

Statement to Parliament: Syria update: Penny Mordaunt statement to Parliament

Mr Speaker, I would like to get on record that the aid workers who have been attacked in South Sudan are very much in our thoughts. Aid workers should never be a target. The whole house will want to join me in sending our support to them and to their families.

Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the United Kingdom's support for the people of Syria. I am keenly aware that Honourable Members are deeply concerned about the level of suffering experienced by millions of Syrians. The United Kingdom has shown, and will continue to show, leadership in the international humanitarian response.

In the eighth year of the conflict the plight of the Syrian people remains grave. The Syrian regime appears to have no intention of ending the suffering of its own people, despite the opposition placing no conditions on peace negotiations.

The barbaric attack in Douma on innocent civilians, including young children, was yet another example of the regime's disregard for its responsibility to protect civilians. Some may seek to cast doubt over the attack and who was responsible, but intelligence and first-hand accounts from NGOs and aid workers are clear: the World Health Organisation received reports that hundreds of patients arrived at Syrian health facilities on the night of 7 April with "signs and symptoms consistent with exposure to toxic chemicals."

Regime helicopters were seen over Douma on that evening: the Opposition does not operate helicopters or use barrel bombs.

Asad and his backers, Russia and Iran, will attempt to block every diplomatic effort to hold the Regime accountable for these reprehensible and illegal tactics. That is why the United Kingdom, together with our US and French allies took co-ordinated, limited and targeted action against the Regime's chemical weapons' capabilities to alleviate humanitarian suffering.

Britain is clear: we must defend the global rules based system that keeps all of us safe. And I welcome the support we have had from members of this house and from the international community.

We will work with the UN and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to create a new independent mechanism to attribute responsibility for chemical weapons attacks.

We will work with France on the International Partnership against Impunity, and with the EU to establish a new sanctions regime against those responsible for chemical weapons use.

In wielding its UN veto twelve times, Russia has given a green light to Asad to perpetrate human rights atrocities against his own people – a regime that

has used nearly seventy thousand barrel bombs on civilian targets.

A regime that tries to starve its people into submission, despite the UN Security Council calling for unhindered humanitarian access.

A regime that has continued to obstruct aid to Eastern Ghouta and removes medical supplies from the rare aid convoys that do get in.

A regime that deploys rape as a weapon of war, with nearly eight out of ten people detained by the regime reported to have suffered sexual violence.

A regime that deliberately bombs schools and hospitals, and targets aid workers and emergency responders as they race to the scene to help.

We must support the innocent victims of these atrocities. All warring parties must comply with the Geneva Conventions on the protected status of civilians and other non-combatants. There must be an immediate ceasefire and safe access for aid workers and medical staff to do their job.

We also want to adapt what we do to the new reality of this war. That is why I have announced the new 'Creating Hope in Conflict' fund with USAID to work with the private sector to find new technology to save lives in conflict zones, and Britain will establish a humanitarian innovation hub to develop new capabilities to hinder regimes who appear determined to slay innocent men women and children.

Our aid has made a difference. Despite the horrific violence meted out by Assad, we have been able to prevent mass starvation, and large scale disease outbreaks. When we are able to reach people who need our help, our aid works.

We are the second largest bilateral donor to the humanitarian response in Syria. Since 2012, our support has provided over 22 million monthly food rations, almost 10 million medical consultations, and over 9 million relief packages.

But the suffering continues.

13.1 million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance. Over half of Syria's population has been displaced by violence, with nearly 6 million seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

In north-west Syria, an intensification of hostilities and the arrival of an additional 60,000 people from Eastern Ghouta is stretching scarce resources. Today, 65% of the population of Idleb – over 1.2 million people – have been forced from their homes.

At last week's Conference ["Supporting the future of Syria and the Region" in Brussels], I announced that the UK will provide at least £450 million this year, and £300 million next year to alleviate the extreme suffering in Syria and provide vital support in neighbouring countries. This will be in addition to our support for the second EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey. We have now committed £2.71 billion since 2012, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis.

Our pledge will help keep medical facilities open to save lives. We will deploy protective equipment to keep medics and rescue workers safe. We will deploy antidote stocks to treat any further victims of chemical weapons use. We will train doctors and nurses to treat trauma wounds.

