

First Day Brief

February 2024



Department of

Finance

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Welcome to the Department of Finance

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The Department of Finance (DoF) provides the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and other public bodies with money, staff, professional services and business support systems, helping them to deliver excellent, value-for-money public services.

We do this by:

- Managing public money – effectively allocating resources to where they are most needed to support the delivery of public services;
- Supporting our people – recruiting, developing and supporting the best people for the Civil Service and providing opportunities for individuals to reach their full potential;
- Transforming and innovating – improving effectiveness across the public sector by transforming the way we work;
- Providing evidence and insights – supporting evidence-based policy and informing public debate, through high quality, trusted, meaningful data, evidence and research; and
- Delivering public services – collecting rates revenue to provide funding towards public services such as health, education and infrastructure, as well as council services.



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Role of Ministers

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Ministers, at all times, are accountable to the Assembly for the decisions and actions of their departments and agencies.

- Departments are separate legal entities.
- Individual civil servants are accountable to their Department's Minister, who in turn is accountable to the Assembly. All civil servants have a shared responsibility to support the work of the Executive as a whole, including the contribution of their Minister to the Executive and within the [NICS Code of Ethics](#) and [Seven Principles of Public Life](#).
- The [Ministerial Code](#) sets out the rules and procedures to which all ministers must adhere. It includes the Pledge of Office, the Ministerial Code of Conduct, and the Seven Principles of Public Life, as well as provisions governing the functioning of the Executive Committee.
- Ministers must declare any personal or business interests which may conflict with their responsibilities.



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Departmental Permanent Secretary

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Neil Gibson

Permanent Secretary

Each department has a Permanent Secretary, who is the most senior civil servant and the Minister's most senior adviser.

- The Permanent Secretary is also the Departmental Accounting Officer, personally responsible for ensuring that public money is being spent and accounted for properly in line with the obligations of [Managing Public Money NI](#) (MPMNI).
- The Permanent Secretary works to ensure that the Department delivers the Minister's policy objectives.
- Each Permanent Secretary ensures their Minister works with the civil service to fulfil the obligations upon their Department as a whole.
- While permanent secretaries work under the direction and control of their Minister, they are also personally answerable to the Public Accounts Committee of the Assembly on their responsibilities as Accounting Officers. [Specific guidance](#) is in place to cover situations where a Minister's instructions could bring the Accounting Officer into conflict with their personal responsibilities.



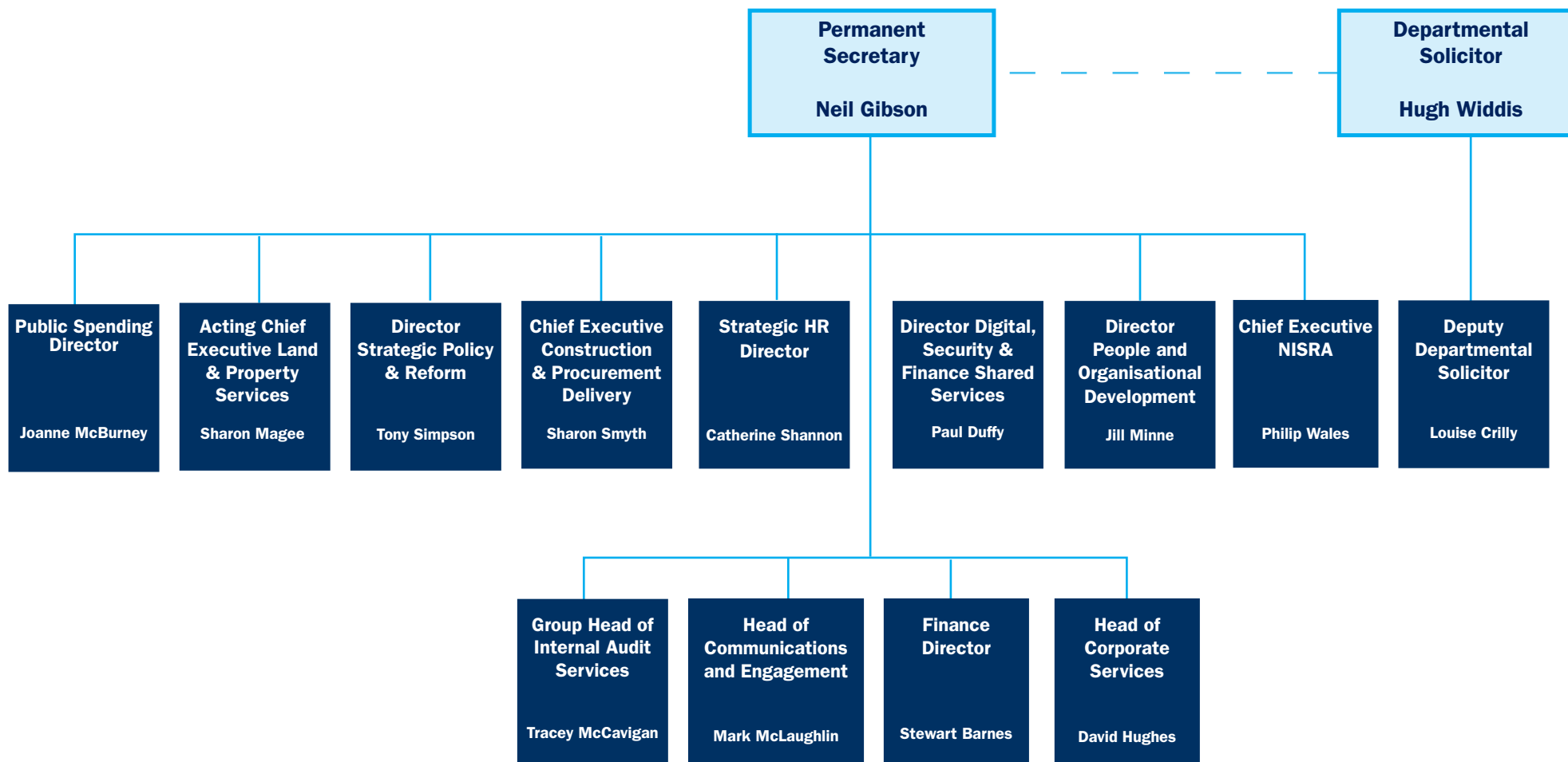
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Leadership Team



Key contacts

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Private Office

The Private Secretary is the first point of contact for Minister and Special Adviser.



