

Northern Ireland Assembly — Current State & Context

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|||**Last updated:** 16 July 2026|

Overview

Detail	Info
Legislature	Northern Ireland Assembly (Stormont)
Seats	90 MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly)
Voting system	Single Transferable Vote (STV) in 18 five-member constituencies
Last election	5 May 2022
Next scheduled election	By May 2027 (at latest)
Executive	Northern Ireland Executive (power-sharing mandatory coalition)

2022 Election Results

Party	Seats	Change	First-Preference %
Sinn Féin 	27	0	29.0%
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) 	25	-3	21.3%
Alliance Party 	17	+9	13.5%

Party	Seats	Change	First-Preference %
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) 	9	-1	11.2%
Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDLP) 	8	-4	9.1%
Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) 	1	0	7.6%
People Before Profit (PBP) 	1	0	1.1%
Green Party NI	0	-2	1.9%
Independent Unionist	1 (Claire Sugden)	0	—
Speaker	1 (Edwin Poots, ex-DUP)	—	—

Current total: 90 seats. Sinn Féin is the largest party for the first time ever — a historic result.

Current Executive (from 3 February 2024)

Office	Minister	Party
First Minister	Michelle O'Neill	Sinn Féin
deputy First Minister	Emma Little-Pengelly	DUP
Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs	Andrew Muir	Alliance
Communities	Gordon Lyons	DUP
Economy	Caoimhe Archibald	Sinn Féin
Education	Paul Givan	DUP
Finance	John O'Dowd	Sinn Féin
Health	Mike Nesbitt	UUP
Infrastructure	Liz Kimmins	Sinn Féin
Justice	Naomi Long	Alliance
Junior Minister (FM)	Aisling Reilly	Sinn Féin
Junior Minister (dFM)	Pam Cameron	DUP

Speaker: Edwin Poots (non-party) — recused from Donaldson-related Assembly business since 29 June; calls to step aside pending DUP review outcome. **Deputy Speakers:** Carál Ní Chuilín (SF),

Notable MLA Changes

MLA	Change	Date	Details
Julie Middleton (DUP, Foyle)	Co-opted	13 Apr 2026	Replaced husband Gary Middleton (resigned due to mental health challenges)
Patsy McGlone (SDLP, Mid Ulster)	Announced retirement	29 May 2026	SDLP's longest-serving MLA (since 2003) will step down at next election (May 2027)
Doug Beattie (ex-UUP, Upper Bann)	Resigned from party	31 May 2026	Quit UUP after claiming "deliberate and vindictive" campaign against him; now sits as Independent
Edwin Poots (Speaker, ex-DUP)	Recused from Donaldson business	29 Jun 2026	Recused himself from Matter of the Day debate on Donaldson; Alliance/SF calling on him to step aside pending review

Co-option Watch

Current status: One in eight Stormont MLAs are unelected (co-opted without a by-election), per a January 2026 democracy campaign group report (Belfast Telegraph). The co-option process allows parties to fill vacancies without a by-election. A 2022 analysis found co-optees had a 96% re-election rate.

This mandate's co-options so far:

- Julie Middleton (DUP, Foyle) — replaced Gary Middleton, Apr 2026
- Andrew McMurray (Alliance) — replaced Patrick Brown (post-election 2024)
- Sorchá Eastwood → replaced (post-election 2024, elected to Westminster)
- Jim Allister → replaced (post-election 2024, elected to Westminster)
- Alex Easton → replaced (post-election 2024, elected to Westminster)
- Robin Swann → replaced (post-election 2024, elected to Westminster)

(Sources: [Belfast Telegraph](#), [BBC](#))

Party Leaders

Party	Leader	Since
Sinn Féin (all-Ireland)	Mary Lou McDonald	Feb 2018
Sinn Féin (NI)	Michelle O'Neill	Jan 2017
DUP	Gavin Robinson	May 2024
Alliance	Naomi Long	Oct 2016
	UUP	Jon Burrows
SDLP	Claire Hanna	Oct 2024
TUV	Jim Allister	Dec 2007
PBP	Gerry Carroll (NI rep)	—

