of information security in 2019-20.

### Summary of effectiveness

For the period 2019-20, I am able to report that there were no significant weaknesses in the Commission's system of internal controls which affected the achievement of the Commission's key policies, aims and objectives.



**JENNY BELL**

**UK Joint Secretary and Accounting Officer**

**9 July 2020**

## Remuneration and Staff report

### Commissioners' numbers and costs

There are four Commissioners. Commissioners McBurney, McWilliams and Reiss are remunerated from funds provided by the UK Government. Commissioner O'Connor is remunerated from funds provided by the Irish Government.

### Remuneration policy

The UK Joint Secretary's post is 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 April 2018). Increases in the UK Joint Secretary's base pay are in line with the parameters of the Senior Salaries Review Board.

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

### Contracts of employment

The Commissioners' appointments run from 8 August 2017, when the Treaty came into force, until 7 August 2021. As the Commission was established under Treaty it will continue to exist until the Treaty obligations are terminated by mutual agreement between the UK Government and the Government of Ireland. The reappointment of Commissioners, if necessary, is a matter for the UK and Irish Governments.

Staff appointments to the UK Secretariat are made in accordance with civil service recruitment and selection policy, which requires appointments to be made strictly on merit and through fair and open competition.

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

The following section provides details of the remuneration and pension interests of the Commissioners and the Joint Secretary, who is also the Accounting Officer.

	Salary/ Remuneration (£'000)		Bonus payments (£'000)		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension benefits (to nearest £'000) <sup>8</sup>		Total (£'000)	
	19-20	18-19	19-20	18-19	19-20	18-19	19-20	18-19	19-20	18-19
UK Joint Secretary, Jenny Bell	70-75	70-75	-	-	-	-	32,000	25,000	105- 110	95- 100
Commissioner, John McBurney	15-20	15-20	-	-	-	-	-	-	15-20	15-20
Commissioner, Monica McWilliams	15-20	15-20	-	-	-	-	-	-	15-20	15-20
Commissioner, Mitchell Reiss	15-20	15-20	-	-	-	-	-	-	15-20	15-20

## Fair Pay Disclosures (audited information)

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

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

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid member of staff of the UK Secretariat in the financial year 2019-20 was £70,000 – £75,000 (2018-19, £70,000 - £75,000) This was 1.83 times (2018-19, 1.85) the median remuneration of the workforce which was £39,670 (2018-19, £39, 238). The range of staff remuneration in 2019-20 was £28,167 (2018-19, £28,002) for the lowest paid member of staff, to £74,820 (2018-19,

<sup>8</sup> The value of pension benefits accrued during the period is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increase excludes increases due to inflation or any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.

£73,020), for the highest paid member of staff. The calculations exclude the remuneration to the Commissioners as their employment terms and conditions, including rates of remuneration, are determined by the UK and Irish Governments and the Commission is unable to influence those rates. Details of the Commissioners' remuneration are provided above.

There was no severance pay in 2019-20 (nil in 2018-19).

### Salary and Remuneration

'Salary' includes gross salary; performance pay or bonuses; overtime; and any other allowance subject to UK taxation. "Remuneration" is the annual amount paid to the Commissioners. The Commissioners do not receive performance pay or bonuses, overtime, or any other allowance. This remuneration and staff 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).

There were no benefits in kind paid during the 2019-20 financial period. There were no benefits in kind paid during the 2018-19 financial period.

### Pension Benefits (audited information)

#### Commissioners

No pension contributions were made for Commissioners in the period ended 31 March 2020 or in the period ended 31 March 2019.

## Accounting Officer

	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/03/20 and related lump sum	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age	CETV at 31/3/20	CETV at 31/3/19	Real increase in CETV	Employer contribution to partnership pension account
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	Nearest £100
UK Joint Secretary Jenny Bell	20 - 25 plus a lump sum of 45 - 50	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0 - 2.5	413	374	18	21,000

The pension information for the senior management team follows guidance in the Employer Pension Notice EPN597 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 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 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 of pensionable earnings for members of Classic, Premium, Classic Plus, Nuvos and Alpha. Benefits in Classic accrue at the rate of 1/80<sup>th</sup> 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 1/60<sup>th</sup> 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 per Premium. In Nuvos a member builds up a pension based on his pensionable earnings during his 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 a panel of providers. 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 and Commissioner numbers and related costs (audited information)

	2019-20 total	Commissioners	Permanently Employed and inward seconded staff	2018- 19 total
	£	£	£	£
Wages and salaries	214,217	52,463	161,754	206,509
Social security costs	21,388	2,624	18,764	20,231
Other pension costs	46,902	-	46,902	31,328
<b>Total Staff Costs</b>	<b>282,507</b>	<b>55,087</b>	<b>227,420</b>	<b>258,068</b>

The Commission's staff are covered by the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS), PCSPS (NI) and the Civil Service and Others Pension Scheme (CSOPS), CSOPSNI - known as Alpha. These are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but the Commission is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities.

