



House of Commons  
Northern Ireland Affairs  
Committee

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**Citizenship and  
passport processes  
relating to Northern  
Ireland: Government  
Response to the  
Committee's First  
Report of Session  
2021–22**

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**Second Special Report of Session  
2021–22**

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## Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Northern Ireland Office (but excluding individual cases and advice given by the Crown Solicitor); and other matters within the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (but excluding the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Northern Ireland and the drafting of legislation by the Office of the Legislative Counsel).

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## Second Special Report

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On 7 July 2021, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee published its First Report of Session 2021–22, [Citizenship and passport processes relating to Northern Ireland](#) (HC 158). On 22 September we received the Government Response to the Report. We subsequently wrote to the Government on 28 October to request a more comprehensive response to our key recommendations. The Government replied to this request on 16 December. The Government Response, our letter and the Government's reply are appended below.

## Appendix 1: Government Response

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The Government welcomes the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's report, and thanks the Committee for the opportunity to have given evidence to it. We recognise the importance and sensitivity of this subject and hope we have provided clarity on a range of areas examined by the Committee.

The following sections provide responses to the Committee's conclusions and recommendations in detail

### Obtaining British citizenship through naturalisation

**The Home Office describes the process for Irish citizens who wish to naturalise as British as fair, because it is the same as the process for people of any third country. But this is to miss fundamentally the historical nuance of the issue. The Department must understand the historical connection between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland including the close personal ties, relationship and continued movement of people between the two countries, as evidenced by the Common Travel Area. Given the special status of Irish citizens, including those who identify as British (hereafter referred to as Irish citizens) within the United Kingdom, and the unique nature of the border on the island of Ireland, the current fee charged to enable Irish citizens in the UK to naturalise as British is at worst indefensible, and at best unreasonable and excessive. The current residency requirement is still appropriate, however, and the bespoke provisions we recommend are framed in relation to those people who are defined in law as Irish citizens also seeking naturalisation. We heard from the Government that there is a balance to be struck between the provisions of the Common Travel Area, post-Brexit restrictions on freedom of movement and developments in UK immigration policy. We recognise the need to guard against an abuse of the Common Travel Area as a back door to immigration to the UK. *The Government should abolish the naturalisation fee charged to Irish applicants who wish to naturalise as British citizens. Likewise, the Government must waive the requirement for Irish citizens to pass a "Life in the UK" test as part of the naturalisation process and allow attendance at the citizenship ceremony to be optional.* (Paragraph 7)**

1. We note the Committee's views on fees charged to Irish citizens to naturalise as a British citizen. While we recognise the unique position Irish citizens have under UK law, which means they do not need to apply for immigration leave to work, live or study in the UK, we have no plans to review the fee for citizenship applications.

2. The fee for a citizenship application reflects the importance and benefits of a successful application. Citizenship, however, is not necessary to live, study and work in the UK and is why fee waivers, exceptions or reductions are not extended to citizenship applications, except in very limited circumstances. Setting different fee levels depending on nationality would not be fair and would be inconsistent with our new global immigration system.

3. The Home Office keeps visa, immigration and citizenship fees under review and ensures they are set in accordance with the powers set by section 68(9) of the Immigration Act 2014. The migration and borders system is predominantly funded by the user to reduce the reliance on the taxpayer and income from fees plays a vital role in our ability to run a sustainable system.

4. We believe the Life in the UK test remains an important part of an individual demonstrating they possess the knowledge which we would expect someone who had been resident in the UK for a lengthy period to hold. We do not mandate how such knowledge should be acquired and applicants will necessarily have a range of connections and experiences which may contribute to their learning alongside the official study products. As the committee will no doubt appreciate, our history means people from many nations have an appreciation of our culture, history and may have family ties here before they ever set foot in the UK, and which will be bolstered by their actual presence here.

5. We do not doubt there will be some Irish citizens who have resided in the UK for many more years than the 5 required by statute to naturalise, as indeed there will be similar individuals from countries around the world. We are pleased and proud if they feel they wish to take the next step and become British citizens, but we do not insist upon it. Irish citizens, in particular, can reside in the UK with minimal restrictions, but we do expect those who make the personal choice to become British to follow the processes which apply to all who make this important decision.