Paula Dawson

Private Secretary

Media & External Communications

The Head of Media & External Communications is the first point of contact for media related matters.



Leander Harding

Media & External Communications



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Our Resources

Money

2023-24

Net Resource*



Net Capital



* Excludes £53.1m depreciation and impairment.

People

3,651 staff



As at 31 December 2023, the Department had 3,651 staff. This is made up of 3,482 permanent staff and 169 agency workers.



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Our Priorities

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A copy of the DoF 2023-24 Business Plan can be found online on the [DoF website](#).

This plan sets out the key activities the Department will undertake to deliver against strategic priorities for the 2023-2024 financial year.

The delivery of the Business Plan will be led by the Permanent Secretary. This will include agreement of the strategic aims and a series of check points and quality review of progress at DoF Board.

It is underpinned by more detailed divisional plans which will contain a suite of operational targets.



Our Business Areas

.....

Public Spending Directorate (PSD) is responsible for the management of the public expenditure regime in Northern Ireland, setting the ground rules for the administration and use of public funds, advising on the effective use of available resources through the Executive's Budget and In-year Monitoring processes, seeking Assembly authority for expenditure through the Budget Bill/Estimates process and issuing cash to departments from the NI Consolidated Fund. PSD also provides oversight of the NI City and Growth Deal programme.

NICS HR is responsible for the operational delivery of a comprehensive range of HR services for the NI Departments including resourcing, employee relations, learning and development, occupational health and wellbeing, pensions and business partnering.

People and Organisational Development (People & OD) has policy responsibility for all the NI Civil Service's HR, industrial relations and pay policies and provides strategic HR advice and support to the NICS Board, the NI Departments and the Public Prosecution Service in its commitment to make the Civil Service an inclusive, well-led, high-performing civil service, which is focused on outcomes.

Land & Property Services (LPS) collects, processes and manages land and property information, which underpins the collection of rates. LPS is also the home of Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) the official producer of high quality, accurate and current geographic mapping data for Northern Ireland.

Digital, Security and Finance Shared Services (DSF) provides a range of shared services, including digital technology, cyber and information security and financial processing for the NI Departments. It also includes nirect the official government website for Northern Ireland citizens and the nirect contact centre. It also incorporates the Integr8 Programme which will enable the transformation of Finance and HR services through the delivery of a new target operating model and technology.

Construction and Procurement Division (CPD) is responsible for providing procurement services to the NI Departments, agencies and associated public bodies and supporting the Minister in the development of public procurement policy. CPD is the hub for the Civil Service Project Delivery Profession and provides assurance to Accounting Officers on the delivery of public sector projects and programmes. CPD is also responsible for the management of the Government Estate which comprises around 95 buildings.



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Our Business Areas

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Strategic Policy and Reform (SPaR) shapes Executive policy and interventions that contribute to a broad range of Programme for Government outcomes. This includes delivering strategic economic and fiscal policy and analysis; providing advice and support to departments to improve government policies and public services; leading the Departmental response to meet obligations under the Climate Change Act and to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry; Funding Policy; oversight of the PEACE PLUS Programme; and legacy EU Exit issues including the Windsor Framework.

Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) is responsible primarily for the provision of impartial legal counsel to the Northern Ireland Ministers, departments, their agencies and non-departmental public bodies. It also has policy responsibility for Civil Law Reform.

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is an Agency within DoF, which supports decision makers in the formulation of evidence-based policy and informs public debate through the production and dissemination of high-quality, trusted and meaningful analysis; facilitates research and delivers the decennial population census and everyday civil registration services.

Finance Division is responsible for the management, monitoring and reporting of the Department's budget. The Division also contains the Audit Authority responsible for auditing of EU programmes.

Corporate Services Division (CSD) is responsible for information management, data protection, Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Regulations, security, health and safety, public appointments, handling concerns and complaints raised about the work of the department.

Communications and Engagement Division (CAED) is responsible for Ministerial Private Office, the office of the Permanent Secretary, Media and External Communications, Internal Communications and Engagement and Events.

Internal Audit provides internal audit and investigation services to NICS departments, executive agencies and arm's length bodies. While located in DoF, it is accountable to individual departmental accounting officers. Any fraud investigations or audit activity undertaken are done so on behalf of the relevant department and reported to the relevant department – there is no reporting line on these matters to DoF.



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Public Spending Directorate (PSD)



Joanne McBurney

Public Spending Director

Background to Policy Area

Public Spending Directorate (PSD) is responsible for:

- Management of the public expenditure regime in Northern Ireland including setting the ground rules for the administration and use of public funds, advising on the effective use of available resources through the Executive's Budget and In-Year Monitoring processes, seeking Assembly authority for expenditure through the Budget Bill/Estimates process (covering some £17bn DEL) and issuing cash to departments from the NI Consolidated Fund.
- Oversight of the £1.3bn NI City and Growth Deal programme ensuring appropriate funding flows and governance arrangements are in place for each of the four City and Growth Deals.
- Managing the DoF interaction with the NI Investment Fund which is managed by CBRE. The £150m Fund makes loans from £3-30m to support development projects that contribute to the local economy and economic growth. As loans for projects are paid off, they are then reinvested into future projects.
- Facilitating transparency, good governance, financial management and accountability of public resources, ensuring that expenditure represents value for money. This includes supporting the Public Audit Process.



DECISIONS REQUIRED IN FIRST FOUR WEEKS

- Budget Bill /corresponding Spring Supplementary Estimates (SSEs) for 2023-24
- Setting a Budget for 2024-25
- An urgent decision is required on funding for the A4 Enniskillen Bypass project, part of the Mid South West Growth Deal.



BUDGET

£3.56m



STAFF

51.27



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Public Spending Directorate (PSD)

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

Managing Public Money NI (MPMNI)

The key document setting out the principles for dealing with resources used by NI Central Government departments was updated and a revised [MPMNI](#) based on the updated 2023 HM Treasury guidance was published in November 2023.

