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HOME

ABOUT THE NIO

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MEDIA CENTRE

ARCHIVED NEWS

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

LINKS

CONTACT US

PUBLICATIONS

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

VACANCIES

PROCUREMENT



Swire Publishes Government Response to Consultation on Political Donations in Northern Ireland

THURSDAY 20 JANUARY 2011

Swire Publishes Government Response to Consultation on Political Donations in Northern Ireland



NIO Minister of State, The Rt. Hon Hugo Swire MP, has today published the Government's response to the public consultation on the confidentiality arrangements that apply to donations and loans to Northern Ireland political parties. The consultation closed on 25 October 2010 and a total of twenty six responses were received.

The Government has carefully considered the responses and has concluded that legislation should be brought forward to ensure that the identities of donors and lenders should continue to be kept confidential for a further two years. The Government will however explore during this time whether modifications can be made to the current arrangements to provide for

increased transparency and will bring forward further legislation if necessary to achieve this.

The Minister said: "I recognise and support the desire for full transparency in politics and on the funding of political parties in particular. But I accept with regret that there remain concerns in Northern Ireland about intimidation which makes it difficult to achieve this. I will therefore bring forward secondary legislation to ensure that donor

identities in Northern Ireland remain protected until 2013.

I also believe that there is a case for greater transparency in the current system and we will continue to examine the possibility of bringing forward further legislation to achieve this."

[View the Response Document](#)

[Notes to Editors](#)

The Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 provides for the confidentiality arrangements that apply to NI political donations.

The law currently provides for donations and loans above certain thresholds to be reported to the Electoral Commission, but the Commission is under a strict duty not to release information relating to these donations publicly.

The Act originally provided for an expiry date of the confidentiality arrangements of 31 October 2010;

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however Parliament recently passed the Control of Donations and Regulation of Loans etc. (Extension of the prescribed period) (Northern Ireland) Order 2010 which extended this to 1 March 2011, to allow for consultation.

The same confidentiality arrangements apply to loans to political parties by virtue of The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (Regulation of Loans etc: Northern Ireland) Order 2008.

Secondary legislation will be brought before Parliament very shortly to provide for the extension of the current arrangements before the prescribed period expires on 1 March 2011.

Primary legislation will also be brought forward at a later date to ensure that donations made during the prescribed period will be kept confidential when this period expires and may also be required to make modifications to increase transparency in the current system.