

The Lord Dannatt GCB CBE MC

By email: dannattr@parliament.uk

27 November 2025

Our ref: MC/25/682

Dear Lord Dannatt,

Earlier this month during an Urgent Question, I committed to write to you with details of the veterans' protections in the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill.

As the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made clear during the recent Second Reading of the Bill, we owe our Operation Banner veterans an enormous debt of gratitude. Their service and their sacrifice will never be forgotten, and we have a duty of care to all those who served.

That is why the Bill puts in place strong protections, which were not included in the 2023 Legacy Act. There is no single Part of the bill which contains these protections because we want to ensure they are considered throughout the operation of the whole framework.

The protections against repeated investigations appear in five places across the Bill (Clauses 30, 31, 36, 51 and 84). Part 3 places a duty on the Commission not to do anything that duplicates any aspect of previous investigations or proceedings, unless it is essential. This is a very high threshold.

Clauses 54 and 84 include our right to stay at home, where we are changing the law to ensure no Northern Ireland veteran is forced to travel to Northern Ireland to give evidence in an inquisitorial proceeding or to an inquest, where modern technology will enable them to engage remotely.

Clause 56 sets out a right to anonymity which will ensure that all veterans are entitled to seek anonymity when giving evidence.

Clause 69 provides for protection in old age, which will require the Commission to consider the health and wellbeing of elderly witnesses, including whether it would be appropriate for them to give evidence at all.

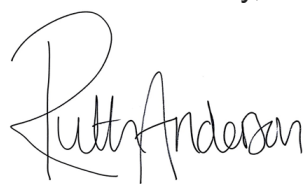
Clause 8 provides for a statutory advisory group that will provide an opportunity for the voices of all those victims and survivors of the Troubles to be heard, including those from the armed forces. This group will, of course, not include anyone who has previously been involved in paramilitary activity. The Commission will also be required to take account of wider circumstances surrounding incidents being investigated.

There is a further protection where, separately to the legislation, the Government is ensuring that veterans will be protected from cold calling through a new protocol. This will ensure they are only ever contacted with the support of the Ministry of Defence, meaning that from the moment of contact they are supported by the state that asked them to serve.

We promised our veterans who served with honour in Northern Ireland that we would put proper protections in place, and the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill delivers on that commitment. These robust safeguards will ensure the rights of those who served their nation so honourably are protected whilst providing victims with a human rights compliant, fair, and transparent system to seek answers.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the House of Lord's library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Ruth Anderson'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'R' at the beginning.

BARONESS ANDERSON OF STOKE ON TRENT