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Tonia Antoniazzi MP
Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA

By email: northircom@parliament.uk

12 October 2026

Our reference: MC/26/773

Dear Tonia,

NORTHERN IRELAND TROUBLES BILL COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

I am very grateful to you and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee for your continued work in scrutinising the Troubles Bill, including through the significant period which has elapsed between Second Reading and the upcoming Committee stage.

Today I will table a number of amendments to the Troubles Bill, designed to build on the provisions introduced in October of last year. Reflecting the NIAC's December 2025 Legacy report recommendations, to which my predecessor formally responded on 12 February 2026, the amendment package has been informed by your Committee's recommendations, and will ensure the framework and processes established by the Bill are fair, proportionate and capable of commanding the confidence of all communities. I have set out the details below and the full list of

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amendments is at Annex A, and you will of course have seen that the Defence Secretary and I have also written today to all MPs.

Ensuring that those who served the State are treated with dignity and respect

Your report highlighted that it is important that the Bill contains protections that can instil the confidence of veterans, and I wholeheartedly agree.

We have a particular duty of care to our veterans who we asked to serve in Northern Ireland in the most difficult circumstances. Many of those who served in Northern Ireland, and their families, suffered bereavement, injury and trauma. Whilst a full list of amendments is in the annex, the key amendments are:

Recognising ‘no equivalence’: We have always been clear that there is no equivalence whatsoever between those members of our security forces who acted lawfully in carrying out their duties, and paramilitaries who were responsible for barbaric acts of terrorism. We are tabling an amendment that will require the Commission and coroners not to regard the lawful conduct of members of the Armed Forces as equivalent to the actions of paramilitaries responsible for acts of terrorism.

Consideration of unique operational context: We will also ensure that, whenever the Commission or coroner considers the actions of a veteran or former police officer acting in the course of their duties, they must have regard to this specific operational context at the time. This includes their training and experience at the time, the duties they were undertaking and the orders they received from their senior officers.

Strengthening protections: To prevent cold-calling of veterans we have been clear that no veteran participating as a witness should be directly contacted by the Commission or a coroner without prior notice from the Ministry of Defence. We are now making this a statutory protection.

Implementation review: We have also heard clearly from veterans that regardless of the strength of the safeguards in the legislation, how they are implemented is just as important. To address this we are creating a new requirement for a statutory review of the implementation of all of the protections provided by the Bill.

Amendments we have introduced which respond to your recommendations

Giving the Commission stronger powers: Your Committee recommended that we address the ICRIIR's calls for enhanced investigatory powers. We are introducing an amendment that will enable the Commission to collaborate with relevant police forces, where necessary drawing on their expertise and capabilities.

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Strengthening disclosure: Your Committee made recommendations around the information disclosure powers. Whilst I am of the view that I, as Secretary of State, must remain ultimately responsible for national security, I also want to strengthen the disclosure powers in the Bill, for example by ensuring that the Commission will be able to set clear timescales for information disclosure from public authorities.

Delivering on the commitments of the Joint Framework: You noted in your report that the Government of Ireland must urgently fulfil the commitments it made in the Joint Framework. The Irish Government's commitments are an important part of efforts to address legacy. That is why, included in the amendments tabled today, is a requirement that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland must make a Written Ministerial Statement on the actions that the UK and Irish Governments have taken to deliver their respective commitments since September 2025. This statement must be made prior to commencement of key provisions of the Bill.

Improving the Victims and Survivors Advisory Group: I note the concerns raised in your report of December 2025 regarding the Group's composition. At Second Reading, some colleagues voiced concerns that former paramilitaries could be appointed to the Group. While we have been consistently clear that this was never the intention, to put the matter beyond doubt, we are amending the Bill to ensure that nobody who has been a member of a paramilitary organisation is ever appointed. In addition, the Bill will now mandate that, so far as practicable, at least one former military or police member, or someone who represents their interests, must be appointed to the Group to ensure that their voice and perspective are properly considered alongside others.

Protection from repeated investigations: In your report you asked that we ensure that investigations are only re-opened where necessary for ECHR compatibility or new evidence. The Government is clear that the Troubles Bill, like the Legacy Act, will not put an upfront barrier on victims and families asking for a review of their case. I hope that the ICRIR's first report, released on the 23rd September, demonstrates the importance of such reports. However, I am clear that the opening of these investigations cannot be used to repeat well-trodden ground or to re-question witnesses over and over. To support that, we will legislate to ensure that once the relevant state disclosure is undertaken, there must be a consideration of whether speaking to witnesses will lead to compelling, new evidence, or the likelihood of a witness being able to provide new information, before contacting a witness.

