

Press Statement, 19 August 2016

NORTHERN IRELAND LEGAL CHALLENGE TO TRIGGERING ARTICLE 50

Letters were sent to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the 22nd of July 2016 on behalf of our clients whose rights and interests are affected, in different ways, by the United Kingdom giving notice under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union to the European Council of its intention to withdraw from the EU.

We have now received a response from the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The various assurances sought by our clients have not been forthcoming and, indeed, the response heightened their concerns about the approach the Government was likely to take. In light of this, papers were lodged in the High Court in Belfast on Friday 19 August 2016 seeking leave to apply for judicial review.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

Our clients:

- The following clients are politicians and Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly:

Steven Agnew MLA, Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for North Down, Leader of the Green Party in Northern Ireland

Colum Eastwood MLA, Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for Foyle, Leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, former Mayor of Derry (2011-2012)

David Ford MLA, Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for South Antrim, Leader of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, formerly Northern Ireland Minister of Justice (2010-2016)

John O'Dowd MLA, Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for Upper Bann for Sinn Fein, former Minister for Education (2011-2016), former acting deputy First Minister (2011)

- The following clients have close associations with the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland:

Dessie Donnelly, Director (Development) of Participation and the Practice of Rights, an Irish citizen living in Belfast, married to a French citizen

Dawn Purvis, former Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for Belfast East (2007-2011), former Leader of the Progressive Unionist Party (2007-2010), former Programme Director of the Marie Stopes Belfast Centre (2012-2015), former Independent member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (2006-2007)

Monica Wilson OBE (received for services to people with disabilities), former member of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and past president of the European Union of Supported Employment

- The following client is an independent human rights organisation with cross community membership in Northern Ireland:

Committee on the Administration of Justice

- The following client is a charity with over 160 member organisations from across all communities in Northern Ireland who work together towards a human rights based society which includes a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights:

The Human Rights Consortium

Other actions

This claim differs from other actions being taken in relation to the triggering of Article 50. For example the actions in London do not, it is understood, deal with the unique requirements of Northern Ireland constitutional law and statute, in particular the statutory recognition of the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement, and satisfying the requirements of EU law incorporated into the law of Northern Ireland by the European Communities Act 1972.

Jones Cassidy Brett Solicitors