6. We also do not believe the Life in the UK test is a particularly onerous requirement for those who have either gained the requisite knowledge through their day-to-day interactions or utilise our range of study materials to support their learning. We have testing centres across the UK, and these can adapt the testing environment for anyone who has particular requirements which need to be accommodated.

7. The ceremony which forms the final stage in the naturalisation journey to becoming a British citizen is equally important. Not only is it the point where a successful applicant makes the requisite oath and pledge, and without which a person does not become British, it is a hugely symbolic event marking a change in someone's relationship with the country in which they reside. Many people want to have friends and families in attendance to celebrate this key moment in their life.

8. Exemptions to the ceremony are limited to the special circumstances of a particular case, for example those who have long-term health reasons which would preclude their attendance. In order to continue with ceremonies during the pandemic we worked with Local Authorities to develop and deliver virtual ceremonies, and we will assess their ongoing use as this immediate need reduces. They may be retained to allow a more inclusive approach for those who, due to long-term issues, might otherwise be excluded. However, this merely reflects our belief the ceremony is a reasonable and appropriate expectation for everyone who has the ability to participate in one.

## The “birthright” provisions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement

We understand the argument put forward by the Government on Article 1(vi) of the Agreement regarding the need for a distinction between the rights of self-identification and of citizenship for the people of Northern Ireland. However, evidence to this inquiry has demonstrated that there remain competing views on the meaning and intention of those birthright provisions, and questions also remain as to what the right to identify “and be accepted as” Irish or British or both actually means in practice. We believe that the term “to be accepted as” has knock-on consequences that have hitherto been sidestepped. This is an example of an unhelpful difference between how the two governments seem to have interpreted the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and the definition of certain terms. Given the proximity and history of the two countries this is undesirable. There is considerable merit in the two governments trying to reach an agreed definition of the terms contained in Article 1(vi). The differentials in definition add to the confusion. *In response to this report, the Government should clarify the meaning of the phrase “to be accepted as” in Article 1(vi) of the Agreement, including how it is respected and upheld in the Government’s approach towards and interpretation of the birthright provisions to remove any remaining ambiguity. We recommend that the two governments meet to iron out those inconsistencies.* (Paragraph 14)

9. The Government is firmly committed to the ‘birthright provisions’ under Article 1(vi) of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement to:

‘recognise the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland’

10. Northern Ireland has a rich diversity of identities and cultures. How a person of Northern Ireland chooses to identify is a personal matter and the Government respects and accepts this, in accordance with the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

11. The Government respects and upholds the right of a person of Northern Ireland to hold both British and Irish citizenship. The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement does not insist on someone aligning their identity with their nationality.

12. UK nationality legislation - including the British Nationality Act 1981 - is compliant with the agreed text of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. It prevents statelessness, and offers a fair and proportionate means of renunciation for those who wish to align their nationality and identity and do not want to be British citizens.

13. The Government recognises, while some people may take the step of aligning their nationality with their identity when they are ready to do so, many others choose not to. If the Government were to take a position of aligning identity and citizenship, the rights of those who do not wish to would be infringed.

14. The Government therefore does not believe identity alone should amount to renunciation of citizenship. This would be contrary to the agreed text of the Belfast (Good

Friday) Agreement, and is a matter of individual choice given the significance of the decision. This conclusion was reached in the judgement of the Upper Tier Tribunal in the case of the Home Secretary v De Souza:

‘[...] the problems inherent in a system of nationality based on consent make it plain that the omission from the 1998 Act of anything touching upon the issues of self-identification and nationality was entirely deliberate on the part of the United Kingdom Parliament. The omission cannot be explained on the basis that there was no need to amend the BNA because it could be construed compatibly with Article 1(iv)/(vi), without Parliament having to spell out the necessary amendments.’

15. Basing citizenship solely on identity would also fail to reflect another element of the agreed text of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. It would see people of Northern Ireland treated differently for nationality purposes from those born in the rest of the United Kingdom, which would conflict with a core tenet of the Agreement recognising Northern Ireland's status as part of the UK.