Full actuarial valuations of both the PCSPs and PCSPS (NI) were carried out as at 31 March 2016. Details can be found in the resource accounts of the Cabinet Office: Civil Superannuation Account ([www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/about-us/resource-accounts/](http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/about-us/resource-accounts/)). Details of the PCSPS (NI) are available in the PCSPS (NI) resource accounts.

For 2019-20, employers' contributions of £46,902, (2018-19 £31,328) were payable to PCSPS and PCSPS (NI) at rates in the range 20 per cent to 24.5 per cent of pensionable pay for Civil Service Pension and 20.8 to 26.3 per cent of pensionable pay for Civil Service Pension (NI), 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 2019-20 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. No employee opted to participate in the partnership pension in 2019-20.

#### Average number of persons employed (audited information)

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

	2019-20		Permanently Employed and inward seconded staff	2018-19
	Total	Commissioners		Total
Directly employed	6	3	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>

The UK Secretariat had three staff in post over the year, including one senior civil servant. The Commission does not employ staff directly and the UK Secretariat staff are seconded from the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Home Civil Service. As the Commission does not have its own Human Resources or pay policies the UK Secretariat staff comply with, and come under the terms of, the policies and practice of their parent Civil Service departments including in relation to attendance management, performance management, requirement to make reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities, and health and safety. The staff are able to avail of training, career development and promotion within their parent departments.

The Commissioners are expected to devote approximately 36 days per year to Commission business per annum.

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

There were no exit packages in 2019-20 (nil in 2018-19).

#### Reporting of expenditure on consultancy (audited information)

There was no expenditure on consultancy in 2019-20 (nil in 2018-19).

Reporting of off payroll engagements (audited information)

There was no expenditure on off payroll engagements in 2019-20 (nil in 2018-19).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'B'.

**Jenny Bell**  
**Accounting Officer**

**9 July 2020**

# PARLIAMENTARY ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUDIT REPORT

## Parliamentary Accountability Disclosures

(This section is subject to audit)

### **1. Income payable to the Consolidated Fund**

There was no income payable to the Consolidated Fund in 2019–20 or in 2018–19.

### **2. Regularity of expenditure**

All expenditure was applied to the purpose intended by Parliament.

### **3. Losses and special payments**

There are no losses and special payments to report (nil in 2018-19).

### **4. Remote Contingent Liabilities**

There are no remote contingent liabilities requiring disclosure (nil in 2018-19).

### **5. Income in relation to Fees and Charges**

No fees or charges were collected (nil in 2018-19).



**Jenny Bell**  
**Accounting Officer**

**9 July 2020**

# THE REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

## **Opinion on financial statements**

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Independent Reporting Commission for the year ended 31 March 2020 in accordance with Article 10 of the September 2016 Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland establishing the Independent Reporting Commission (“the Treaty”). The financial statements comprise: the 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. 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 Independent Reporting Commission’s affairs as at 31 March 2020 and of net operating expenditure for the year then ended; and
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with Article 10 of the Treaty 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) 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 2016. I am independent of the Independent Reporting 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**

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require me to report to you where:

- the Independent Reporting Commission use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Independent Reporting Commission have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Independent Reporting Commission's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

### **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 and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

### **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 Article 10 of the Treaty.

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. 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.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Independent Reporting Commission's internal control.
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Independent Reporting Commission's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Independent Reporting Commission's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my

opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Independent Reporting Commission to cease to continue as a going concern.

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.

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.

### **Other Information**

The Commission and the Accounting Officer are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises information included in the annual report, other than the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited, the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and 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, 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 regard.

### **Opinion on other matters**

In my opinion:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Article 10 of the Treaty and Secretary of State directions issued thereunder;

- in the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Independent Reporting Commission and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified any material misstatements in the Performance Report or the Accountability Report; and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

### **Matters on which I report by exception**

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
- 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.