Budget Bill

Northern Ireland Budget (No. 2) Act 2023 and Main Estimates taken through Westminster. Any additional Departmental allocations for 2023-24 will need to be confirmed and recorded to allow SSEs and further Budget Bill to be prepared and finalised before introducing to the Assembly in early February.

Budget 2024-25

Information Gathering Exercise commissioned across Departments in December 2023 to provide information for decision makers, including the equality impacts of proposals.

NI Investment Fund

Operational Agreement for the NI Investment Fund was amended in March 2023 and approved by the Permanent Secretary and Fund partners to increase size of fund by £50m.

City and Growth Deals

[Annual Progress Report 2022-2023](#) published October 2023.

Revenue Raising Consultations

Published a document setting out the [financial context for the revenue raising consultations](#) directed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Urgent decisions required within 4 weeks

Budget Bill /corresponding Spring Supplementary Estimates for 2023-24.

Setting a Budget for 2024-25.

An urgent decision is required on funding for the A4 Enniskillen Bypass project, part of the Mid South West Growth Deal.

Priorities for 2023/2024

Budget Bill

Further Budget Bill must be passed and receive Royal Assent by early March to ensure departments have access to cash to fund services until end of 2023-24. Vote on account must also be in place to authorise expenditure and access to cash for departments from 1 April 2024 onwards.

Budget 2024-25

A Budget should be in place before the start of the financial year on 1 April.



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NICSHR



Catherine Shannon

Strategic HR Director

Background to Policy Area

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) employs approximately 24,000 people in central government functions, including the development of legislation and policies and delivering key services to the Northern Ireland public.

NICS Human Resources (NICSHR) provides centralised HR services to all the NI Departments, including ensuring the NICS has skilled and experienced staff capable of delivering a wide range of public-service roles across Departments.

NICSHR is responsible for the delivery of Resourcing, Occupational Health and Wellbeing, Employee Relations, Learning and Development, HR Connect management, HR Business Partnering and Pensions.

NICSHR is undertaking significant transformation across all business areas to modernise, streamline and standardise its delivery model including a review of end to end processes and use of digital technology and automation to enhance service delivery. NICSHR is working collaboratively with the Integr8 Programme.



BUDGET

£15.02m Resource
£1.01m Capital



STAFF

383.24



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NICSHR

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

Minister previously progressed two Legislative Consent Motions on NI requirements for: (i) the McCloud remedy for age-related discrimination in 2015 pension schemes reforms; and (ii) changes to public service pensions cost-control process, to be carried in the Westminster Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022.

Recent decisions taken:

- Delivery of DoF Directions on 3 October 2023 to NI Departments for the completion of scheme valuations to set new employer rates in public service schemes.
- Delivery of NICS specific regulations to implement tranches 1 and 2 of McCloud remedy on age discrimination with effect from 1 April 2022 and 1 October 2023 respectively.
- DoF Directions made for all NI public service pension schemes to ensure compliance with new legislative requirements of Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022 by 1 October 2023.

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Using innovation, digital transformation and industry best practice to modernise and transform HR across all areas including resourcing, absence, Occupational Health, and employee relations and Pensions.
- Delivery of remedy choices to NICS pension scheme members in line with new legislative requirements.
- Legislative Orders for 2024 pension uprating and revaluation for active, deferred and pensioners members of the NI public service schemes.
- Implementation of new operating model for Occupational Health and Wellbeing service to incorporate multi-disciplinary teams.
- Development of modern learning and development practice to support the NICS, including launching new L&D portfolio.
- Implementation of Health and Wellbeing Framework.
- Implementation of new end-to-end Resourcing model.
- Implementation of new operating model for Employee Relations.



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People & Organisational Development (People & OD)



Jill Minne

Director People & OD

Background to Policy Area

People and Organisational Development's role as policy owner for all NICS HR policies (including pay and industrial relations) is to:

- 1) ensure that all NICS people policies are up to date and fit for purpose against all current legislative requirements; and
- 2) develop longer-term people strategies that support the organisation in achieving its aims.



URGENT ISSUES

- 2023 NICS pay offer
- Response to Tribunal case management of holiday pay



DECISIONS REQUIRED IN FIRST FOUR WEEKS

- Urgent decision required on NICS pay offer to allow negotiation with unions and implementation within a year of it being due.



BUDGET

£4.6m



STAFF

63.39

People and OD's corporate HR priorities are:

- Pay, Grading and HR Litigation – NICS pay negotiations and development of Pay Strategy; management of 70 smaller Industrial Tribunal cases with c.700 litigants, significant numbers of Holiday Pay cases and >40,000 cases against NICS Departments in form of large-scale public-sector-wide litigation on Pensions Injury to Feelings. Number of cases can fluctuate.
- Policy - a prioritised HR policy review and development plan.
- Workforce - effective and fair management of formal SCS surplus and SCS career development moves, and review of NICS Professions.
- Talent - People Strategy, NICS Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Graduate schemes, Civil Service Essential Skills pilot, and SCS performance management arrangement.
- Diversity & Inclusion - 'Count Me In' campaign, SCS Inclusive Leadership Development programme pilot, NICS Employability Programmes, outreach strategy focused on engagement with education sector, and Diversity Action Plan 2024/25.



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People & Organisational Development (People & OD)

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

- 2023/24 Diversity Action Plan launched July 2023.
- NICS Discipline, Grievance and Dignity at Work policies reviewed. Consultation with Central Trade Union Side (CTUS) underway.
- Recruitment and retention allowance policy developed for Ministerial decision (subject to CTUS consultation).
- [Public consultation – Review of Recruitment Advertising Policy.](#)
- New Apprenticeship policy developed.
- HR policy audit underway to benchmark HR policies against other organisations/jurisdictions.
- Completed Pay Strategy workshops seeking views of stakeholders.
- Case-managing multiple individual litigation and strategic cases such as: holiday pay, pensions and SO/DP recruitment.
- Industrial relations support/advice on industrial action. Regular reporting to NICS Board on impact of strikes and action short of strike.
- Eight SCS recruitment competitions progressed in 2023/24.
- Proposed HR MI dashboard for NICS Board developed.
- Early engagement with heads of profession to encourage development of career paths.
- Ongoing improvements to workforce analytics and insight.

Urgent decisions required within 4 weeks

Urgent decision required on NICS pay offer to allow negotiation with unions and implementation within a year of it being due.