We will focus on education, making sure that every child in the region has access to quality education even in the most trying of circumstances; and on steps to protect civilians and ensure that those responsible for attacks will face justice. And we will help support the millions of Syrian refugees sheltering in neighbouring countries.

Our friends in the region, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey in particular, continue to demonstrate extraordinary generosity in opening their doors to millions fleeing the conflict in Syria.

We must continue to offer them our fullest support. Last week I announced that the UK will host an international conference with Jordan in London later this year. It will showcase Jordan's economic reform plans, its aspiration to build a thriving private sector, and mobilise international investment.

There are refugees who can't be supported in the region: people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk of exploitation. We will work closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to identify those most at risk and bring them to the UK.

We are helping. But, with Russian support, Asad continues to bomb his own people – that is why so many continue to die and so many have fled their homes.

There can be no military solution to the Syrian civil war. As UN Special Representative, Staffan de Mistura, said in Brussels last week, the Asad regime risks a pyrrhic victory unless they and their backers engage in a genuine political process. Only this can deliver reconciliation and the restoration of Syria as a prosperous, secure and stable state.

The UK will continue to support the efforts of the UN, under the Geneva process, to this end. The obstacles remain serious – the regime has shown no inclination to engage seriously so far, and the Security Council remains divided.

But the international community cannot and should not resign themselves to failure. The costs for Syria, for the region, and for the wider international rules based system are too great. The Foreign Secretary was in Paris last Thursday to discuss with key partners how we should intensify our efforts to bring this conflict – and its causes – to an end.

Whilst we actively work to find a political solution, the UK will continue to stand alongside the people of Syria and the region; to do what we can to alleviate human suffering; and to demand immediate access for aid workers to all those who need our help.

I commend this statement to the house.

Speech: Aurora Spring Forum 2018

It is wonderful to be back in Oxford, not only because of many happy memories, but also to be in a city that is central to so many energy breakthroughs.

In 1976 Professor Goodenough formed a research group from around the world to tackle the intractable problem of how to make batteries rechargeable.

And these great minds struggled, they even had to call out the fire brigade when experiments went wrong... But of course in 1980 they published their findings in Materials Research Bulletin.

The world took notice – the lithium ion battery changed the world, although it meant that officials could pester ministers at any time, day or night.

So many academic innovations have sprouted from this academic powerhouse, from nuclear fusion research at Culham to Professor Snaith's new understandings of perovskites which could transform solar power.

And it is harnessing the value of this sort of world changing innovation that we want to see right across the UK, and particularly in the energy portfolio.

That's why this government has set out the biggest ever increase in public research and development investment; three billion pounds more invested every year by 2021.

And it is that focus on innovation, research, development, commercialisation which underpins the Industrial Strategy.

Looking at how we invest in Britain's historical strengths to create the high-growth firms and well-paid jobs is essential to redress many of the imbalances of our economy, and make sure we are fit for the future. And our modern Industrial Strategy doesn't just celebrate engineering developments, it celebrates ideas.

That's why it's so great to be hosted by Aurora today, a relatively new energy research company, trying to do things differently...

... and one that has already grabbed a leading position across Europe.

And that was one of the reasons we tapped into one of Aurora's founding directors, to ask for his wisdom and his experience of the energy sector, to lead the Independent Cost of Energy Review.

This was commissioned as a no-holds barred look at how we deliver more affordable energy, to look at how we keep the lights on, while decarbonising, how we create innovation, and how we balance those relationships and those responsibilities between the public sector and the market.

The review has sparked a debate, a vibrant debate if I might say, about how we actually get to an energy market where active consumers, not producers, are central; where the pyramid of supply and distribution is turned upon its head; where we realise the potential of the investments we've been making now for many years in new clean energy technologies.

And where we implement ideas and spending according to a framework. One of the frameworks we've been using a lot in the [Clean Growth Strategy](#) which I authored last year, is the idea of a triple test that investment makes sense if it decarbonises, if you can see a cost trajectory so that means you don't burden consumers with expensive innovations over the long term, and where you actually create and leverage a strategic innovation that means you can export that technology globally.

And since [Dieter's Review](#) was published, we have also published the [Industrial Strategy White Paper](#), which once again emphasised the importance of energy to our economic success.

And showed a reliable, affordable, and smart energy system provides the backbone for a stronger, fairer, and more productive society.