16. The Government will continue to work closely with the Irish Government on a range of issues, including matters pertaining to identity and citizenship. This reflects the shared commitment of both governments to the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

### Family migration arrangements for the people of Northern Ireland

**The changes made to the EU Settlement Scheme for the people of Northern Ireland in August 2020 were welcome, demonstrating how Government has been prepared to introduce bespoke immigration policy for the people of Northern Ireland. The acceptance of a bespoke approach illustrates that it can be done. Contrary to the Government's view, however, we are not entirely convinced that the changes to the scheme represented the full scope of the review announced by the then Prime Minister. In the interests of transparency, the Government must publish in full the results of the review announced by Mrs May. (paragraph 16)**

17. The review announced by then-Prime Minister Theresa May in February 2019 culminated in the “New Decade, New Approach” commitment to enable the family members of the people of Northern Ireland to apply for UK immigration status on broadly the same terms as family members of Irish citizens. The Government delivered on the commitment by including family members of the people of Northern Ireland in the EU Settlement Scheme and is pleased the Committee welcomes this.

18. The Home Office and the Northern Ireland Office reviewed how the UK's Immigration Rules treated the people of Northern Ireland exercising their rights under the Belfast Agreement to identify and be accepted as Irish, even if they held British as well as Irish citizenship. Under EU law, Irish citizens resident in the UK were able to benefit from EU family reunion rules, but British citizens were not. Thus, the people of Northern Ireland experienced different treatment depending on whether they were solely Irish or whether they were solely British or dual British and Irish citizens, and their choice of identity was not taken into account.

19. However, the UK's family Immigration Rules applied to British and Irish citizens equally, enabling the people of Northern Ireland to present their citizenship in line with their chosen identity without detriment, and this continues to be the case.

20. The Government's firm view is the implementation of the "New Decade, New Approach" commitment fully delivers the "long-term solution consistent with the letter and spirit of the Belfast Agreement" envisaged by the former Prime Minister in her February 2019 speech. It eliminates the difference in treatment so family members of all people of Northern Ireland, regardless of their citizenship or their choice of identity, can obtain UK immigration status on broadly the same terms as family members of Irish citizens. Where the comparable Irish citizen benefits from the Withdrawal Agreement, this immigration status is provided under the EU Settlement Scheme. Where the comparable Irish citizen does not benefit from the Withdrawal Agreement, this immigration status is provided under the UK's family Immigration Rules.

21. To the extent the Committee considers more is needed, the Government believes this would amount to unjustifiable racial discrimination on grounds of nationality and national origin which is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

## Renunciation of citizenship

**The renunciation of one's citizenship is not a decision to be taken lightly or without consideration of potential consequences. We recognise, however, that some people in Northern Ireland may wish to take the formal step of legally aligning their citizenship with their choice of an Irish-only identity, just as others wish to assert a British-only identity. Others, too, wish to assert both. Any person wishing to assert or renounce a deemed citizenship should be able to do so with processes made as fair and straightforward as possible. Clearly these are not easy or simple issues to address. We would urge the UK and Irish Governments to address these issues jointly, underpinned by the principles of simplicity, fairness and understanding of history (this again makes the point of the inappropriateness of dealing with these sensitive and important issues given the reluctance of the Home Office to recognise the particular status of Ireland and Northern Ireland). Any fees to be charged must not exceed the unit processing cost of the service. In addition, the British Nationality Act 1981 should be amended so that the right of future resumption of citizenship is a right for this group of people too, instead of something dispensed at the discretion of the Home Secretary.** (Paragraph 21)

22. We welcome the committee's agreement, both in principle and practice, a person of Northern Ireland should have to renounce the British citizenship they hold by operation of the British Nationality Act 1981 if they no longer wish to hold it. As noted, such a decision is not one to be taken lightly and should be made in the full understanding of the consequences of doing so, including the processes which might have to be followed should they wish to reverse the decision at a later date. This is also in keeping with our evidence given regarding the operation of the birth right provision on citizenship, and it being reasonable and proportionate to have administrative processes where people no longer wish to be British.

23. We note the suggestion the renunciation processes should be made as simple and straightforward as possible. We agree with such an aspiration, although tempered by the already-cited point made by the committee there should be a recognisable legal process,

both in principle and in practice, given the seriousness of the decision. It is not immediately clear in which area the committee believes improvements should be made from the possibilities cited by those who gave evidence. We already try to keep the information we request to the minimum required to evaluate statutory requirements.