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Agreeing and implementing NICS Pay award.
- Holiday pay retrospective settlement.
- Progress Recruitment Advertising policy.
- Management of Pensions Injury to Feelings cases and other cases/pay policy matters.
- Formulating a Pay Strategy for the NICS.
- Review and/or development of HR policies including: Reasonable Adjustments; Hybrid Working; Employee Mobility; and Performance Management.
- Development/implementation of employability programmes to support those furthest removed from labour market.
- Delivery of remaining NICS Diversity Action Plan actions.



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Land & Property Services (LPS)



Sharon Magee

Acting Chief Executive of LPS

Background to Policy Area

Land & Property Services (LPS) was formed in 2007/08 by the merger of four Executive Agencies: the Rate Collection Agency, the Valuation and Lands Agency, The Land Registers of Northern Ireland and Ordnance Survey NI.

LPS is made up of seven directorates which deliver a diverse range of land and property services and products, including the development of rating policy, property valuation, rates collection, land registration and the work of the Ordnance Survey.

LPS collects over £1.3bn in rates revenue annually to provide vital funding for public services.

LPS has started a major digital transformation programme (Nova) to replace its outdated legacy IT systems. The Nova programme will take over five years to implement in full and the value of the contracts may be up to £300 million over the next 20 years.



DECISIONS REQUIRED IN FIRST FOUR WEEKS

Decisions on level of regional rate poundages as part of the setting the NI Executive's budget for 2024/25.



BUDGET

Total approx. £71m, £47m of which is generated from fees and charges to users of the services.



STAFF

1,216.31



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Land & Property Services (LPS)

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

- NIO legislated for 2023/24 regional rates.
- Annual legislation passed to continue Small Business Rate Relief.
- Legislation drafted to reintroduce lapsed reliefs when Assembly returns.
- Emergency legislation passed to provide rate relief for flooded businesses.
- At Secretary of States's request, [launched consultation](#) on removal of seven rate reliefs.
- Provided evidence to the UK Covid Inquiry.
- Worked with BEIS on Economic Crime (Transparency Enforcement) Act 2022 to increase transparency of information on ownership of UK land by overseas entities.
- Prepared a draft Land Registry Fees Order.
- Awarded contract for new rate collection system; aiming to award contract for a new land registration system by March 2024.
- Permanent Secretary approved a non-domestic revaluation to come into effect on 1 April 2026. The antecedent valuation date has been legislated for.
- NICS Board mandated the use of the Pointer addressing format in all NICS systems which hold addresses.

Urgent decisions required within 4 weeks

Decisions on level of regional rate poundages as part of the setting the NI Executive's budget for 2024/25.

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Preparations for 2024/25 rate bills – dependent on passing Regional Rate legislation.
- Reintroduce lapsed rate relief for Rural ATMs and the Back in Business Scheme.
- Increase collection to raise £1.45bn in rate revenue – 92% of Gross Collectable Rates.
- Progress the procurement, award of contracts and implementation of the Nova projects.
- Publicising Reval 2026 and commencement of engagement with businesses and stakeholders in preparation for collecting market information.



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Digital, Security and Finance Shared Services (DSF)



Paul Duffy

Director of DSF



BUDGET

Resource £53.4m

Capital £11.8m



STAFF

598

Background to Policy Area

Digital, Security and Finance Shared Services (DSF) comprises:

Digital Operations:

- IT Assist, providing and supporting common IT services to the NI Departments and wider public sector; and
- Enterprise Digital Development providing development and support of shared applications and websites across the NI Departments and the wider public sector.

Digital Security and Engagement:

- Cyber Resilience and Assurance (including Northern Ireland Cyber Security Centre);
- Digital Engagement and Communications (including NIDirect website and contact centre);
- Promoting best practice in Information Management for the NICS;
- Digital Inclusion and Transformation; and
- Network and Information Systems (NIS) Regulator for NI.

Finance Shared Services provides:

Provides standardised, end-to-end financial transaction processing and reporting to the NICS and the wider public sector.

Integr8 Programme:

Is taking forward the development of an integrated model for finance and HR including the implementation of supporting technology.

Corporate Governance manages:

Manages Public Sector Shared Network, Data Centre and NIDirect contracts.



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Digital, Security and Finance Shared Services (DSF)

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

- Provision of common IT systems and services to 28,000+ users across the public sector and facilitating hybrid working for all NI departments.
- The NI Direct Contact Centre was critical in supporting the NI response to Covid-19.
- Exit and transition from the BT NI Direct Strategic Partnership contract successfully managed. Serco Ltd (new provider) started to manage all calls, emails, and contacts from 10th October 2022.
- Finance Shared Services processed £1bn in Covid-19 support grants.
- The Network and Information System Competent Authority is a statutory function of the Department to oversee the regulation of Health, Water supply and distribution and Transport and Energy sectors under the NIS regulations 2018.
- The finance system (Account NI) was successfully upgraded in September 2023.

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Launch Integr8 Delivery Partner procurement to support the design and implementation of new finance and HR solution for NI Departments.
- A Sustainability programme is underway within Account NI ensuring it is supported and secured until the Integr8 solution is operational. Current contract extension ends March 2026 (with optional 2 years).
- Increase cyber resilience in NICS by delivering a range of cyber initiatives.
- Commitment to NIDirect and funding for Contact Centre.



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Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD)



Sharon Smyth

Chief Executive of CPD

Background to Policy Area

CPD has three main areas of responsibility: Procurement, Property and Project Assurance/Delivery covered by six divisions:

1. Procurement Policy Division
2. Construction Division
3. Supplies and Services Division
4. Properties Division
5. Property Services Division
6. Commercial Delivery Group

CPD has two principal policy areas (i) public procurement policy; and (ii) Building Regulations (it had been agreed by previous Ministers to transfer Building Regulations to align with other relevant policy areas. Work has progressed to assess best fit and prepare to transfer this function to Department for Communities (DfC) alongside its new Building Safety Unit).

CPD acts as a Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) for Construction and Supplies and Services, providing professional procurement and construction related services to a wide range of public bodies.

CPD is landlord for 95 government offices; manages the grounds of the Stormont Estate and provides property maintenance services to over 200 clients.