Timeline

2 June 2026

|- Beattie was "aggressive" at UUP meeting, local association claims: The Upper Bann Ulster Unionist Association pushed back against Doug Beattie's resignation letter, claiming he was "aggressive" at a meeting with party officers. The claim emerged as the association's version of events following Beattie's departure on 31 May, in which he accused the party of a "deliberate and vindictive" campaign against him. The UUP association's account appeared designed to counter Beattie's narrative that he was a victim of a party move to the right. The continuing public back-and-forth underscores the depth of the split and will keep pressure on UUP leader Jon Burrows' leadership ahead of next year's Assembly election. *(Source: BBC News NI)*

|- New mayors installed across Northern Ireland: Róis-Máire Donnelly (SF) officially installed as Lord Mayor of Belfast — the city's first Irish-speaking mayor. Other council mayoral chains were also handed over. *(Source: BBC News NI)*

|- Lady Donaldson 'did nothing' about alleged abuse incident, court hears: The Donaldson trial continued at Newry Crown Court with evidence that Lady Eleanor Donaldson was told about an alleged sexual abuse incident involving Sir Jeffrey Donaldson and "did nothing" about it. The prosecution's case continued with heated exchanges between Eleanor Donaldson's barrister and Complainant A. The trial is expected to run around four weeks. *(Sources: BBC, The Irish News, RTÉ)*

|- Alex Kane: "If you're serious about an electoral comeback, you have to look serious about it": Political commentator Alex Kane wrote a column analysing UUP infighting, questioning whether the party can mount a credible electoral challenge given its current internal divisions and the loss of Doug Beattie. *(Source: The Irish News)*

|- DUP says 'significant concerns remain' about watered-down employment bill: The DUP reiterated its opposition to the Good Jobs Bill, stating "significant concerns remain" even as the legislation was reported to have been watered down. The bill remains at Committee Stage with the Executive deadlocked. *(Source: The Irish News)*

|- Top DfE civil servant admits he and senior officials 'messed up': A senior Department for the Economy civil servant accepted that he and other officials "messed

up" in their handling of certain matters, in a rare admission of fault at a Stormont committee. (Source: *The Irish News*)

|- Programme for Government update criticised as 'heavy on numbers but light on accomplishments': The Executive's Programme for Government update was met with criticism, with analysis suggesting it contained numerous metrics but little evidence of concrete delivery. Joint First Ministers heralded "collaborative endeavour" in the update. (Source: *The Irish News*)

|- Paul Frew launches bid to strengthen police powers to seize e-scooters and scramblers: DUP MLA Paul Frew introduced a proposal to allow police to seize illegally used e-scooters and scramblers without prior warning. (Source: *The Irish News*)

|- Senior Sinn Féin press officer who quit over paedophile reference now working for Falls Community Council: Seán Mag Uidhir, who resigned as a Sinn Féin press officer after controversy over a paedophile reference, was recruited by the Falls Community Council where his brother Harry Maguire is a director. (Source: *The Irish News*)

||- Social housing fraud cost NI public purse ~£8m in 2024/25: The NI Audit Office found that social housing fraud cost around £8 million in the last financial year. (Source: *The Irish News*)

||- Hundreds of new social homes stalled due to water infrastructure 'capacity restrictions': New social housing developments are being held up by inadequate water infrastructure capacity, despite thousands of families on housing waiting lists. (Source: *The Irish News*)

||- Call for toxic tyres to be removed from loyalist Eleventh Night bonfire: Concerns raised about environmental and health risks from burning tyres at loyalist bonfires ahead of the Twelfth of July. (Source: *The Irish News*)

||- Warning of potential 'costly catastrophe' over NI's two landfill sites: Northern Ireland's two remaining landfill sites face capacity issues, with councils paying to ship black bin waste overseas for incineration. (Source: *The Irish News*)

||- Developers behind Belfast Tribeca scheme sell similar project in Manchester: The developers behind the controversial Belfast 'Tribeca' development sold a similar project in Manchester, as the revised Belfast planning application progresses. (Source: *BBC News NI*)