24. The committee will also be aware, in giving evidence to the committee, Kevin Foster, Minister for Future Borders and Immigration, advised he wished at a point in the future to look at the modernisation and simplification of nationality more broadly, linked to our wider work on simplifying the immigration system. While this process has not yet started, it is not inconceivable renunciation could form a part of any reform and it would certainly be something on which stakeholder views would be welcomed at the requisite time.

25. The fee for renouncing citizenship is already set at the estimated cost to the Home Office of processing the application and has remained at its current level since 2018. The Home Office keeps fees under review and ensures they take into account the charging powers set by section 68(9) of the Immigration Act 2014, which includes the costs of administering the route, the costs of the wider system, and the benefits provided by a successful application.

26. The fee was increased in 2018 to reflect an increase in the cost of processing these applications. We cannot rule out future increases to this fee as it must cover the cost to the Home Office of processing the application, in line with Managing Public Money HMT guidance and reducing the burden on the UK taxpayer. Immigration and Nationality fees cannot be changed without the approval of Parliament through an amendment to the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations and cannot exceed the current fee maximum of £400 without an amendment to the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Order, which is subject to the affirmative procedure.

27. As the committee is aware, the British Nationality Act 1981 sets out the circumstances in which a person, having previously renounced British citizenship, may resume it at a later date. This only occurs by entitlement in one scenario, namely on the first occasion someone seeks to resume British citizenship and where the renunciation had been necessary in order to retain or acquire another citizenship or nationality. All other applications are dealt with by discretion and taking into account the individual circumstances.

28. We do not believe this approach needs to change, either for the people of Northern Ireland or more broadly. The decision to renounce British citizenship is a serious one and we would encourage people to understand both the ramifications of making such a decision and the process by which they might resume it. However, it is not in our view appropriate for resumption to be something an individual can insist upon by entitlement when the decision to renounce was made voluntarily, not least given the UK's acceptance of dual nationality and the provision already in place where renunciation was required by another state not accepting such a position. Having an application process for resumption with each case considered on its merits is neither unfair nor disproportionate when determining something as important as nationality.

## Citizenship processes: final conclusion

The circumstances in which, and reasons why, Irish citizens seek to take up British citizenship, and British nationals seek to renounce their citizenship to become Irish-only, are very much island of Ireland issues. Yet the Home Office describes the process for people defined in law as Irish citizens who wish to naturalise as British as fair, because it is the same as the process for people of any third country. The Home Office must understand the historical connection between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and the personal ties, relationships, geopolitical realities and movement of people between the two countries today. To that end there is merit in the two governments reaching an accepted definition of the terms ‘to identify’, and ‘to be accepted as’ in Article 1(vi) of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. Differential in definition add to the confusion. *We recommend the two governments meet to resolve these inconsistencies.* Citizenship issues will not be addressed to the satisfaction of all traditions whilst the Home Office treats Ireland and the rest of the world as an amalgam. Instead, we need bespoke, granular solutions. Abolishing the fee for Irish citizens to naturalise as British would be a start. The need to complete the ‘Life in the UK’ test seems irrelevant and offensive, and attendance at the citizenship ceremony should be optional. We agree in principle and practice that a person of Northern Ireland should have to renounce their deemed British citizenship if they wish to assert only Irish citizenship. On the premise of fairness and sensitivity, however, the process of renouncing British citizenship for those people of Northern Ireland who do wish to do so should also be straightforward. The Home Office would be well advised to start from a deep understanding of and sensitivity to history, and a realisation that ‘one size fits all’ cannot work. There must be an approach which understands the interlocking relationships between Ireland and the United Kingdom, with quicker, simpler, cheaper citizenship processes that nevertheless continue to respect the significance of citizenship itself and the integrity of UK borders. (Paragraph 22).

29. We believe our responses to the individual recommendations have already addressed these points and we again thank the committee for the opportunity to clarify the government’s position.

## Appendix 2: the Committee's letter

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Kevin Foster MP  
Minister for Future Borders and Immigration  
Home Office

from the Chair  
Simon Hoare MP

28 October 2021

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for the Government's response to my Committee's report on Citizenship and passport processes relating to Northern Ireland. I must say at the outset that it has not been well received by Members.