CPD provides project assurance and commercial capability to a wide range of public bodies.



URGENT ISSUES

Implement recommendations from [NI Audit Office Report on Public Procurement](#) (published April 2023)



BUDGET

£36.5m Resource
£13.3m Capital
Income generation £13.4m



STAFF

320.33



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Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD)

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

- The Executive agreed (December 2020) to NI being included in the UK Procurement Bill. The Bill (now Act), which received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023, now requires secondary legislation to be made to implement some powers. Cabinet Office has consulted on a draft Statutory Instrument (SI) which includes NI. It is planned to lay this in Parliament in March 2024 with new regulations effective from October 2024. Executive agreement will be needed to table a Legislative Consent Motion in the Assembly.
- Power to make energy performance regulations was obtained in the Energy Act 2023. A SI to implement the relevant provisions will require Executive approval and appropriate Assembly procedures. Public consultations were launched on building regulation changes for energy efficiency and fire safety.
- Office Estate Review approved by NICS Board in July 2022 to reduce departments footprint.

Urgent decisions required within 4 weeks

Implement recommendations of the NIAO Report on Public Procurement.

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Progress the Office Estate Review (reduction of in-scope Estate by 40%).
- Implementation of Procurement Act 2023.
- Changes to the Building Regulations to be progressed to meet Energy Strategy and Fire Safety objectives.
- Progress the transfer of Building Regulations to DfC.



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Strategic Policy and Reform (SPaR)



Tony Simpson

Director of SPaR

Background to Policy Area

SPaR is responsible for:

- Providing economic and fiscal policy and analysis, including tax devolution, & fiscal floor analysis.
- Co-ordinating, leading and engaging on the development of an approach to public service transformation.
- Leading the Department's response to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.
- Providing economic advice on business cases.
- Determination of Public Sector Pay Policy and guidance which provides the basis for employers across the public sector to engage with their staff groups and develop pay proposal for approval and implementation.
- Co-sponsorship, management and governance of the Special EU Programmes Body. (SEUPB)
- NI management of PEACE PLUS, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programmes [total €1.6bn].
- Leading NI engagement on Levelling Up [to date £262m] and Future Funding opportunities.
- Member State role in the European Structural & Investment Funds 2014-2020 Programme (£523m).
- Managing EU Legacy Issues including Windsor Framework and divergence.
- Sponsorship of independent NI Fiscal Council.
- Inputting into draft NI Climate Change Action Plan
- Providing of policy directions for the Dormant Accounts Fund.
- Supporting the public sector through Business Consultancy Services and the Innovation Lab.
- Management of the NICS Economist Group.



URGENT ISSUES

Determine overall approach to implementation of 2023/2024 Pay Awards.



DECISIONS REQUIRED IN FIRST FOUR WEEKS

- Agree approach to pause and review of funding streams including Levelling Up Funding.
- Agree approach to engaging with UKG on Fiscal Floor and other Fiscal Matters.



BUDGET

£5.2m



STAFF

90



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Strategic Policy and Reform (SPaR)

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

- Engagement with political parties and Departments on return of an Executive, including analysis of Fiscal Floor and approach to transformation.
- 2022/23 & 2023/24 Public Sector Pay Policy Guidance published.
- Sponsorship of NI Fiscal Council and drafting of legislation to put on statutory footing.
- Sponsorship of Fiscal Commission NI and [public consultation](#) completed on recommendations.
- Approval and launch of PEACE PLUS.
- Reviewed DoF legislation for Brexit opportunities and progressed related minor change to Primary Legislation.
- Led discussions on UK Shared Prosperity Fund and secured concessions from UK Government.
- Engagement with UK Government on “Pause and Review” of funding streams including Levelling Up Funding.
- Four Departmental Rule 9 requests to the Covid Inquiry issued from the Department to date.
- DoF input to Climate Action Plan.
- Worked with stakeholders to develop proposed approach for Executive consideration on future of the Mournes.

Urgent decisions required within 4 weeks

- Agree approach to pause and review of funding streams including Levelling Up Funding.
- Agree publication of draft Climate Action Plan (including DoF input) for consultation.
- Agree approach to engaging with UKG on Fiscal Floor and other Fiscal Matters

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Determine Public Sector Pay Policy for 2023/24
- 2024/25 Public Sector Pay Policy.
- Determine approach to Fiscal Matters and DoF role in transformation.
- Fiscal Council legislation.
- Sponsorship of SEUPB; delivery of PEACE PLUS; Closure of 2014-20 ESIF Programmes.
- Lead NICS engagement with UK Government on paused funding streams and post-2025 funding arrangements for Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Windsor Framework - managing divergence; Democratic Scrutiny Committee.
- Providing statutory responses to Covid Inquiry.
- Meet statutory obligation in NI Climate Change Act.
- Dormant Assets directions.
- Innovation support and consultancy services to departmental clients.



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Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO)



Hugh Widdis

Departmental Solicitor

Background to Policy Area

While professionally independent, DSO is part of the Department. DSO provides legal advice, counsel and representation to serve, enable and empower government bodies in NI to achieve their objectives, within the rule of law.

Provision of litigation services to all departments and other public bodies, across a wide range of functions, including:

- Judicial reviews, which can be high profile and sensitive.
- Personal injury and other claims against government.
- Commercial and procurement litigation and alternative dispute resolution.
- Employment litigation.
- Regulatory appeals and Departmental prosecutions.

DSO also act on behalf of all NI Departments in commercial and property transactional legal matters including funding, commercial contracts and education, infrastructure and development, and commercial leasing, acquisitions and disposals.

DSO also provide a policy lead in the Department on civil law reform (CLR), which includes, amongst other policies, private family law, marriage and civil partnerships, gender recognition, the law of tort including defamation, and aspects of land law.



BUDGET

£4.9m
£6.1m income from charges
to other Departments



STAFF

179



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Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO)

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

Current work includes advising departments in relation to the discharge of their duties, powers and functions:

- Impact of EU Exit and REUL Act.
- Implementation of Windsor Framework.
- Construction of Casement Park.
- Mother and Baby Homes.
- Provision of specialist legal advice and support for Public Inquiries.
- Renewable Heat Incentive – judicial reviews and changes to scheme.
- Appointments to boards.
- Major infrastructure projects.
- Judicial review of departmental decisions taken in absence of Ministers.
- CLR: Policy development for a proposed Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill and consultation ongoing on the operation of the Defamation Act (NI) 2022.