3 June 2026

|||- Free electric car charging for MLAs despite travel pay: Stormont provides free EV charging points for MLAs behind Parliament Buildings — six points in an upper car park not accessible to the public. MLAs already receive an annual travel allowance (up to ~£6,780 for those furthest away) for attending Stormont. TUV MLA Timothy Gaston said the public is "effectively paying twice" for MLAs to travel. The Assembly said it "supports more sustainable travel choices" and the matter would be "considered in future reviews of member allowances." No metered data on costs is retained, but bookings for one week in May cost ~£325. Five main parties approached for comment — four didn't respond; Sinn Féin said it "does not hold any information in relation to MLA modes of transport." (Source: *BBC News NI*, *Brendan Hughes*)

|||- Questions for UUP over minimum criminal age vote: UUP leader Jon Burrows refused to say whether his eight-strong MLA team will support the DUP's petition of concern to block raising the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) from 10 to 14. Sinn Féin, Alliance and SDLP back raising it. The DUP has tabled a petition of concern requiring 30 signatures — the DUP's 25 plus TUV's 1 leaves them 4 short, meaning at least 4 UUP MLAs would need to sign. Beattie (who quit UUP on 31 May) was in favour of raising to 12. Burrows said raising MACR would be "reckless" but that he would consult his team. Debate due next week as part of the Justice Bill. (Source: *BBC News NI*, *Jayne McCormack*)

|||- Jon Burrows "deeply disappointed" by Beattie's resignation letter: Burrows told BBC

Radio Ulster's Evening Extra he has "a lot of respect" for Beattie but is "deeply disappointed" by his comments and doesn't "recognise his characterisation of me whatsoever." He "completely" rejected claims of an "insidious campaign of rumour and gossip" being directed at Beattie. Burrows said it's his "responsibility to set high ethical standards" as leader. *(Source: The Irish News, Bairbre Holmes/PA)* |||- **Nesbitt defends drug warning as "practical" amid DUP criticism:** Health Minister Mike Nesbitt described a Public Health Agency social media warning about high-strength MDMA and "pink powders" at festivals as "practical." Several DUP representatives had expressed concern about the PHA message, which warns about increased risk at concerts, festivals, and nightlife settings. *(Source: The Irish News Evening Briefing)* |||- **Teachers to ballot on industrial action from 10 June:** The five main teaching unions, represented by the Northern Ireland Teaching Council (NITC), announced ballots for industrial action over what they describe as an "unsustainable" workload crisis. Balloting opens 10 June and runs until September, covering teachers across all state-funded schools. *(Source: BBC News NI, The Irish News)* |||- **Hospital doctors ballot for two 24-hour strikes in June after rejecting 3.5% pay offer:** All grades of hospital doctors in NI — consultants, specialist (SAS), and resident doctors — are being balloted for strike action by the BMA after rejecting the recommended 3.5% pay rise. It's the first time all hospital doctor grades have been balloted simultaneously, described as "unprecedented" by BMA NI consultants chair Dr David Farren. Ballot closes 8 June. Proposed strikes: **25 June** (consultants/SAS — Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing) and **29 June** (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout, with consultants/SAS covering). Dr Farren cited 18 years of pay erosion and NI being the lowest-paid doctors in the UK and Ireland. Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said even the 3.5% can't be guaranteed without an agreed Stormont budget — the Executive remains deadlocked on a multi-year budget. The DoH said the 3.5% comes on top of cumulative 30% (residents), 25% (SAS), and 24% (consultants) rises over the last three years. GPs are already taking collective action, meaning all categories of NI doctors are now in dispute. *(Source: The Irish News, Belfast Telegraph)* |||- **Committee meetings (3 June):** The Assembly is in committee mode today with six committees sitting: Infrastructure (10am — likely discussed Water/Sustainable Drainage/Flood Management Bill); Economy (10am); Finance (2pm); Education (2pm — continuing SEN reform scrutiny following last week's Pat Sheehan row); Executive Office (2pm); and Health (2pm). *(Source: NI Assembly TV schedule)* |||- **Donaldson Trial — day four evidence continues:** Week two of Sir Jeffrey Donaldson's trial continued at Newry Crown Court. The Belfast Telegraph reported Eleanor Donaldson "did nothing" when told of an alleged abuse incident involving her husband, according to complainant evidence. *(Source: Belfast Telegraph)* |||- **Health Minister apologises for thousands of missing patient letters:** Around 12,000 referral letters to patients have gone missing from Northern Ireland's new patient record system. Health Minister Mike Nesbitt has apologised. *(Source: The Irish News)* |||- **£140m spent on 12 NI road projects that haven't broken ground:** Twelve Northern Ireland road infrastructure projects have cost £140 million in spending without any construction having started. *(Source: The Irish News)* |||- **Second alleged victim gives emotional evidence in Donaldson trial:** The Donaldson trial continued at Newry Crown Court with emotional testimony from a second alleged victim. Memories of a toy yellow truck and an alleged assault that "will live with me forever" dominated Tuesday's hearing. The court also heard Donaldson had allegedly apologised to a complainant at a Christian centre years after the alleged abuse. *(Sources: BBC, The Irish News, RTÉ)* |||- **Justice Bill Consideration Stage (Day 1) — Assembly sits:** The Assembly debated the Justice Bill at Consideration Stage on 2 June, the main legislative business of the day. The bill includes provisions

