

Role Description

Job Title: Director General - Northern Ireland Office

Grade: SCS 3

Location: London or Belfast but frequent travel between two locations

Reporting to: Permanent Secretary - Sir Jonathan Stephens

Background

This is a challenging and demanding role, but also a rewarding one. Operating across key stakeholders in London and Belfast, it offers a unique and exciting opportunity to operate at the very heart of the Northern Ireland Office. Reporting to the Permanent Secretary with line management of four Directors, this post will have a pivotal role in advancing Northern Ireland's interests with key partners in the Cabinet Office, Treasury, Ministry of Defence and other security agencies, as well as representing the UK Government's interests in NI directly with key politicians, community and business leaders and security partners.

Although a small department, this new post will combine significant leadership, strategy, policy and corporate responsibilities in a very challenging policy and operational context. As well as the challenges of restoring the institutions under the Belfast Agreement and advancing proposals to help NI come to terms with its past, NI issues are at the heart of Brexit and the future of the Union. Given the changing challenges and uncertainty in Northern Ireland, the post will initially be short term focussed on developing a cross-government strategy for Northern Ireland - with scope for review after 9 months or so.

The Role This role will provide strategic leadership and direction on all aspects of the NIO's business including, political strategy, the sensitive and complex policy and casework issues around Northern Ireland's past, on constitutional and rights issues, including aspects of EU exit, and continuing change and delivery of corporate services. The Director General will develop strategy and manage senior relationships, working closely with Directors and the wider senior management team spread across two locations. We are a flexible and agile department, used to responding to the unexpected, so this role will regularly provide new issues and responsibilities to explore.

The Director General will also play a key role with the Permanent Secretary and other Directors as part of the Senior Leadership Team of the Department, taking responsibility for oversight of the NIO's corporate well-being and culture and other projects. Together with the Permanent Secretary, the Director General will sit on the Departmental Board and, separately have responsibility for oversight of the NIO's Committees for People & Resources, Culture & Engagement, Policy & Strategy and the Audit and Risk Committee.

Key Responsibilities

The precise responsibilities of the new Director General may change in response to outside factors, but are expected to include:

- Planning and driving the long term cross-Government strategy for Northern Ireland, in the light of EU Exit and political developments, to reflect the Government's commitment to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, to the Union, and to Northern Ireland's peace, political stability and prosperity;
- Increasing understanding of NI in Whitehall, in order to support development and delivery of such a cross-Government strategy, working in particular with the Cabinet Office, HM Treasury, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and other interested departments;
- Working closely with the Cabinet Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and key posts abroad (particularly Dublin and Washington) to ensure this strategy reflects, and is reflected in, the UK's wider relationships;
- Ensuring this is reflected in the approach to NI issues in discussions on the future relationship with the EU;
- Representing the UK Government with key political, security and economic stakeholders in Northern Ireland, and working with them to ensure Northern Ireland's interests are reflected in UK Government decisions;
- Reviewing, with the Senior Leadership Team, NIO's purpose and resourcing to enable it to lead the cross-government strategy.
- Play a leading role in the NIO's corporate leadership, including line management of four Directors.

These responsibilities will contribute directly to the Department's objectives of making politics work, creating a stronger society and ensuring the NIO is fit for the future. But they will also feed into the Department's other objectives of creating a secure and more economically prosperous Northern Ireland.

A high priority will be to build and manage senior relationships with the centre of Government in Whitehall, the Northern Ireland Executive, Civil Service, and the wider community, to ensure that the work and role of the Northern Ireland Office is fully understood, maximising the impact and support that can be provided to partners across Government.

Given the size of the Department and the breadth of its portfolio, which has expanded significantly over the past twelve months, the post-holder will have very regular exposure to the Secretary of State, the wider ministerial team and Special Advisers, as well as other senior officials across Whitehall and in partner agencies.

Regular travel to Belfast and London will be required.