



## **Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland**

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### **MORE PEOPLE URGED TO SERVE ON PUBLIC BODIES**

The Public Appointments Commissioner, Felicity Huston, today urged more people to apply for appointments to Quangos.

Speaking at Newtownards Rotary Club, Mrs Huston, said it was vital that the boards and committees which make so many important decisions on behalf of everyone in the community are truly representative.

“In Northern Ireland we have a wide variety of bodies to which people are appointed by dint of their expertise and experience. They do a very important job on behalf of society,” said Mrs Huston. “Whilst it is vital that appointments are made on merit – that the best are picked – sometimes this means the body is not as reflective of the community as it might be.

“I feel quangos should be made up of as diverse a range of people as possible – coming from all arts and parts and having a wide range of life experiences. That is why I want more volunteers from under-represented groups such as minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

“The Review of Public Administration will bring big changes and so the time is right for those who criticise quangos for being too white, too middle class and too male, to put their money where their mouth is and apply. Of course there is no guarantee that they will be chosen but if people are not in they cannot win. Only by widening the range of applicants can we change the balance of appointments.”

The Commissioner continued: “I would also encourage younger people to give their time to public service in this way. Those in junior or middle management have different insights from older people and the experience of sitting on boards helps their own professional development.

“I have looked closely at this issue and it is clearly not all one way traffic – all give and no take. Those who sit on public bodies do in general receive some remuneration – but they do not do it for the money. Serving on a public body can give you a wider understanding of the world around you and also a chance to learn from those you serve with.”

For further information please contact Felicity Huston on 028 9080 6080.