



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Bellamy KC

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Justice

OFFICIAL

Sir Robert Neill KC MP

Chair, Justice Committee

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

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15 May 2024

Dear Sir Bob,

**PRE-APPOINTMENT SCRUTINY OF THE PREFERRED CANDIDATE FOR THE POST OF THE
STANDING INDEPENDENT PUBLIC ADVOCATE**

I am writing about the establishment of a new role, the Independent Public Advocate (IPA), which is currently being legislated for in Part 2 of the Victims and Prisoners Bill. As you may recall, the commitment to introduce an IPA is a long-standing one which the Government is delivering. This new role is informed by the experience of the Hillsborough families and will support future victims of major incidents to ensure that they can access support and that their voices are heard.

During Lords Committee Stage, the Noble Lord Wills sought to amend the Bill to include a provision that the Secretary of State could not appoint the standing advocate without the approval of the relevant Select Committee. Whilst I do not feel it wise to make this a legislative requirement, I do believe that this new position would benefit from pre-appointment scrutiny by the Justice Select Committee (JSC). Particularly as the standing advocate's role will involve direct contact with vulnerable victims, public authorities and they will also advise the Secretary of State as to the interests of victims of major incidents and their treatment by public authorities. The process for appointing a candidate should therefore be as rigorous and transparent as possible. Additionally, I believe the preferred candidate should be a person that is able to stand-up to scrutiny and gain the trust of victims, public authorities, and Parliamentarians.

As a concession, I announced on the floor of the House of Lords during the Report Stage debate of the Bill on 30 April that the role of Standing Advocate will be subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by the JSC before the Secretary of State for Justice makes their final decision.

I would like to thank you for your advanced agreement in your capacity as Chair of the JSC on this matter, which allowed for this concession to be made.

Yours sincerely

Christoph Bellamy

LORD BELLAMY KC