



Northern Ireland Office

**Secretary of State
for Northern Ireland**
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1 2HQ

Stormont House
Belfast
BT4 3SH

E sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/nio
@NIOgov

Simon Hoare MP
Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee
Email: northircom@parliament.uk

17 November 2020

Dear Simon,

I am writing following the publication of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's interim report into the Government's legacy proposals on 26 October. I am grateful to the Committee for its work to date, which has further highlighted the complexity and sensitivity involved in seeking to address legacy issues in Northern Ireland.

As the interim report rightly points out, I wrote to you on 11 September requesting that my scheduled oral evidence session be postponed until the Government was in a position to provide more detail in relation to its legacy proposals. In doing so, I reiterated my commitment to working collaboratively with the Committee on this issue. It is regrettable that the interim report was published so soon after this, and before the Government was able to provide further details regarding proposed legacy reform.

The Government remains committed to addressing the legacy of the Troubles in a way which focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of investigations that has failed victims and veterans alike. However, progress on this - including substantive engagement with key stakeholders - has been affected by the circumstances of the past few months, which has seen the Government's priorities rightly focused on the response to COVID-19.

I welcome the interim report's recognition of the importance of providing families - who have already waited too long for answers - with as much information as possible on the circumstances of the death of a loved one. This is key to the Government's approach. We must be realistic that, with the passage of time, relatively few cases

are likely to see a successful prosecution, even following the most rigorous investigation - this has been highlighted by the recent PPS decision not to charge four individuals in cases referred to it by Operation Kenova, and indeed in the evidence provided by Jon Boucher to the committee.

We understand the importance of getting this complex and sensitive issue right, and fully recognise the importance of engaging with stakeholders from all communities on the way forward. We are also committed to engaging collaboratively with the Irish Government, which the interim report rightly recognises has its own responsibilities in helping to address legacy issues.

I look forward to further constructive dialogue with the Committee on this matter, and to sharing further details in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Brandon Lewis', written in a cursive style.

**THE RT HON BRANDON LEWIS CBE MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**