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Simon Hoare MP
Chairman
Northern Ireland Affairs Committee
By Email: northircom@parliament.uk

04 June 2020

Dear Simon,

Thank you for your letter of 1 June. The UK Government understands the deep frustration of those who were injured in the Troubles and their families. Victims have waited too long for these payments and we are extremely disappointed by the current delay. The Government provided a legislative framework for this scheme in the absence of an Executive and the Executive must now deliver.

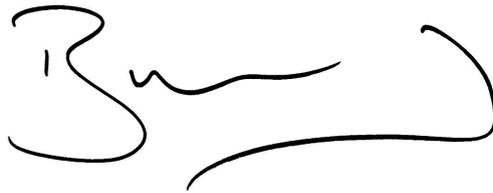
Your letter suggests that funding is holding up the establishment of the scheme. This is not the case. Discussions about funding are not preventing the Executive from being able to progress implementation. The key step to unblocking progress is the designation of a Department to provide administrative support to the Victims Payments Board. It is encouraging that the Minister of Justice is content for her department to be that designated department and I urge the Executive to formalise the way forward to get the scheme underway.

You recommend that I convene meetings. I have written and spoken to the First and deputy First Ministers on several recent occasions about the need to address delay to the scheme. Sinn Féin has been clear that it wants to reopen the criteria by which eligibility for the scheme will be determined but this is already set in legislation and provides a fair basis for helping those who suffered most throughout the Troubles. It is therefore imperative that Sinn Féin, along with all the parties, enable the scheme to move forward as the time for delay is done.

Since January my officials have been providing practical support to the team preparing to deliver the scheme, in the wider interest of ensuring that the spirit and letter of the Regulations are implemented as quickly and effectively as possible.

I will continue to urge the Executive to make progress and I will keep the Committee updated on their progress. But I must be clear that it is for the Executive to now put in place the arrangements that will allow victims to receive payments. The discussions and delay of the past few years have gone on long enough. The time has come for the Executive to get this done and deliver for those people who will benefit most.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B Lewis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**THE RT HON BRANDON LEWIS CBE MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**