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## **Northern Ireland Office objectives** (*refreshed December 2017*)

Our key purpose is to make politics work by working alongside a restored Northern Ireland Executive to:

- Secure, sustain and support effective, inclusive devolved government in Northern Ireland.
- Ensure a more secure Northern Ireland.
- Deliver a growing and strengthening economy.
- Ensure a stronger society by supporting initiatives designed to build better community relations and a genuinely shared future.
- Support the United Kingdom's effective exit from the European Union and ensure that Northern Ireland's interests are represented during the negotiations for withdrawal and in the post-Exit settlement.

The UK government is delivering a stronger Northern Ireland within a stronger United Kingdom across a wide range of areas. In support of the government's commitments, our objectives are:

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## **Making politics work**

We will:

- Work with the Northern Ireland political parties and, consistent with the three-stranded approach, the Irish Government to restore the devolved institutions.
- Work with a restored Northern Ireland Executive and partners, including the Irish Government as appropriate, to support the full and faithful implementation of the provisions of political Agreements including the Fresh Start and Stormont House Agreements.
- Deliver the UK Government's responsibilities under the historic Stormont House Agreement to enable devolution to function more effectively; to deal with the legacy of the past; and to make progress on divisive issues such as flags and parading.
- Work with Whitehall partners to ensure that, as appropriate, Government policy takes account of Northern Ireland constitutional and devolution issues and that an Executive has visibility and understanding of UK wide policy decisions.
- Pass legislation to provide for transparency of donations and loans in Northern Ireland.

## **Performance to date:**

- We have worked closely with Northern Ireland political party leaders and, as appropriate, the Irish Government towards the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland. This has not been achieved but progress in addressing the complex issues involved has been made.

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- We have worked closely with partners to ensure the continued delivery of good governance in Northern Ireland in the absence of an Executive - including through taking forward the Northern Ireland Budget Bill in Westminster.
- We have continued to build towards a public phase on legacy reforms, working with victims and survivors, the political parties and other interested parties.
- We have supported the Chief Electoral Officer as she prepares for the introduction of online registration in 2018.

## A more secure Northern Ireland

We will:

- Develop and implement our strategic approach to combatting Northern Ireland related terrorism, giving the strongest possible support to the brave men and women of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.
- Work with key partners, including the PSNI, other Government Departments and devolved government, to drive down the threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism and ensure appropriate protection for those at risk. Over the period, provide additional security funding of £160 million to support Police Service of Northern Ireland.
- Support the devolved institutions in their strategy to end paramilitarism, through close cooperation with strategic security partners and the Irish Government and the creation of a new monitoring and implementation body.
- Ensure that partners have the strongest possible support to tackle the threat and that effective policies and legislation are in place. Over the period, to provide an additional £25 million to tackle continuing paramilitary activity in accordance with the Fresh Start Agreement.

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### **Performance to date:**

- We have established a new Independent Reporting Commission to monitor and report on progress to tackle paramilitary activity.
- We have worked closely with our partners to ensure there is a co-ordinated and effective approach to tackling the enduring threat from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism.
- Additional funding has been provided for the Police Service of Northern Ireland.
- We have worked with the Home Office to implement the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, ensuring that the highest stands of accountability are met.

### **A growing economy**

We will:

- Work with an Executive on a stable and sustainable budget for the remainder of this Spending Review period and beyond, to put Northern Ireland's finances on a secure footing for the long-term.
- Work with a restored Executive to ensure that proposals are brought forward, and as appropriate implemented, to rebalance the Northern Ireland economy, build a more united and stronger society and secure the transformation of public services.
- Ensure the delivery of the financial measures in the Agreements, including our steadfast support for shared and integrated education.

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- Implement the power to set a devolved rate of Corporation Tax powers, if a restored Executive demonstrates its finances are on a sustainable footing.
- Work towards a comprehensive and ambitious set of City Deals across Northern Ireland.
- Work with Whitehall partners to ensure the views of a restored Executive and economic stakeholders in Northern Ireland are taken in to account when economic policy is being made in Westminster, including in discussions around the UK Government's approach post-Exit.
- We will work with DExEU and others to maintain an open and frictionless border for people and goods between Northern Ireland and Ireland, avoiding any physical infrastructure or related checks or controls, while also continuing to ensure unfettered access for Northern Ireland's businesses to the whole of the UK internal market.
- We will work closely with a restored Northern Ireland Executive and BEIS to ensure the continuation of a single electricity market covering Northern Ireland and Ireland post-Exit.

### **Performance to date:**

- Consistent growth of the Northern Ireland economy, growing by 1.4% in 2015-16 and 1.6% in 2016-17.
- Falling unemployment in Northern Ireland. Currently it is at 3.9%, its lowest level since 2008 - with 41,000 more people in employment in Northern Ireland than in 2010, and 4,600 more businesses.
- Rising earnings and productivity - the earnings of full-time employees in Northern Ireland grew faster in NI between 2010 and 2017 than in any other region (14.6%), with the fastest annual productivity growth in the last year of all UK nations and regions.

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- Increasing funding, with a real-terms increase in the Northern Ireland Executive's block grant over this Spending Review period - following the announcement of £660m more for Northern Ireland at the 2017 Autumn Budget.
- Secure finances - with the UK Government passing a regional rate for Northern Ireland, and a 2017-18 Budget, to ensure the continued provision of public services in the absence of an Executive.
- We have published a position paper setting out our priorities for Northern Ireland in the EU Exit negotiations and the principles that we think should apply to key areas.
- We have secured agreement, in principle, with the European Commission to maintaining the Common Travel Area and associated rights for British and Irish citizens.

## A stronger society

We will:

- Work with a restored Northern Ireland Executive and partners to support reconciliation and the Executive's objective of building a shared future for all, while acknowledging the past.
- Work to increase engagement and build trust across society and ensure that Government funding supports progress on the Executive's ['Together: Building a United Community \(TBUC\)' Strategy](#) and in delivering a shared future.
- Prepare legislation to establish the legacy institutions set out in the Stormont House Agreement. To work with the Northern Ireland Executive, political parties, victims groups and the Irish Government to achieve sufficient consensus to introduce legislation.
- Work with sponsored bodies and partners.

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### **Performance to date:**

- £12m of Shared Future funding was made available to the Northern Ireland Executive during 2016-17.
- £50m funding a year for 10 years has been committed to fund integrated and shared education projects and funding is also available to deliver integrated housing projects.
- Nearly £2m has been released to help tackle paramilitary activity.
- We have worked with partners to ensure effective, strategic and coordinated processes are in place for addressing legacy casework issues.
- We have worked closely with partners to deliver major centenary events and a busy programme of Royal visits.

### **Northern Ireland Office fit for the future**

We will:

- Make Government more efficient, effective and accountable.
- Ensure that the Northern Ireland Office embraces change and lives within its means, and maximises the value of its people and resources.
- Deliver the efficiency savings identified as part of the Spending Review to ensure that the department operates within its annually funded baseline and can deliver Ministerial priorities.
- Introduce new, more flexible and mobile, IT system and reduce the cost of accommodation and related services.

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- Make the Northern Ireland Office fit for the future and able to deliver existing and new priorities by having the right structure and people in place.
- Continue to champion diversity and inclusion in how we work.

### **Performance to date:**

- We have continued to reduce the cost of delivering back-office functions.
- We have reduced the costs of accommodation in both London and Belfast.
- We have delivered upgrades to our IT systems to maximise efficiency and enable staff to work more flexibly.
- We have reviewed our future staff structure and introduced ways to increase capacity and capability.