And how new technologies, AI, big data, EVs, autonomous vehicles are not just disruptive in their own sector but are also hugely disruptive to the energy sector as well.

And how creating the conditions for success for fair competition is so central to innovation.

And also how energy systems are central to the broader challenge of clean growth, 1 of the 4 [Grand Challenge of the Industrial Strategy](#). An energy system that underpins, benefits from and accelerates the transformation of our economy.

And Dieter's Review covered very eloquently many of these arguments. Much of his diagnosis is compelling, articulated brilliantly.

He talks about the disruptors that are coming along in this sector, the move from passive to active demand, more and more zero marginal low cost clean generation.

We are now buying at prices unimaginably low compared to just a few years ago. Access to cost-effective storage technologies that scale; linking in electric mobility into the grid.

Dieter says that these changes are happening regardless of what government does, whether we like it or not, this is the way the market is moving.

And so for me the job of government is to re-examine the bits that we do, the bits of the market that we are involved in, the frameworks, the policies, the regulation that we put in place, to make sure that they are fit for purpose.

That they encourage this innovation, they increase competition, and they don't have unintended consequences down the road.

And I think if we manage these changes well, the historic tension between cost, CO2 and security becomes irrelevant.

It's a little bit like the conversation we have for clean growth, where some had always imagined that a green future meant hunkering down in caves.

Recessions are really good for cutting carbon emissions, and there are still politicians out there who would rather like that to be the case.

But actually, if you look at what the UK has done when it has decarbonised more and grown faster than any other G7 nation since 1990, that these 2 things go hand in hand.

And it's the same with the age-old energy trilemma.

And of course, if it's the UK innovators who develop the technologies to achieve those goals, we reap those industrial and economic benefits, bringing home the benefits of the world's pivot to this low-carbon future in a way that generates highly productive jobs and growth at home.

So Dieter's Review brings that challenge to life, and without front-running the response to the consultation, I did want to dwell on three of his findings, not all 68 of them, don't worry.

The first was the necessity for more active management of the system.

The huge increase in distributed generation, the opportunity for more demand-side response, and the potential for creating new demand for electric heating creates a requirement for a less passive local grid.

Grid management is hard enough in the current top-down system, the idea of having intermediates and end-states of supply and demand I think is incredibly challenging.

And so, Dieter's proposal for the system of neutral regional systems operators is extremely interesting. And it's part of the process that we're already going through, which has already seen us create a much more independent systems operator role for National Grid.

Dieter's review challenges us to consider whether and how we should go further. The network industry has come forward with initial proposals, which we're looking at, many of them suitably ambitious.

But we will be working closely to ensure that these go beyond 'business-as-usual' and deliver the framework that we need to move us to this future. We have to get this right.

And secondly, Dieter's eye-catching proposal for the equivalent firm power auction is worth dwelling on. When considering this, I am mindful that many of the tools are actually working well.

I know we've taken a fair share of criticism for how we got here, but if you look at what the tools are delivering, CfDs are delivering offshore wind at

57 pounds per MWh with every prospect of further reductions, and with an industry that is being created as part of that supply chain, right across the UK.

The Capacity Market is giving confidence to industry that there is no risk to supply at keener and keener prices. And of course the 'Beast from the East' tested the resilience of the systems right across Europe and the UK. I think there are lessons to be learned, but overall our gas and electricity systems proved robust and responsive.

The market frameworks we had in place provided National Grid with the tools they needed.

Dieter's challenge is how do we evolve today's arrangements, so they can adapt to this pace of change and achieve this end-state that we want to see going forward.

And the Capacity Market is obviously a key part of that evolution.

So later this year, we will be conducting a formal review to mark 5 years since this introduction, asking some key questions:

Have we got the penalty regime right? Are the outcomes of the market aligned, not just with the security of the energy system, but with the triple test I described, and the ambition we have in the Industrial Strategy?

Should it be open to new technologies, like renewables as we are seeing in Ireland? How do we include battery technology into this mix? How do we work with demand-side response and small-scale gas installations, which have already confounded prior expectations?

Understanding and answering these questions will help simplify the system in line with Dieter's recommendations, whilst maintaining robust energy security and delivering on our triple test.

But as we consider these changes, we have to create market structures and regulation that continue to make the UK one of the leading destinations for energy investment.

