

The Government's spending plans for the Northern Ireland Office provide for an additional £140 million of spending in 2005-06 compared to 2002-03, clearly demonstrating its full commitment to building a lasting peace with security in Northern Ireland. Excluding exceptional programme expenditure, these plans provide for growth of average 3.5 per cent a year above inflation in resources for the Northern Ireland Office over three years. This will allow the Northern Ireland Office to build on the substantial resources it received in the 2000 Spending Review and continue:

- implementing fully its Good Friday Agreement pledges;
- building a modern and efficient Police Service of Northern Ireland that is properly representative of all traditions in Northern Ireland and secures growing respect, trust and support;
- bringing about key reforms in the system of justice in Northern Ireland, which will also secure the respect, trust and support of all traditions in Northern Ireland; and
- providing for a properly financed independent Police Oversight Commissioner, Police Ombudsman, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, support for Victims of the Troubles and the Bloody Sunday Inquiry.

PEACE AND SECURITY FOR ALL IN NORTHERN IRELAND

19.1 The aim of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is to secure a lasting peace in Northern Ireland, based on the Good Friday Agreement, in which the rights and identities of all traditions are fully respected and safeguarded and in which a safe, open and tolerant society can thrive and prosper. The NIO will also seek to maintain positive and constructive relations with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government, and to contribute effectively to the work of the British-Irish bodies.

19.2 The political structures set out in the Good Friday Agreement, namely the Northern Ireland Assembly and the British-Irish bodies, continue to function. The implementation of the Patten reforms on policing continues with the first 300 recruits on a 50:50 Catholic/Protestant basis being appointed. The Policing Board was established in November 2001 with cross-community membership and agreement on a new police badge. Progress also continues on key reforms in the system of justice in Northern Ireland with legislation likely to receive Royal Assent in the summer of 2002. The Independent Commission on Decommissioning verified the first acts of IRA arms decommissioning in October 2001 and April 2002. The work of bodies including the Police Oversight Commissioner, Police Ombudsman, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, and Equality Commission continues.

19.3 Over the 2002 Spending Review period, the Northern Ireland Office will have a range of challenging Public Service Agreement targets building on those agreed in the 2000 Spending Review. These include two targets on increasing public confidence in policing and the criminal justice system in both communities in Northern Ireland, increasing Catholic representation in the Police Service of Northern Ireland to 30 per cent by 2011 as well as targets for reductions in specific types of crime and the rate of re-conviction. There is also a value for money target on reducing the cost per prisoner place in the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

A modern police service for the 21st century

19.4 The Northern Ireland Office will continue to receive substantial new resources over the next three years to continue to finance a modern, efficient and fully inclusive Police Service of Northern Ireland which secures widespread popular support. The investment for reform and modernisation includes resources for the on-going recruitment programme, the establishment of a new training college, the latest information and communications technology, refurbishment of police stations as well as a fleet of modern police vehicles. The aim is to provide the people of Northern Ireland with a modern and responsive police service for the 21st century; a police service which they can trust and support.

Reform, justice and fairness for all

19.5 The Northern Ireland Office will press ahead with legislation to implement the reforms recommended by the Criminal Justice Review and an updated Implementation Plan will be published. Through implementing these reforms, the Northern Ireland Office will place human rights principles and instruments at the core of a reformed justice system and establish basic principles to underpin the whole system. A single independent prosecution service will also be established. A new tariff-based Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme is replacing the current arrangements that will provide victims with a simpler, quicker and more accessible service. The Northern Ireland Office will ensure that funding will continue to be made available for the Police Oversight Commissioner, Police Ombudsman, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Investing in modern prisons

19.6 The Northern Ireland Prison Service is committed to ensuring, as far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its staff, prisoners and others who come in contact with the service. In taking forward the Modernising Government agenda, the service extended video-conferencing technology for pre-trial hearings to HMP Maghaberry which has reduced significantly the movement of prisoners to courts, provided a greater degree of security and the more efficient running of courts; an innovation that has already secured substantial savings for the taxpayer and will be extended more widely in the 2002 Spending Review period.

19.7 The Prison Service is keenly aware of the dangers caused by the illegal use of drugs in prisons and has appointed a Drugs Coordinator to help combat drugs use in Northern Ireland prisons. A strategic review of the prison estate will be carried out to determine the size and structure of the estate to meet future custody demands. A capital modernisation programme is currently taking place in the Juvenile Justice Centres.

Other commitments

19.8 The resource plans also provide the Northern Ireland Office with sufficient funds to meet its other commitments including criminal injury and damage compensation and core departmental modernisation initiatives.

SPENDING PLANS

Table 19.1: Key figures

	£ million			
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Northern Ireland Office				
Resource budget	1,143	1,088	1,128	1,162
Capital budget	60	64	57	72
Total Departmental Expenditure Limit¹	1,170	1,114	1,144	1,190
Near-cash spending in NIO DEL ²	1,151	1,083	1,109	1,150

¹ Full resource budgeting basis, net of depreciation.

² Consistent with previous control basis.