I am determined to ensure that this legislation is able to command the confidence of all those communities affected by the Troubles in Northern Ireland. I look forward to continuing to work with the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee to ensure that we can deliver a fair, proportionate and transparent system to enable those affected by the Troubles to seek answers.

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Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chris Bryant". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Chris" and the surname "Bryant" clearly legible.

**RT HON SIR CHRIS BRYANT MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

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Annex A: Full Northern Ireland Troubles Bill Committee amendments package.

Amendment area	Description
SUBSTANTIVE AMENDMENTS	
Ensuring that those who served our state are treated with dignity and respect	
Disclosure sequencing in investigations	This amendment will ensure that individual veterans are not contacted unnecessarily by the Legacy Commission, as formal state disclosure will need to be undertaken first. It also requires, prior to witness contact, full consideration of whether compelling new evidence is known or reasonably expected to exist, and the likelihood of the witness being able to provide any further information. These measures will prevent the unnecessary contacting of witnesses.
Equivalence and Operational Context	This new clause makes clear that the Bill does not allow the lawful actions of soldiers in the course of duty to be treated as equivalent to the actions of terrorists. It also recognises the circumstances in which veterans served and that they were operating in a particular operational context during violent political unrest. It requires consideration of the circumstances in which decisions to deploy the use of force were made, including: • training and experience, • the duties which they were undertaking, • any orders or other instructions given to them, • the information available to them, • whether it appeared to them that any person was at risk of harm from unlawful violence, • whether it appeared to them that the immediate use of force was required to prevent that harm, and • the extent to which P acted in accordance with any rules of engagement, or guidance regarding the use of force, that were then applicable.
No Cold Calling	We know stakeholders are concerned about veterans being cold called by the Legacy Commission or a coroner without warning, which is why a protection from cold calling was part of our original veterans' package, to be delivered via agreement with the Commission. Veterans have told us they want the clarity of this being in the legislation, this amendment puts this protection on the face of the Bill. This will ensure that any initial contact (from the Commission or a coroner) with a veteran goes through the MoD so that they are given the pastoral support they need.
Ensuring remote access for witnesses	This will ensure that when a witness is contacted as part of an investigation under Part 3 of the Bill they can do so remotely, mirroring the provision already applying to Part 4 of the Bill.

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Ensuring no former paramilitaries on the Victims and Survivors Advisory Group (VSAG)	We have already been very clear that no former paramilitaries will be appointed to the Victims and Survivors Advisory Group. However, having listened to concerns, we are going further by giving legislative effect to that commitment in order to provide absolute certainty on this point.
Providing for a Veterans' representative on the VSAG	We will require there to be veteran or police representation on the Victims and Survivors Advisory Group to ensure the experiences of our soldiers in Northern Ireland are reflected.
Statutory Review of effectiveness of witness protections	Veterans groups have been clear that the implementation of the protections are just as important as the legislation, in how veterans experience them. To give further assurance we are amending the Bill to require an independent review of the effectiveness of the witness protections and other measures. This will help ensure the provisions designed to safeguard former service personnel are being delivered effectively.
No new inquests	This amendment will remove Clause 85, meaning that no new Northern Ireland legacy inquests can be directed following the winding up of the Legacy Commission. In practice, this means that no new inquests beyond those already in the system will be directed.
Building wider confidence in the reforms	
Attorney General Consent	This amendment will require that the Attorney General must provide consent before any prosecution of a serious Troubles-related crime can be taken forward.
Prosecutorial advice to the Commission	This amendment will ensure that the Commission seeks the advice of prosecutors during the course of an investigation to help inform its decision making prior to considering referrals to prosecutors. This will ensure that cases are not referred to prosecutors in circumstances where the evidence is unlikely to support a successful prosecution.
Prosecutorial Guidance	This amendment will require the Public Prosecution Service in Northern Ireland and the Crown Prosecution Service in England & Wales to work together to publish joint guidance about the prosecution of Troubles-related offences.
Ensuring transparency in prosecutions	This will require the Legacy Commission to publish a policy on the types of circumstances in which they will refer a case to prosecutors, in order to increase transparency.
Clarifying 'on the run' letters	This amendment will clarify that 'on the run' letters cannot be used to prevent or frustrate any prospective prosecution.
Ensuring an effective process for victims	
Removing	These amendments will repeal the Legacy Act's provisions relating to the