I think that clarity of regulatory structure and confidence in the system are a hugely important part of that. As we look to the future, I think it's worth reflecting on the work that we're doing now to ensure well-regulated, competitive markets deliver value and service for customers. That markets work for customers in a way that consumers perceive industry they should.

We've seen huge improvements in the efficiency of our home energy system, thanks to the smart regulation insulation measures.

I've given lie to the argument that all this stuff we do, the investing in the future of energy, is somehow putting up prices.

Whilst we've seen a policy price increase, bills have gone down in the average household because of excellent improvements in energy efficiency, and

as we made clear in the Clean Growth Strategy.

We want to build on that success. I'll be reviewing the ECO obligation very shortly, which I want to pivot as much as possible to helping those living in fuel poverty, making sure that it provides a much better route to market for innovation technology in the home efficiency space.

We're regulating so that landlords have to ensure the homes they let are cheaper to run.

We've exempted many of our energy-efficient industries from many of the levies that we have brought forward. And we've also taken tough decisions in 2015 to cut subsidies while focusing resources on strategically important sectors like offshore wind and nuclear.

And just this month you may have seen that I brought forward the Price Cap Legislation, with very strong cross-party support.

This is not an attempt to set energy prices in Westminster.

This is an attempt to help the market speed up its evolution to a more competitive marketplace.

We have a problem in this market as in so many others, which is asymmetry of customer information: a group of highly enabled, digitally-savvy consumers who are able to take advantage of switching deals that are on offer given the new entrance on the market, and then a much larger group of those who are not as aware or as able to take advantage of those opportunities and worryingly tend to be older, less wealthy, less educated, often more vulnerable.

And we know that the market is working hard with its regulator to address many of those problems... But we want to make sure that that acceleration continues. That's why we're bringing forward a time-limited, intelligent intervention in the market to help reset this market to ensure it works for consumers.

And it's part of a huge package of work that is coming forward:

- smart meter roll-out
- faster switching
- half-hourly settlements
- midata portability

Together this will mean that switching will be almost instantaneous and extremely easy to do. Dieter has made clear proposals in this area about what the cap should include. It is quite rightly being developed by Ofgem and I'm sure they will be listening carefully to Dieter's recommendations when they bring forward the cap.

That cap will be in place by the end of this year.

Dieter's review also makes absolutely clear that government has an important role to play in new nuclear. Dieter calls it a societal choice, as to whether

to invest in nuclear.

But for us, it's more than that. For us, nuclear has a crucial role to play in creating a diverse, reliable energy supply that reduces our CO2 emissions, creates a cost trajectory that we can see going forward and contributes enormously to the Industrial Strategy, to the creation of exportable innovation and capability.

I have no doubt that nuclear is a vital part of the mix both in the UK and for the global community to meet its Paris commitments.

It is also a sector that can deliver innovation, growth, and high-quality jobs for the economy.

But to get these benefits, we have to get costs down.

And this is a joint partnership between government and industry.

For me it's about innovation. It's about understanding how new technologies techniques, whether it's digitisation, modular manufacturing, whatever it is, can help simplify and standardise the nuclear new-build process, and potentially find new markets for that technology.

I'm extremely mindful of the role of government in supporting new nuclear...

We're studying the results of the NAO report carefully.

If we can get this right, we can maintain our position at the forefront of nuclear innovation. That, for me, is an example of the Clean Growth Grand Challenge in action.

But whether it's nuclear, or the rest of the energy supply, we have got to think hard about the policy and regulatory changes that we bring forward and be mindful of the unintended consequences that can happen, not just currently, but over a decent period of time going forward.

The government's ambition is for the UK to have the lowest energy cost in Europe for both households and businesses, whilst delivering on our CO2 targets and ensuring security of supply. We don't know how markets will look in 50 years' time.

There are so many disruptive technologies out there, from digitalisation, AI, the continued galloping fall in the cost of clean technology.

For me, this is the most exciting moment in the energy industry in the UK since privatisation, and this change will only accelerate going forward.

More renewables, coal getting off the system by 2025, increasing amounts of distributed energy, more storage, more demand-side, more local generation; again inverting this pyramid, from passive consumers and the top-down approach, to energy moving up and down the system.

And that's before we confront the challenge that a more electrified heating

system may place on the system. If you look at the Clean Growth Strategy, we're looking at what hydrogen pathway looks like, what increased electrifications looks like; there are radical changes coming forward that will hugely impact the investment decisions we take.

