

NEWS RELEASES

THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

22 June 2006

A STEP TOWARDS A FIRST CLASS SERVICE FOR VICTIMS - HANSON

Victims' Minister, David Hanson, today welcomed a report from the Interim Victims' Commissioner, Mrs Bertha McDougall, and said it would help Government devise a first class service to victims and survivors and their families.

Mr Hanson said the interim report from Mrs McDougall was a most welcome step on the road to developing a strategy for the future.

"This is a complex issue especially in the light of the fact that the significant amount of EU money which was available in this area is now beginning to dry up," said the Minister.

"Continuity of funding is an issue and this is one of the reasons why the Government appointed an Interim Commissioner to help chart the way ahead. Mrs McDougall's interim report is a vital step and an important one for all with an interest in addressing the needs of all victims and survivors of the troubles.

"So far around £44 million, with the Government providing nearly £37 million, has been provided over the past seven years and currently around £5 million is being made available by the Government each year to support statutory and voluntary groups across Northern Ireland. We need to put measures in place to manage the transition to a reduced level of EU funding, to streamline our support and make it more efficient in the light of the changing needs of victims and survivors.

"The fact that the Interim Commissioner will produce a full report at the end of the year is another significant step. I will be meeting with Mrs McDougall again to discuss the entire issue so that we can establish a first class service for victims in the future."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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