- Working with HOCS and Perm Secretaries on the administration of devolved government in the absence of Ministers, associated constitutional change, and protecting decisions in the courts.
- Preparation of section 20 (Programme for Government) programme and supporting HOCS in facilitating a return to sustainable governance.

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Deliver on the objectives in the DSO 2023/24 Business Plan.
- Servicing the Departments' responses to the Covid-19 and other Inquiries.
- Support legal aspects of return of Ministers.
- Develop new line of service for the implementation of the Windsor Framework.
- To support Finance Minister in reporting to the Assembly on the operation of the Defamation Act (NI) 2022 and other developments in defamation law and Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill.



Department of

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An Roinn

Airgeadais

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)



Philip Wales

Chief Executive and Registrar
General for Northern Ireland

Background to Policy Area

NISRA is an Executive Agency of DOF, and the primary source of statistics, analysis and research on the economy, society and population of Northern Ireland. NISRA's functions include:

- Collecting data to produce and disseminate key statistics and analysis.
- Supporting policy makers through the production of timely, high-quality analysis to enable evidence-based decision-making.
- Responsibility for the delivery of registration services – including birth, death, marriage, adoption and gender recognition registration services – through the General Register Office (GRO).
- Conducting the Census in Northern Ireland.

NISRA works across departments, with the wider UK statistical system and with partners in academia to produce research inputs and analysis in support of policy objectives.

To deliver these services, NISRA manage a network of around 470 statisticians and other staff across 24 government departments, executive agencies and arms-length bodies in Northern Ireland. NISRA employs a professional and high-performing field force producing many statistics designated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) as meeting the 'National Statistics' kite mark.



DECISIONS REQUIRED IN FIRST FOUR WEEKS

- Agree the recruitment of new members to the statutory Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC).
- Agree NISRA's approach to scope delivery options for the next Census in Northern Ireland.



BUDGET

£10.8m supporting £32.6m in current expenditure in 2023/24



STAFF

472.4



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Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

- During Covid-19 changes (approved by the Finance Minister) were introduced to enable the electronic transfer of documents between the various parties to the registration of deaths and still-births by telephone without an informant's signature. In January 2024, under the Executive Formation Act, the Permanent Secretary approved General Register Office to start exploratory work to identify options to make these changes permanent, and to extend remote and electronic registration to births. This would align with the position adopted in England, Wales and Scotland.
- In August 2022 NISRA launched a consultation seeking views on changes to its statistical outputs to help address financial constraints. Following the consultation 10 outputs will be scaled back in frequency/content, six outputs will be suspended, and five outputs have been delayed. Reflecting feedback, two outputs proposed for suspension will now be reviewed.
- The New Decade New Approach document refers to births, deaths and marriages being registrable through Irish. The Regulations to introduce the first step (headings on certificates in Irish) commenced on March 2022.
- Many of NISRA's outputs are regulated by OSR, which monitors our compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics. This requires us to compile high-quality, valued, trustworthy and impartial statistics. NISRA's relationship with DoF and the Minister are consequently set out in our published [Framework document](#).

Urgent decisions required within 4 weeks

- Agree the recruitment of new members to the statutory Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC).
- Agree NISRA's approach to scope delivery options for the next Census in Northern Ireland.

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Provide high-quality registration services through GRO.
- Publish Census 2021 Flexible table builder to allow users to examine data on demand.
- Begin delivery of Census 2021 micro-data products for research.
- Begin transforming the Labour Force Survey into an online first Labour Market Survey.
- Produce official population estimates in line with pre-announced tables.
- Publish official economic and labour market statistics in line with pre-announced dates.



Department of

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Finance Division



Stewart Barnes

Finance Director

Background to Policy Area

- Finance Division is responsible for the management, monitoring and reporting of the Department's budget.
- This includes providing support and advice to business areas through the network of finance business partners.
- In addition, the Division has responsibility for Corporate Governance across the Department, including risk, fraud prevention, business case assessment and providing assurance on adherence to the Governance Framework.
- The Division also contains the Audit Authority responsible for auditing of EU programmes.



DECISIONS REQUIRED IN FIRST FOUR WEEKS

Agreement of departmental budget for 2024-25



BUDGET

£2.8m



STAFF

53.8

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

The Division was responsible for the agreement across business areas and allocation of the Department's 2023-24 budget allocation and taking appropriate actions to ensure delivery of spend within the budget limits. Currently we are on target to do so.

Urgent decisions required within 4 weeks

Agreement of departmental budget for 2024-25

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Delivery of the 2023-24 budget within expenditure limits.
- Agree allocation of the Department's 2024-2025 budget settlement across DoF business areas.
- Production of Annual Report and Accounts within statutory time frame.



Department of

Finance

An Roinn

Airgeadais

Corporate Services Division (CSD)



David Hughes

Director of Corporate Services



BUDGET

£850,000



STAFF

15.2

Background to Policy Area

CSD maintains and promotes key departmental corporate policies including the departmental Equality Scheme. The Division's remit includes information management, data protection, Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Regulations, security, health and safety, public appointments, handling concerns and complaints raised about the work of the department. The team also has responsibility for support to the Departmental Board's People and Resources Committee, Open Government policy and for sponsoring the Legal Services Commissioner.

The Head of CSD is the Senior Information Risk Owner, Departmental Security Officer and Designated Officer for concerns.

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

CSD was established in September 2023 to provide better alignment of functions and mirror the approach taken in other NI Departments. Staff and budgets moved from other areas of the Department to establish the new Division.

Previous ministerial engagement included the DoF Equality Scheme. This sets out how the Department is committed to meeting its statutory obligations on the promotion of equality and good relations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The updated Equality Scheme published in February 2022 can be viewed on the [DoF website](#).

Priorities for 2023/2024

To progress secondary legislation required to commence and give effect to the Legal Complaints and Regulation Act (NI) 2016.