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unlawful bar on Civil Claims and Immunity	conditional immunity scheme and the bar on civil claims. While the immunity provisions were never commenced, this will remove them from the statute book, providing clarity and confidence to individuals approaching the Legacy Commission. These provisions were originally contained in the Remedial Order which the House of Commons passed on 21 January.
HMICFRS investigation	These amendments will give His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services the power to conduct regular inspections of the Legacy Commission to ensure it is operating as efficiently as possible and in a way that finds appropriate value for money.
Death certificates	This amendment will allow Judicial Panel Members to provide death certificates where the family has been unable to previously obtain one.
Police Collaboration	These amendments will remove the prohibition on any other police forces being able to assist the Legacy Commission on Troubles cases. They will enable the Commission to collaborate with police forces across the UK where necessary to fully investigate a death or serious injury, using the expertise of police forces.
Cases where a seriously injured person has died	These amendments will ensure that certain scenarios where a seriously injured person has died since the start of their investigation are dealt with appropriately.
Timing for disclosure of information	This amendment makes clear that the Legacy Commission can set a timescale by which relevant authorities must supply information.
Progress on the Joint Framework	These amendments will require the Secretary of State, prior to commencement of key aspects of the Bill, to make a Written Ministerial Statement setting out the progress that the UK and Irish Governments have made on delivering commitments on legacy since the Joint Framework was signed in September 2025.
TECHNICAL CHANGES	
Technical changes to the workings of the Commission	
Legacy Commission governance	Some Legacy Commission functions are the responsibility of the Commission as a body, while some functions are the responsibility of one or multiple person(s) within the Legacy Commission. These amendments make clearer which constituent person(s) within the Legacy Commission are specifically responsible for certain functions including a small amendment to enable the functions of the CEO to be delegated to another member of the Legacy Commission when the CEO is unable to fulfil their duties (such as through illness or injury) or the position is vacant.
ICIR reports and winding up	This amendment makes changes to the wording in the Bill to reflect that the Secretary of State cannot wind up the Independent Commission for Information Retrieval because it is an international body, but that he can bring to an end its functions by regulations.

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	This amendment also allows the Independent Commission for Information Retrieval to retain any reports which cannot be issued to family members when the Independent Commission for Information Retrieval is wound up, allowing for future release.
Unnecessary costs	This amendment will ensure the Legacy Commission considers the need to avoid unnecessary costs, per the model of the Inquiries Act.
Enforcement notices by e-mail	This amendment will allow penalty enforcement notices to be served by email rather than only in writing, increasing efficiency of the Commission.
Legacy Commission powers (Section 40)	This amendment seeks to clarify that Legacy Commission Officers have the powers to arrest and charge prior to, but not after, a referral to a prosecutor is made.
Technical changes to Inquisitorial Proceedings in Part 4	
Joint legal representation	This amendment requires the Legacy Commission through Inquisitorial Proceedings to consider whether the person applying for legal funding could be jointly represented to ensure costs are appropriately managed.
Protection against defamation claims	This amendment protects the Legacy Commission from the prospect of civil lawsuits relating to both the content of its reports and statements made in the course of inquisitorial proceedings.
Judicial review time limit	This amendment adds a time limit of 14 days for judicial reviews against inquisitorial proceedings decisions. This will prevent challenges that would cause long delays and aligns the regime with the Inquiries Act.
Deemed restrictions	These amendments will protect sensitive material provided to Judicial Panel Members in advance of the decision as to whether or not a restriction order should be made. This aligns the regime with the Inquiries Act.
Interception bar in inquisitorial proceedings	This amendment will bar the use of material acquired via interception in inquisitorial proceedings, as is the case in public inquiries.
IPs vs specific proceedings	This is a technical amendment in relation to how Inquisitorial Proceedings work as a process and how each specific proceeding within that process operates.

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Jurisdiction	This amendment will clarify that remote evidence provided in Inquisitorial Proceedings will be treated as taking place under the law of Northern Ireland, even where the person is providing evidence from outside Northern Ireland.
Other technical changes	
Inquests wording	These minor and technical amendments ensure consistency in our legislative drafting on Inquests.
Police misconduct	This amendment makes minor and technical changes to the drafting to ensure that the Police Ombudsman can investigate cases that have been referred by the Legacy Commission.