### **Report**

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

**Gareth Davies**  
**Comptroller and Auditor General**  
National Audit Office 1  
57-197 Buckingham Palace Road  
Victoria  
London  
SW1W 9SP

**Date 10 July 2020**

# Financial Statements

## Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the Year Ended 31 March 2020

		For the Year Ended 31 March 2020	For the Year Ended 31 March 2019
	Note	£	£
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Staff costs	3	282,507	258,068
Other expenditure	4	147,339	73,479
Total operating expenditure		429,846	331,547
<b>Net Operating Expenditure</b>		<b>429,846</b>	<b>331,547</b>

The Independent Reporting Commission has no gains or losses other than Net Operating Expenditure during 2019- 20 (2018/19 £nil). There was no other comprehensive income or expenditure during 2019-20 (2018/19 £nil).

All amounts above are in respect of continuing operations.

The notes on pages 50 to 55 form part of these accounts.

## Statement of Financial Position As at 31 March 2020

	Note	At 31 March 2020 £	At 31 March 2019 £
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Trade and Other Receivables	5	-	958
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		-	<b>958</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	6	(22,399)	(14,799)
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>(22,399)</b>	<b>(14,799)</b>
<b>Total Assets less liabilities</b>		<b>(22,399)</b>	<b>(13,841)</b>
<b>Taxpayers Deficit</b>			
General Fund		(22,399)	(13,841)
<b>Total (Deficit)</b>		<b>(22,399)</b>	<b>(13,841)</b>

The financial statements on pages 46 to 49 were approved by the Commission on 8 July 2020 and were signed on its behalf by:

Signed: 

**Accounting Officer: Jenny Bell**

**Date: 9 July 2020**

The notes on pages 50 to 55 form part of these accounts.

## Statement of Cash flows

### For the Year Ended 31 March 2020

		For the Year Ended 31 March 2020	For the Year Ended 31 March 2019
	Note	£	£
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
Net Operating Expenditure		(429,846)	(331,547)
Decrease in trade and other Receivables	5	958	6,030
Increase/(Decrease) in trade payables	6	7,600	(9,424)
<b>Net cash outflow from operating activities</b>		<b>(421,288)</b>	<b>(334,941)</b>
<b>Cash inflow from financing activities</b>			
Amounts from sponsor body		421,288	334,941
<b>Net cash outflow from financing activities</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the period</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

The notes on pages 50 to 55 form part of these accounts.

## Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Deficit For the Year Ended 31 March 2020

	General Reserve	Total Reserves
	£	£
<b>Changes in taxpayers' deficit for 2018-19</b>		
<b>Balance at 31 March 2018</b>	<u>(17,235)</u>	<u>(17,235)</u>
Comprehensive Expenditure for the year	<u>(331,547)</u>	<u>(331,547)</u>
Grant-in-aid from NIO	<u>334,941</u>	<u>334,941</u>
<b>Balance at 31 March 2019</b>	<u><b>(13,841)</b></u>	<u><b>(13,841)</b></u>
<b>Changes in taxpayers' deficit for 2019-20</b>		
Comprehensive Expenditure for the year	<u>(429,846)</u>	<u>(429,846)</u>
Grant-in-aid from NIO	<u>421,288</u>	<u>421,288</u>
<b>Balance at 31 March 2020</b>	<u><b>(22,399)</b></u>	<u><b>(22,399)</b></u>

The notes on pages 50 to 55 form part of these accounts.

# NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

## 1. Statement of accounting policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2019-20 *Government Financial Reporting Manual* (FReM) 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 Commission for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Commission are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

The accounts have been prepared pursuant to Article 10 of the International Treaty between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Ireland, on a going concern basis. The Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2020 shows net liabilities of £22,399 (2019: net liabilities of £13,841). The Commission will continue to exist until the Treaty obligations are terminated by mutual agreement between the UK Government and the Government of Ireland. The future financing of the Commission's liabilities, in relation to the costs of the UK Secretariat and remuneration of three Commissioners, will continue to be met by the Northern Ireland Office. The Commission's 2020-21 budget has been approved by the Northern Ireland Office. It has accordingly been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the 2019-20 financial statements.

### 1.1 Accounting convention

These accounts have been prepared for the year commencing 01 April 2019 and ending 31 March 2020 under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment and intangible assets. The comparatives stated reflect the financial position for the year ended 31 March 2019.

### 1.2 Employee Benefits

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS), the PCSPS (NI), the Civil Service and Others Pension Scheme (CSOPS) and CSOPS (NI). These 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 schemes of the amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Liability for payment of future benefits is a charge on the pension schemes.

Further details regarding the above schemes are contained in the Remuneration and Staff Report.

### **1.3 Contingent liabilities**

In addition to contingent liabilities disclosed in accordance with IAS 37 *Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets* the Commission discloses for Parliamentary reporting and accountability purposes certain statutory and non-statutory contingent liabilities where the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit is remote, but which have been reported to Parliament in accordance with the requirements of *Managing Public Money*.