Department of

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Communications and Engagement Division (CAED)



Mark McLaughlin

Head of CAED

Background to Policy Area

The Communications and Engagement Division includes Permanent Secretary's Office, Ministerial Private Office, Media and External Communications, Internal Communications Engagement and Events and CAED Directors Office

Key functions include:

- Strategic and operational support to the Permanent Secretary.
- Conduit between Minister and the Department and between the Minister and other Departments.
- Development of DoF Business Plan
- Responsibility for the design and delivery of strategic media and external communications activities including all digital channels.
- Internal communications including staff engagement events.
- Delivery of NICS Live events to all departments providing practical information and advice with a strong emphasis on mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- Responsibility for staff recognition through Imperial Service Medals (recognising long service) and managing nominations of staff and departmental representatives for Honours and Garden Parties.
- Secretariat to the DoF Board.
- Secretariat to the Non-Executive Directors Forum.



URGENT ISSUES

- Identifying Ministerial priorities
- Completing Minister and SpAd Declarations of interest
- Completing SpAd contract of employment and salary



BUDGET

£1.94m



STAFF

26.5



Department of

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Communications and Engagement Division (CAED)

Work to date including previous important ministerial decisions and engagement

- CAED works closely with the Minister on a daily basis providing a range of support to assist them and the Special Adviser (SpAd) in their respective roles.

Priorities for 2023/2024

- Effectively support the Minister and SpAd in their roles.
- Promote the work, priorities and policies of the Minister and Department including consultations, rate reliefs, recruitment opportunities and NISRA statistics.
- Development of 2024/25 Business Plan.
- Formulation of People Survey Plan to respond and take action on the 2023 People Survey.
- Delivery of DoF staff engagement programme.
- Delivery of NICS Live events to staff across all NI Departments.



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Departmental Board

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The Departmental Board provides the collective strategic and operational leadership in support of the Minister.

The role of the Board includes:

- setting the strategic direction for the Department, including its vision, values and strategic objectives;
- developing and overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes in line with the Department's strategic direction;
- monitoring performance against corporate plans, budgets and targets;
- overseeing the strategic management of the Department's staff, finance, information and physical resources; and
- establishing and overseeing the implementation of the Department's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management.

The Board does not decide policy or exercise the powers of the Minister.

The Board reviews its own effectiveness each year and, every 3 years, an independent external verifier is invited to evaluate the review process.



Department of

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Airgeadais

Non-Executive Board Members (NEBMs)

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The role of Non-Executive Board Members on the Departmental Board entails specific responsibilities.

These include:

- assisting and advising on the development of Departmental business and strategic plans;
- monitoring and challenging the Department's performance in relation to its objectives and commitments;
- active participation in the planning of Departmental budgets and in financial decisions;
- identifying and advising on new challenges, initiatives and opportunities;
- challenging the quality of policy making; and
- representing the Department as required.



Joan McEwan

Chair of the Departmental Audit and Risk Committee and of NISRA's Audit and Risk Committee.



Olwen Laird

Member of the Departmental Audit and Risk Committee, Member of NISRA's Audit and Risk Committee and Member of the Department's People and Resources Committee.



Department of

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Policies and procedures

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- [Ministerial Code](#)
- [Guidance for Ministers in the exercise of their official responsibilities](#)
- [Special Adviser Code of Conduct](#)
- [Scheme defining categories of registrable interests](#)
- Official Secrets Act 1989 – available in Annex 7 of the [NICS Standards of Conduct policy](#).
- [Use of Electronic Communications Policy](#) at (6.11) of the NICS staff handbook
- [Email policy](#)
- [Mobile Device policy](#)
- [Official information held in non-corporate channels policy](#)



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List of decisions taken under the provisions of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2022

MONTH	DECISION TAKEN TO:
DECEMBER 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine Public Sector Pay Policy for 2022/23. • Make a formal NICS pay offer. • Make a temporary revision to the Department for Infrastructure's (DfI) Productivity Unit (PU) Scheme for road workers, until the end of March 2023. • Approve an option in a business case developed by the DfI which provides for negotiations with unions on an issue relating to DfI out-of-hours emergency response.
JANUARY 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage Valuation Industry Experts to provide independent professional advice and expertise on specifying requirements for an innovative IT solution based on industry knowledge, industry trends and advancements and international best valuation practice. • Approve the laying of the Report on the 2022 Review of the Effects of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 in the NI Assembly as required by Section 10 of the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014. • Approve the Northern Ireland Water Limited Pay Remit for 2022-23. • Approve the Department of Health (DoH) Agenda for Change and Salaried Doctors and Dentists pay remits for 2022-23.
FEBRUARY 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve of the use of external consultants to review Covid-related grant schemes administered by all Northern Ireland Departments between March 2020 and December 2022. • Approve the PSNI Federated and Superintending pay remit for 2022/23. • Approve the extension of the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 in relation to death registration for a further 6 months until 24 September 2023. • Approve the making of the Public Service Pensions (Exercise of Powers, Compensation and Information) Directions (Northern Ireland) 2023. • Support a TEO-led cross departmental initiative to approach UKG to request they legislate on behalf of NI to preserve the operation of devolved retained EU law pending the return of the NI Executive and Assembly.



MONTH	DECISION TAKEN TO:
MARCH 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the 2022 pay remit for the Northern Ireland Prison Service. • Offer industrial unions a beneficial change to the Dfl Productivity Unit (PU) Scheme for road workers. • Approve the making of the Pensions Increase (Review) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023. • Approve the making of the Public Service Pension Revaluation Order (Northern Ireland) 2023. • Approve the recruitment of a CEO for Tourism Ireland for a 5-year fixed term contract. • Offer industrial unions a further adjustment to the Dfl Summary Productivity Unit (PU) Scheme for road workers for 2022 pay. • Approve the PSNI's Chief Police Officers pay remits (Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, and Assistant Chief Constable). • Approve the changes to two allowances in payment to serving PSNI officers. • Approve the Northern Ireland Water Alpha Pay Remit for 2022-23. • Appoint new members of the Programme Monitoring Committee to oversee the implementation of the Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme within the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds. • Launch a public consultation concerning a draft Statutory Rule covering the 2015 Remedy ('McCloud'): retrospective phase, as failure to implement or any delay in the Statutory Rule coming into operation on 1 October 2023 would mean failing to comply with a statutory obligation.
APRIL 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the DoH pay awards for Specialty Doctors and Associate Specialists (SAS) for 2022/23 and HSC Senior Executives for 2020/21 and 2021/22. • Impose 2022 non-industrial pay award in the NICS. • Agree the recommendations within the NI Expert Panel's Building Safety report, which is now available on the DoF website.
MAY 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer NICS unions an increase in subsistence levels for staff working away from the office on official business. • Impose 2022 industrial pay award in the NICS. • Publish a summary of responses that were gathered through the "Consultation on devolution of more fiscal powers." • Not increase the minimum weighted score for social value from 10% to 20%. The increase in the minimum weighted score was subject to approval by the NI Executive. • Determine Public Sector Pay Policy for 2023/24.