And for me, central planning of anything, whether it's of an economy or an energy system, means taking often poor choices for short-term ends, and stifling innovation.

The way to get beyond that is to put the consumer, not the producer, at the heart of energy policy.

Firms who create value for consumers – whether they're large energy-intensive industries, or little old ladies paying on standard variable tariffs – the firms that create the value and deliver the service for those consumers, not the firms which are best at lobbying government, are the ones that are most rewarded by investment and by market share.

A system where market participants who innovate and can reduce both costs and emissions over time, thrive. That is the challenge we all face, whether it is government, regulators or indeed incumbents. That is the market that we want to see coming forward.

If we get it right, the astounding opportunities that are out there, both in solving our own energy problems and solving the energy problems of the world are just immense.

Helping the world's poorest countries never build a coal-fired power station, but moving straight to a distributed, renewable policy, using some of our climate finance to make that happen.

If we can unlock that future, then the opportunities for UK-based innovation, economic growth and job creation are absolutely immense.

And again, I pivot back to the Industrial Strategy.

The people in the room will know about the Faraday challenge, the first beneficiary of one of the major investments to come out of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund...

Investing where we have a comparative advantage in technology, where we have an industry working from a position of strength,

... we already manufacture 1 in 5 of the electric vehicles sold in Europe,

... overflowing any benefit into the renewables industry where distributed storage is what will unlock possibilities going forward

... and bringing it all together in a public- private way that drives jobs and growth and innovation and ultimately productivity.

And so, this ambition of a clean low cost innovative energy supply that works for customers, creates strong supply chains, really is built on incredible

innovation and knowledge and development, just like we saw in Professor Goodenough's lab.

That is the prize that is out there for us.

And ultimately, we want to seize that opportunity, create those long-term commercial advantages in the UK, but make sure that when we commercialise and bring them to market, that IP is also kept in the UK and contributes to our economy going forward.

Thank you very much.

Speech: Dr Liam Fox challenges anti-free trade myths

International Trade Secretary and President of the Board of Trade, Dr Liam Fox MP will today call on people across the country to be bold and optimistic in promoting the benefits of free trade.

In a lecture at the Speaker's House today (Monday 30 April), he will say that people need to stand up and challenge the myths about free trade.

Making a specific address to colleagues at the event in Parliament, he will ask them to show leadership because they have a responsibility to future generations to make the case for a liberalised, global trading system.

The speech marks the beginning of a long-term drive that will speak to the British public, consumers, businesses and global investors over the coming months. This is a debate that Liam Fox wants to take place in households across the country.

He will say that for too long the argument has been focused on misleading claims about food standards. Instead he wants to shift the focus of the debate onto the opportunities the global market can bring: for example increased UK exports of pharmaceutical drugs to poverty ridden countries.

Dr Liam Fox MP, International Trade Secretary is expected to say:

It would be a major political mistake to assume that the case for free trade is so self-evident that it does not require champions today. We have seen the way in which trade agreements such as the EU's proposed agreement with United States (TTIP) produced violent reactions, however carefully orchestrated, in traditionally free-trade countries such as Germany.

We need to distinguish between the violent anti-capitalists and the

legitimate concerns of those worried about the effects that free trade and the development of new technologies may have on their own jobs and communities.

We need people – to confront the myths and wilful distortions perpetuated by the anti-trade lobby.

It is not only our democratic duty but our responsibility for the generations to come to build the case for free trade by making coherent arguments that are attractive across the political spectrum.

On increasing consumer choice, he is expected to say:

If we're not willing to take head-on the deceptions of the anti-trade lobby then we will deny to future generations, including those in developing countries, the benefits of free trade that we ourselves have enjoyed with improved living standards, improved safety and reliability of goods and improve choice for consumers.

We can all see the benefits of greater choice, greater competition and lower prices in the vast array of goods in our shops and supermarkets where traditional seasonal provision has given way to year-round availability of an increasingly wide selection of produce – from quality Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand or coffee from South America. We are also seeing increasing demand for global goods with the growth of world food aisles and the popularity of superstores like Whole Foods and Aldi.

He is also expected to say:

...I believe that trade is one of the means by which we can spread prosperity. That prosperity underpins social cohesion and that in turn underpins political stability. That political stability in its turn provides the building blocks of our collective security. It is a continuum that cannot be broken in one part without affecting the rest.

