

Press Release

Monday 3rd JULY 2006.

Monstrous Myths from Quangoland

Felicity Huston, Northern Ireland's Public Appointments Regulator today re-launched her website. The aim of the website is to inform the man and woman in the street how the public appointments process works. It is also designed to generate interest in applying for public appointments.

Felicity states "There are still far too many myths about how you get appointed to a public body. Here are just a few examples:

It's still who you know – the old boys' network

False: It's not who you know, but what you can do that counts.

Public appointments are carried out under the guidance of the Commissioner for Public Appointment's Code of Practice. This Code insists on openness, transparency and independent scrutiny amongst other things.

I can't belong to a political party and serve on a quango

False – Anyone can be a member of a political party and be appointed to a public body. We ask that you complete a political activity form when you apply for a post. This is detached from your application form and **NOT** used to assess your suitability. It will only be referred to in a press release if you are appointed to the body. It is also sought for statistical purposes.

The selection process for quangoes involves days of tests and interviews.

No – the process involves filling in an application form and if you are judged to meet the criteria you will be called for an interview. This will very rarely last longer than one hour.

If there are too many from one side of the community on a board then they'll only look at those who apply from the other side – to even out the numbers.

False – We're interested in what you know, not where you come from. Government Ministers must appoint on merit – i.e. the best person for the job. The form asking for your religion and ethnic background is again detached from your application and is **NOT** used to assess whether you meet the criteria for appointment. The answers are used for statistical purposes and will not be made public."

Felicity added

"These are just a few examples of the myths and legends surrounding Northern Ireland's Quangoland. Today I am re-launching our website at www.ocpani.gov.uk.

Anyone interested in finding out about the realities of quangoes and how you get appointed should look at it.

You can find out how the appointments process works; who's involved and what quangoes each government department is responsible for. There is a link to the database on upcoming appointments, where you can register to be kept informed.

I will be publishing my 2005/06 Annual Report on the site this autumn.

I hope the website will help slay a few Quangoland dragons.”

Ends

For further comment contact:

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Notes for editors

The Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland is independent of government and responsible for the Code of Practice for Public Appointments which sets the standard by which appointments are made.

Felicity Huston was appointed Commissioner in August 2005. She is the first person from Northern Ireland to hold the position.