MONTH	DECISION TAKEN TO:
JUNE 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve a technical policy change under the NICS Recruitment policy to allow using a condensed, less detailed form of newspaper advertisement which will alert the reader that the NICS is recruiting for various job roles and direct them to the NICS recruitment website, (which would contain a fuller job role advert and positive action statement specific to that role). • Approve a temporary derogation to the NICS secondment policy to facilitate the secondment of a specific group of staff from DAERA to the GB Civil Service (Defra) to deliver the construction of permanent facilities at Northern Ireland’s points of entry in line with the Windsor Framework agreement between the EU and the UK Government. • Proceed with the annual Whole of Government Accounts (Designation of Bodies) Order (Northern Ireland) for the 2022-23 financial year. • Approve the Northern Ireland Housing Executive proposals for a one-off cost of living payment to its employees. • Provide retrospective DoF approval to DoH for the expenditure incurred on the retrospective application of the NIFRS Development to Competent Pay policy as outlined in the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) Development to Competent business case. • Launch a public consultation on proposed amendments to Part E (Fire safety) of the Building Regulations 2012 (as amended) and to Technical Booklet E (Fire safety), which provides supporting guidance to implementing the Part E fire safety requirements. • Approve the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) pay award for 2022-23. • Approve an increase in fees for the Chair and Panel Members of the Industrial Court. • Approve DoH request for NIFRS to offer a one-off payment of £1,000 (net) to 33 employees to ‘buy’ them out of their terms and conditions in moving from a weekly to a monthly pay cycle.
JULY 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve a DoH request to temporarily amend Agenda for Change (AFC) terms and conditions to allow overtime at Band 8A for 4-6 staff within Child Protection and Looked After Children services in the SHSCT only from 1 July to 30 September 2023. • Award external consultancy via direct award up to a maximum of £15k. • Proceed with the publication of a ‘Phase 2’ Discussion Document and Pre-Consultation on delivering uplifts in Part F (Conservation of fuel and power in buildings) of the Building Regulations and other associated matters. • Progress a public consultation on the NICS recruitment advertising policy. • Approve the following Pay Remits: Further Education Lecturers Pay Award for 2021-22 and 2022-23.



MONTH	DECISION TAKEN TO:
AUGUST 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish the Annual Procurement Report. • Request that UKG, to improve legal clarity and accessibility, amend Art4(a)(v) of the Statutory Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 to replace: “Retained Direct EU Legislation (within the meaning of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, if the power is expressed to be exercisable by statutory rule for the purposes of this order” with “Assimilated direct legislation, if the power is expressed to be exercisable by statutory rule for the purposes of this order”. • Approve the NI Water Total Rewards Evolution (Pay Transformation), which involves restructuring its salary framework from pay progression to performance related pay linked to market rates. • Extend an interim solution in respect of terms and conditions for a group of staff in DfI Roads and Rivers. • Renew NICS membership of Stonewall Diversity Champions. • Approve the extension of the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 in relation to death registration in NI.
SEPTEMBER 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place new NICS Pension Scheme Regulations, to fulfil the requirements of Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022. • Instruct Land & Property Services to commence work on the next non-domestic revaluation for Northern Ireland; antecedent valuation date 1 April 2024, operational date 1 April 2026. • Make the Public Service Pensions (Valuation and Employer Cost Cap) Directions (Northern Ireland) 2023, complying with a statutory requirement to make these directions under Section 11 and Section 12 of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.
OCTOBER 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence a recruitment competition to replace the Utility Regulator Board Chair and one member, whose current term of appointment ends in June and September 2024 respectively. • Approve recruitment and retention premiums to Consultant Forensic Pathologists working in the Department of Justice State Pathology Department, and an increased responsibility allowance for the NI State Pathologist. • Approve the introduction of pay progression for Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) staff.



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MONTH	DECISION TAKEN TO:
NOVEMBER 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the remit for Further Education Senior Staff Pay Awards for 2021-22 and 2022-23. • Approve the remit for a Planning Appeals Commission and Water Appeals Commission Pay Award for the period 01 August 2022 to 31 July 2023. • Approve the introduction of pay progression for Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland (COPNI) staff. • Approve changes to pay related terms and conditions of the Chief Executive of the Probation Board NI. • Increase the term (to February 2027) and value (by £273,419) of the current contract to provide specialist legal services in support of the LPS NOVA Programme. • Increase the value (by £239,476) of the current contract to provide specialist financial / commercial services in support of the LPS NOVA Programme. • Approve the 2022-23 pay remit for HSC Senior Executives.
DECEMBER 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislate for short term rate relief, from 29 October 2023 to 31 March 2024, aimed at mitigating the financial impacts of recent devastating localised flood damage. • Approve the Education Authority Assistant Directors pay remit for 2022-23. • Approve the CCEA Chief Executive pay remit for 2022-23. • Approve the pay remits for Northern Ireland Certification Officer 2022-23 and Labour Relations Agency Chair and Board Members 2022-23.
JANUARY 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the 2022/23 Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority Pay Remits. • Explore options to enable birth registration by telephone or electronically, and the inclusion of electronic documents and their transmission in the birth registration process. • Approve the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Directors Pay Remit for 2022-23. • Approve the Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta Chief Executive Pay Remit for 2022-23. • Approve the Northern Ireland Police Fund pay remit for 2021-22 and for 2022-23. • Approve the introduction of legislative amendments to death and still-birth legislation to enable the provisions in the Coronavirus Act to be made permanent. • Approve the extension of the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 in relation to death and still-birth registration for a further 6 months until 24 September 2024.



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