Where the time value of money is material, contingent liabilities which are required to be disclosed under IAS 37 are stated at discounted amounts and the amount reported to Parliament separately noted. Contingent liabilities that are not required to be disclosed by IAS 37 are stated at the amounts reported to Parliament.

### **1.4 Value Added Tax**

The Commission is not VAT registered, therefore all expenditure is inclusive of VAT.

### **1.5 Staff Costs**

Under IAS19 *Employee Benefits*, all staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as the organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the costs of any untaken leave as at the year end. The cost of untaken leave has been determined using data from staff leave records.

The staff remuneration report includes only one senior civil servant. The Commission does not employ staff directly and the UK Secretariat staff are seconded from the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Home Civil Service. They therefore comply with, and come under the terms of, the policies and practice of their parent Civil Service departments including in relation to attendance management, performance management, requirement to make reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities, and health and safety. The staff are able to avail of training, career development and promotion within their parent departments.

### **1.6 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 management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the Commission's accounting policies. We continually evaluate our estimates, assumptions and judgements based on available information and experience. No critical accounting estimates or judgements have been made in this account.

### **1.7 Accounting standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards adopted in the year ended 31 March 2020**

There were no new standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards that became effective during 2019-20 which are relevant to the operations of the Commission.

### **1.8 Impending application of newly issued accounting standards not yet effective**

The following standards or interpretations have been issued by the International Accounting Standards Board but have not yet been adopted:

IFRS 16 – Leases replaces IAS 17 Leases and related interpretations and has 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 2021.

The Commission does not expect IFRS 16 to have a material impact on future accounts as the Commission does not hold any leases.

## **2. Analysis of net expenditure by segment**

In line with the provisions of IFRS 8, Operating Segments, the Commission does not analyse its net expenditure by operating segments as it has concluded that it has no separately identifiable operating segments. This conclusion is based on the current reporting structure.

### 3. Staff costs (see staff report page 36)

	For the Year Ended 31 March 2020			For the Year Ended 31 March 2019
	Total	Commissioners	Permanently Employed and inward seconded staff	Total
	£	£	£	£
Wages and salaries	214,217	52,463	161,754	206,509
Social security costs	21,388	2,624	18,764	20,231
Other pension costs	46,902	-	46,902	31,328
<b>Total Staff Costs</b>	<b>282,507</b>	<b>55,087</b>	<b>227,420</b>	<b>258,068</b>

### 4. Other expenditure

	For the Year Ended 31 March 2020	For the Year Ended 31 March 2019
	£	£
Accommodation and Services	19,402	21,333
Apprenticeship Levy	-	(7 )
Audit & Accountancy - Internal	2,860	2,500
Audit - External	8,400	8,400
Consultancy	91,838	17,133
Exchange Rates	634	608
Professional Subscriptions	1,676	1,278
Staff Training	1,612	1,520
Publications	6,907	3,020
Postage and Stationery	1,096	915
Travel, Subsistence and Hospitality	12,914	16,780
	<b>147,339</b>	<b>73,479</b>

## 5. Trade receivables, financial and other assets

	For the Year Ended 31 March 2020 £	For the Year Ended 31 March 2019 £
<b>Amounts falling due within one year:</b>		
Prepayments and accrued income	-	958
	<hr/> -	<hr/> 958

## 6. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	For the Year Ended 31 March 2020 £	For the Year Ended 31 March 2019 £
<b>Amounts falling due within one year:</b>		
Other payables	600	1,500
Accruals and deferred income	21,799	13,299
	<hr/> 22,399	<hr/> 14,799

## 7. Related-party transactions

The Commission was established by International Treaty between the UK and Irish Governments. For accounting purposes, the Commission is treated as a Non-Departmental Public Body by the Northern Ireland Office and the UK Joint Secretary is required to report on the funding provided to the Commission by Parliament. The Northern Ireland Office is therefore regarded as a related party.

During the year, the Commission has also had transactions with the Government of Ireland; however, as these transactions relate to funding provided by the Government of Ireland separate reporting arrangements have been made. The Government of Ireland is therefore also regarded as a related party.

## **8. Contingent Liabilities**

The Commission has no contingent liabilities at 31 March 2020 (31 March 2019 £nil).

## **9. Events after the reporting period**

During March 2020 the Commission took urgent action as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19. This included instructing and enabling staff to work from home, and not attend the offices for performance of their duties, in line with government guidance. From 31 March 2020, the majority of the Commission's work has continued to be delivered remotely with minimal disruption.

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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