This is why we must take head-on the destructive arguments of the anti-trade lobby whose narrative is that free trade is nothing more than a global corporate conspiracy, a front for their wider ideological anti-capitalist agenda.

They peddle the irresponsible myths that agreements such as the new EU trade agreement with Canada, CETA, will result in reduced protection for workers, a degradation of food and environmental standards and the forced privatisation of organisations like our

NHS. Such false claims are as dangerous as they are pernicious.

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[Press release: Government to launch review into carbon monoxide alarms](#)

- review will examine existing legislation, checking if it remains fit for purpose
- ministers to consider reforms once review reports back

A government review into rules that require carbon monoxide alarms to be fitted in homes across England has been announced today (30 April 2018) by Housing Minister Dominic Raab.

Around 8 million carbon monoxide alarms are currently installed in homes across England – a requirement when solid fuel appliances such as wood burning stoves and boilers are installed, as well as in private rental properties that feature a solid fuel appliance.

Launching later this year, the review will examine the regulations closely to establish whether they remain fit for purpose.

This will include whether there should be a blanket requirement to install alarms for all methods of heating, including gas and oil.

The review will also consider whether the cost of alarms is affecting installation rates and will look at new research into the number of carbon monoxide poisonings.

The announcement follows on-going discussions between ministers at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Eddie Hughes MP, who has called for extending the regulations to cover all social housing tenants and all combustion appliance types.

Housing Minister Dominic Raab said:

Carbon monoxide can be a silent killer and my top priority is to ensure people remain safe and protected in their own homes.

Working with Eddie Hughes, who has a long track record of campaigning on this issue, this review will look into the adequacy of the current laws and ensure they are providing residents with

the necessary protection.

Eddie Hughes MP said:

I'm pleased the Housing Minister has responded positively to my campaign and the work done by all those involved in raising awareness of this silent killer.

I look forward to the outcome of the review and will continue to campaign for improved safety to protect others from the threat of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Any future changes would take account of the outcome of the government's consultation on the operation of private rented alarm regulations and the Dame Judith Hackitt [independent review](#) into building regulations and fire safety.

Further details of the review's terms of reference will be announced by the government in due course later this year.

The government's building regulations require the safe installation of combustion appliances in all properties, new and existing, regardless of fuel used or tenure. From 2010, these regulations have also required carbon monoxide alarms when solid fuel burning appliances are installed.

In 2015 the government introduced new regulations requiring private rented sector landlords in England to have a carbon monoxide alarm in any room used as living accommodation where solid fuel is used

Whilst there is a downwards overall trend for carbon monoxide poisonings, the government has continued to raise awareness about the risks posed by combustion appliances and the measures available to reduce the risk of poisoning.

Any reform recommended by this review will be subject to ministers' agreement, further consultation and scrutiny.

Eddie Hughes MP is the Member of Parliament for Walsall North and is a member of the All Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group on Carbon Monoxide.

Mr Hughes previously proposed regulatory changes via his [Carbon Monoxide \(Detection and Safety\) Private Members Bill](#).

Press release: Appointment of new Chair of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Karen Bradley MP today announced the appointment of Deirdre Blakely Toner as the new Chair of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland.

The appointment will take effect on 1 June 2018.

The Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland

The Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland are independent of Government and the Northern Ireland Civil Service, and have a statutory responsibility to uphold selection on merit for appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). The Commissioners also hear appeals under the NICS Code of Ethics. Commissioners work in partnership with the NICS and other stakeholders to uphold the merit principle and promote public confidence in recruitment.

Biography of Appointee

Deirdre Blakely Toner is currently Chief Executive Officer of Samaritans Ireland and serves as an independent member on the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Deirdre has over 30 years' experience in governance, performance and risk management from working across the voluntary, community and public sectors in Northern Ireland and further afield. She is a graduate of Public Administration and Management, and Human Rights law with the University of Ulster and Transitional Justice Institute.

Terms of Appointment

Deidre Blakely Toner will take up appointment from 1 June 2018. Her appointment is for a five year term.

She will receive remuneration of £16,000 per annum for Chairing Civil Service Commissioner meetings and participating in Commissioner's business as required by the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order.

This is a Crown Appointment.

Political Activity

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity in

defined categories within the last five years to be made public.

The appointee has declared no such political activity in the past five years.