At a recent meeting the Committee discussed the Government's response and decided not to publish it. Instead, Members agreed to ask the Home Office to reconsider its view and respond again. On certain elements of the reply, including its tone and at times blunt – seemingly ignorant - language, Members were, frankly, appalled. Let me provide you with some examples.

First, at paragraph 2, the response states: "Setting different fee levels depending on nationality would not be fair and would be inconsistent with our new global immigration system." These circumstances do not, however, have anything to do with a global immigration system. As I would have hoped the report made clear, but I am happy to reiterate here, the Home Office needs to understand, and create policy based on, the historical connection between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland including the close personal ties, relationship and continued movement of people between the two countries, as evidenced by the Common Travel Area.

Secondly, paragraph 4 begins: "We believe the Life in the UK test remains an important part of an individual demonstrating they possess the knowledge which we would expect someone who had been resident in the UK for a lengthy period to hold." Such phrasing smacks of an almost automated response to the specific experiences my Committee heard in evidence and the careful arguments it subsequently marshalled in its report. We were, and are, talking about people who have been resident in the UK for, in some cases, more than six decades. To receive such a dismissive reply to those specific circumstances is, again, appalling.

Thirdly, paragraph 5 includes the same mistake, where the Government says, "we do not insist upon it[Irish citizens becoming British citizens]." Of course not, but that is not the point. Members were bereft at the lack of engagement with the particulars of this issue.

As the report notes, the Government has commendably introduced bespoke immigration policy more recently for the people of Northern Ireland. The changes made to the EU Settlement Scheme for the people of Northern Ireland in August 2020 were welcome, although temporary, and demonstrated that there is precedent for the recommendations we made regarding the need for a bespoke approach. To see them therefore cast aside was, if nothing else, rather strange and illogical.

Finally, my Committee concluded that there remain competing views on the meaning and intention of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement birthright provisions – demonstrated in

the contributions received by the inquiry- and questions also remain as to what the right to identify “and be accepted as” Irish or British or both actually means in practice. We recommended that the Government clarify the meaning of the phrase “to be accepted as”, including how it is respected and upheld in the Government’s approach towards and interpretation of the birthright provisions, to remove any remaining ambiguity.

In response, however, the Home Office only repeated the text already set out in Article 1(vi) of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and stated that how a person of Northern Ireland chooses to identify is a “personal matter”. What we sought, and on which no further clarity has been provided, is how the phrase “to be accepted as” Irish or British or both is currently respected and upheld by the Government in practice.

More generally, the Committee noted and agreed that Government should always be cognisant of the powerful importance, implications and impact of a report agreed unanimously by a Select Committee. When one considers that that Committee is in this instance not only cross-party but includes the main Northern Ireland political parties, one should not underestimate the significance, and feasibility, of its recommendations.

There appears to be a huge chasm between what was relayed in conversation to Members about the response when it was being prepared, and what has ultimately emerged. We shall therefore await a further reply before deciding whether to publish the Government’s response, in the usual way, as a Special Report of the Committee.

Yours ever,

Simon Hoare MP  
Chair, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

## Appendix 3: the Government's reply

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**16 December 2021**

Dear Chair,

We fully appreciate the care and thoroughness with which the Committee has explored the matter of citizenship and passport processes in Northern Ireland, and wish to provide this letter in furtherance to the Government's response to your inquiry.

The Government fully reflected on the Committee's report on this matter and its response to it, and it was not our intention for this to be considered to the contrary.

Your inquiry raised concerns about our response on naturalisation fees. We appreciated your arguments on this point. The close, historical connection between the United Kingdom and Ireland including the close personal ties, relationship and continued movement of people between the two countries is well understood and greatly appreciated, and as you say is evidenced by our shared commitment to the Common Travel Area. It is because of this that Irish nationals already enjoy automatic, free permanent residence rights in the UK, with all of the associated rights and benefits that brings. This is a unique benefit. No other nationality benefits from a similar approach.

