

Human Rights Consortium
Community House
6A Albert Street
Belfast
BT12 4HQ

PS Ministers
Stormont Castle
Stormont Estate
Belfast BT4 3TT

21st February 2020

Dear First and deputy First Minister,

Under the terms of *New Decade, New Deal* (NDNA) we note that the Ad-Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights is to agree terms of reference and a timetable within 30 working days of the restoration of devolution. Given that timeframe, we understand that the Committee, its terms of reference and timetable are due to be established within the next few days.

We welcome the renewed process to deliver this widely supported but unimplemented element of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. There is extensive community support, and an expectation that this process will now be the final step in delivering this long outstanding commitment. We therefore welcome and look forward to its establishment.

In order to help you and colleagues within other political parties frame the discussions that lie ahead we have drawn together what we believe are essential elements of the Terms of Reference for the new Committee.

Proposed principles for Ad-Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights Terms of Reference

All parties represented on the Committee should:

1. Declare their support for the achievement of an enforceable and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.
2. Indicate that they are committed to working towards an agreed outcome in the form of a draft Bill of Rights.
3. Ensure full compliance with the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement by guaranteeing that the Bill of Rights incorporates and supplements the European Convention on Human Rights/Human Rights Act 1998, draws on international instruments and experience, provides for the incorporation of international human rights standards and reflects the principles of mutual respect and parity of esteem.
4. Confirm that the work of the Committee will be open and transparent, draw on existing expertise and will be open to engagement with wider Northern Ireland society.
5. Support an open and transparent appointment process for the five experts who will support the work of the Committee.
6. Ensure that there is a fixed timeframe and deadline for the Committee's work and that parties are committed to reaching an agreement by that deadline.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it represents some of the key principles within which it would be helpful for the Committee to operate if it is to finally deliver an effective Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

We wish you and your colleagues well in this vital work. A Bill of Rights will, at long last, provide for a rights-based system of governance and decision making. We would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss how we can assist with this initiative at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Kevin Hanratty, Director, Human Rights Consortium

Patrick Corrigan, Head of Nations and Regions, Amnesty International UK

Paddy Kelly, Director, Children's Law Centre

Dr Anne Smith, Senior Lecturer, School of Law/Transitional Justice, Ulster University

Brian Gormally, Director, Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)

Colin Harvey, Professor of Human Rights Law, School of Law, Queens University Belfast

Rory O'Connell, Professor of Human Rights and Constitutional Law, School of Law/Transitional Justice, Ulster University

Dr Esther McGuinness, Senior Lecturer in Law; Co-Director, Ulster University Law Clinic

Patrick Monteague, Chairperson, Focus: The Identity Trust

Andrew McCracken, Chief Executive, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Ciaran Moynagh, Director, Phoenix Law Human Rights Lawyers

Alison Millar, General Secretary, NIPSA

Roisin McLaughlin, Co-ordinator, North West Community Network

Danielle Roberts, Policy Officer, Here NI

Lorraine Griffin, Manager, Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas (COSTA)

Ellen Finlay, Policy Officer, Children in Northern Ireland

Owen Reidy, Assistant General Secretary, Irish Congress of Trade Unions Northern Ireland

Taryn Trainor, Regional Women's & Equalities Officer, UNITE

Rachel Powell, Women's Sector Lobbyist, Women's Resource and Development Agency

Anne McVicker, Director, Women's Resource and Development Agency

Aoife Nolan, Professor of International Human Rights Law, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nottingham

Patricia Bray, Coordinator, North West Forum of People with Disabilities

Paddy Mooney, Director, Include Youth

Sara McCracken, CEO, Angel Eyes NI

Boyd Sleator, Northern Ireland Humanists Coordinator, Humanists UK

Steve Williamson, Director, Cara-Friend

Patricia McKeown, Regional Secretary, UNISON

James Orr, Director, Friends of the Earth

Paschal McKeown, Charity Director, Age NI

Jonna Monaghan, Project Coordinator, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform

Dessie Donnelly, Director, Participation and Practice of Rights Project

John O'Doherty, Director, The Rainbow Project

Anne Moore, Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns (PAC) Manager, Save the Children

Jim O'Neill, Programme Manager, Community Dialogue

Glenn J. Bradley, Chair Northern Ireland Business and Human Rights Forum

Robert Murtagh, President, NUS-USI