

Westminster Election Update – June 2010

The recent Westminster Election on 6 May 2010 has for the first time in over half a century seen the coming together of two parties, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat, to form a coalition Government. The following update aims to highlight some of main areas of interest to the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

The coalition has stated that the themes the programme for government will be based upon are freedom, fairness and responsibility.

Services and Economy

- Royal Mail will open for private investment while guaranteeing the post office network remains in public hands
- Discussions will be held with the Northern Ireland Assembly on measures to increase the competitiveness of airports in Northern Ireland.
- The proposed raise of employers NI contributions of 1% by 2011 will be amended in a manner which will be outlined in the upcoming Budget.
- The Bank of England is to gain responsibility for macro-regulation of financial services.
- The government will scrap identity cards, the National Identity Register and cancel the next generation of biometric passports.
- Provisions will be put in place ensuring that a referendum must be held to approve any future treaties on the transfer of powers to the European Union.
- The government will hold a referendum on introducing the alternative vote electoral system for Westminster elections.
- The link between earnings and the state pension will be restored from 2012.
- The government will legislate for the phasing out of the default retirement age and set a timetable for raising the state pension age, depending on the outcome of a review.

Parliamentary Reform

Measures will be introduced by the government to:

- Establish fixed-term elections for Parliament, held every five years.
- Require 55% of MPs to vote for dissolution of Parliament between scheduled elections.
- Provide constituents with a procedure to "recall" corrupt MPs between elections.
- Reduce the number of MPs by about 50.

- Review of reform of the House of Lords may be included in a separate draft bill later in the year.

There are also commitments to

- Raise spending on overseas aid by 2013
- Place a cap on non-EU economic migrants allowed to work in UK
- Invest in the construction of high-speed rail line
- Increased investment in high-speed broadband
- Extending the right to flexible working to all employees in the future

Devolution

The Scottish Parliament is to gain more powers in relation to taxation, borrowing (along the proposals of the Calman review of devolution) and the holding of DNA records.

There will also be a referendum on further powers for Wales

Devolved Matters and parallel legislation

The government will introduce a number of the proposed Bills related to devolved matters which will need parallel legislation to be passed in Stormont to apply in Northern Ireland.

These include:

- A single welfare-to-work programme is to be created which will make benefit payments more conditional on acceptance of work.
- Giving health professionals and patients more say over NHS decision-making.
- a cut in the number of health service quangos, some central targets and increase focus on "health inequalities".
- Introduce an Energy and Green Economy Bill aimed at promoting enhanced energy efficiency and low-carbon energy production.

Full details of "*The Coalition: Our Programme for Government*" can be found at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf

Elected representatives

Following the Westminster Elections and the election of 18 Members of Parliament from Northern Ireland has resulted in changes in membership of Northern Ireland Assembly representation which include the following:

DUP	SDLP	Sinn Fein	Alliance	Independent
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			Party	
Nigel Dodds MP MLA North Belfast	Margaret Ritchie MP MLA South Down	Gerry Adams MP MLA West Belfast	Naomi Long MP MLA East Belfast	Lady Sylvia Hermon MP North Down
Dr William McCrea MP MLA South Antrim	Mark Durkan MP MLA Foyle	Martin McGuinness MP MLA Mid Ulster		
Gregory Campbell MP MLA East Londonderry	Dr. Alasdair McDonnell MP MLA South Belfast	Conor Murphy MP MLA Newry/Armagh		
Sammy Wilson MP MLA East Antrim		Pat Doherty MP MLA West Tyrone		
Ald. David Simpson MP MLA Upper Bann		Michelle Gildernew MP MLA Fermanagh/South Tyrone		
Rt. Hon. Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA Lagen Valley				
Jim Shannon MP MLA Strangford				
Ian Paisley Jnr. MP MLA North Antrim				

Minister for Social Development [Margaret Ritchie](#) MLA was replaced by [Alex Attwood](#) MLA

Statutory Committees: Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons

Each Party nominated a person to be the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson of the 11 Statutory Committees;

Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister

Chairperson Danny Kennedy (UUP, Newry and Armagh)

Deputy Chairperson Naomi Long (Alliance, Belfast East)

Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Chairperson Ian Paisley Jnr (DUP, North Antrim)

Deputy Chairperson Tom Elliott (UUP, Fermanagh & South Tyrone)

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

Chairperson Barry McElduff (Sinn Fein, West Tyrone)

Deputy Chairperson Declan O'Loan (SDLP, North Antrim)

Committee for Education

Chairperson Mervyn Storey (DUP, North Antrim)

Deputy Chairperson David Hilditch (DUP, East Antrim)

Committee for Employment and Learning

Chairperson Dolores Kelly (SDLP, Upper Bann)

Deputy Chairperson Peter Weir (DUP, North Down)

Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Chairperson Alban Maginness (SDLP, Belfast North)

Deputy Chairperson Paul Butler (Sinn Fein, Lagan Valley)

Committee for the Environment

Chairperson Cathal Boylan (Sinn Fein, Newry and Armagh)

Deputy Chairperson Dominic Bradley (SDLP, Newry and Armagh)

Committee for Finance and Personnel

Chairperson Jennifer McCann (Sinn Fein, Belfast West)

Deputy Chairperson David McNarry (UUP, Strangford)

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Chairperson Jim Wells (DUP, South Antrim)

Deputy Chairperson Michelle O'Neill (Sinn Fein, Mid Ulster)

Committee for Justice

Chairperson Maurice Morrow (DUP, Fermanagh & South Tyrone)

Deputy Chairperson Raymond McCartney (Sinn Fein, Foyle)

Committee for Regional Development

Chairperson Fred Cobain (UUP, Belfast North)

Deputy Chairperson Michelle McIlveen (DUP, Strangford)

Committee for Social Development

Chairperson Simon Hamilton (DUP, Strangford)

Deputy Chairperson Carál Ní Chuilín (Sinn Fein, Belfast North)

www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2009/100412.htm#10

[Owen Paterson](#) MP is now the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

[Hugo Swire MP](#) is Minister of State for Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Office is responsible for overseeing the Northern Ireland devolution settlement and representing Northern Ireland interests at UK

Government level and UK Government interests in Northern Ireland. The department also has responsibility for national security in respect of Northern Ireland as well as Human Rights, elections, legacy issues (including current ongoing public inquiries).

On 12 April 2010, the NIO transferred responsibility for policing and criminal justice to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. The minister of Justice is now [Mr David Ford](#) MLA

Contact details are:

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[Nick Hurd](#) MP has been appointed **Minister for Civil Society** and is responsible for charities, social enterprises and voluntary organizations in the Cabinet Office. Government policy will focus on three fundamental issues:

- Making it easier to run a charity, social enterprise or voluntary organization
- Getting more resources into the sector: strengthening its independence and resilience
- Making it easier for sector organizations to work with the State

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