So when considering the approach to naturalisation we need to take a step back and consider carefully any and all arguments for a differentiated approach to application fees. There are a number of relevant considerations here:

We very much welcome people who want to become British but we don't require it of people, or indeed promote it beyond providing information on our application and guidance pages on Gov.uk. It is and should be a personal choice. We also appreciate and fully recognise the contributions that permanent residents make to life in the UK, and understand the reasons why they may wish to retain their original nationality and not become a dual national. For that reason we would be cautious about offering a preferential fee position to any specific nationality because of how it could be interpreted.

We also have to take account of our statutory duties in setting fees. Setting a lower fee for Irish nationals would amount to direct discrimination. Given the existing benefits Irish nationals enjoy with the Common Travel Area, we think a more compelling rationale would have to be presented for a change to a one-size fits all approach to fees. We believe people of other nationalities would reasonably ask why the UK Government appears to prefer Irish nationals over them if we adopted your recommendation.

Application fees have remained static in recent years, following a period of increases imposed as part of the Home Office's move towards a user-pays model agreed as part of the 2015 Spending Review, and to reduce the funding that comes from general taxpayers. Citizenship fees have not changed since April 2018. We do, however, recognise the concerns about the overall quantum of citizenship fees.

Fees levels in part reflect the significant benefits that can accrue to an individual through acquiring citizenship. The Committee will be aware that there are a number of ongoing legal challenges to the current fees regime, and we trust you will understand it would be inappropriate for us to comment further at this point.

The inquiry also raised a concern about the requirement for all applicants for naturalisation to undertake the 'Life in UK' test. We understand that someone who has lived most of their life in the UK and played an active part in UK public life may feel that needing to meet the requirement fails to recognise their knowledge and experience (and we did read the evidence given by Lord Hay to the Committee on this point with great care). It is for that reason that we want to stress that it is in no way intended to do so.

However, from the perspective of administering a statutory application process involving around 150,000 applications a year, we hope the Committee will also appreciate that it would be impracticable to operate a system which attempts to weigh an individual's knowledge or contribution to society in deciding whether a test is then necessary or not. In order to be fair and transparent to all it would require the creation of a whole new process and a change to the application process. That in turn would inflate the costs of the naturalisation process for all. I note such a change would also require a change to legislation and we already have an exemption for people over 65.

We would also underline the Government's view that the 'Life in UK' test is an important part of the naturalisation process. It is more than a symbolic process. It ensures that people who are committing to become British citizens have knowledge of our values, history and culture. Some people will be better equipped to pass the test because of their prior experience and knowledge - but that is the nature of any given test - and we would hope an individual with knowledge and experience gained from their long residence in the UK and/or professional life might see this as being to their advantage.

The inquiry took a particular interest in the birthright commitments set out in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and how they are given effect. In practice, a person of Northern Ireland is able to exercise their right to identify and be accepted as Irish or British or both, and this is ensured in law. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 prohibits discrimination by public authorities and affords the protection of the law including to those who consider their identity to be Irish, Irish and British, or British. The Act also places specific duties on a wide range of public authorities in Northern Ireland to promote good relations and equality of opportunity on the basis of a range of characteristics, which again includes those of a British, British and Irish, or Irish identity.

In the separate citizenship birthright context, we would highlight the High Court of Northern Ireland agreed in a recent judgement that the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement did not make any stipulation on changes to nationality legislation in respect of the birthright commitments.

We appreciate some people of Northern Ireland may wish to align their identity and citizenship, and British nationality legislation enables them to take reasonable and proportionate steps to give effect to this. However, we would underline the equation of identity and citizenship as a matter of policy, as some have advocated, would have the dangerous effect of impinging on the birthright of those who do not wish to align their

identity and citizenship. This is why the Government believes the renunciation process and British nationality legislation more widely achieves a delicate and appropriate balance that is faithful to the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

We are considering what more can be done to make our processes clearer and more straightforward for those who wish to engage with them. In particular, we would be very happy to hear any thoughts you and the Committee have on how we can apply the principles of the simplification agenda we have been applying to immigration routes to the naturalisation process, for all who apply for it. We will consider the Committee's report in this context as our work progresses.

Once again, we wish to put on record our appreciation to the Committee for its work on these important issues.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Foster MP, Minister for Safe and Legal Migration

Rt Hon Conor Burns MP, Minister of State for Northern Ireland