on MACR (Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility), among other justice reforms. Question Time covered Health. (Source: *NI Assembly Order Paper*) |||- **Alliance councillor Eric Hanvey quits party, "disillusioned with politics":** Alliance Party councillor Eric Hanvey (Lisnasharragh, Belfast City Council) quit the party and will not stand in the next local election, saying he has become "disillusioned with politics." He is the second Belfast councillor to leave a party recently — Paul Doherty (former SDLP deputy Lord Mayor) left the SDLP in a dispute over a Bobby Sands statue vote. Alliance thanked Hanvey for his service. (Source: *BBC News NI*) |||- **Doug Beattie admits lying in social media post:** As the fallout from Beattie's resignation from the UUP continued, Beattie admitted to lying in a social media post. The Belfast Telegraph reported Beattie "was to be suspended from UUP over abusive language to leader and other issues including failure to remove misogynistic old tweets" — the party's planned suspension being overtaken by his resignation. (Source: *Belfast Telegraph*)

4 June 2026

|||- **O'Dowd hits back at Treasury budget report:** Finance Minister John O'Dowd rejected a Treasury "open book" review which suggested Stormont could largely solve its budget problems by bringing the NI civil service in line with GB — finding ministers could save up to £3bn/yr. O'Dowd described the health spending comparison (152% of England per head) as "simply not true," saying NI spend is only 6% higher. He said the report failed to account for functions handled by councils in GB, and NI's "rurality" making services more expensive. He rejected calls for water charges. The Executive remains without an agreed budget, operating under emergency financial procedures since April. O'Dowd said a "lack of urgency" from the Treasury was the major sticking point. (Source: *BBC News NI, John Campbell*) |||- **Free electric car charging for MLAs revealed:** BBC News NI's Brendan Hughes revealed that MLAs have access to six free EV charging points behind Parliament Buildings, despite already receiving travel allowances worth up to £6,780/yr for attending Stormont. The arrangement was confirmed via an FOI request. TUV MLA Timothy Gaston said the public is "effectively paying twice" and called it "ludicrous" — coming "so soon after MLAs received a pay rise worth more than 27%." DUP proposed changing to a pay-to-charge system matching on-street rates. Sinn Féin said it holds no data on MLA transport modes. SDLP said no MLAs have EVs. The Assembly said the matter would be "considered in future reviews of member allowances." 114 comments on the BBC story. (Source: *BBC News NI, Brendan Hughes*) |||- **Witness apologises for 'unacceptable' remarks about TUV MLA:** Fidelma Fearon, from Minority Ethnic Support Armagh, who was overheard using offensive language about TUV MLA Timothy Gaston at a Stormont committee meeting, has now apologised for her comments. Committee chair Paula Bradshaw (Alliance) said she only became aware of the remarks 48 hours after the meeting. The committee has invited Fearon back to address the matter. (Sources: *BBC News NI, The Irish News*) |||- **Teachers ballot for industrial action from 10 June over workload:** The five main teaching unions (NASUWT, INTO, UTU, NAHT, NEU) confirmed they will ballot members from 10 June over "unsustainable" workload, with the ballot running until September and potentially leading to strike action in the new school year. Education Minister Paul Givan said he was "genuinely disappointed," citing an existing workload action plan. The unions said the department's plan "did not go far enough." (Source: *BBC News NI, Robbie Meredith*) |||- **Naomi Long agrees to all recommendations on review of criminal legal aid:** Justice Minister Naomi Long agreed to implement all recommendations from a review of criminal legal aid.

(Source: BBC News NI) ||| - **Donaldson trial — Week two continues:** The trial of former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson entered its second week at Newry Crown Court. An alleged victim told the court she "should have reported abuse claims earlier." Trial expected to run four weeks.

(Source: BBC News NI) ||| - **Stephen McCullagh sentenced to 31 years for Natalie McNally murder:** A Co Antrim man was sentenced to 31 years for the murder of his pregnant partner Natalie McNally in a case that drew widespread attention. (Source: BBC News NI) ||| - **Committee meetings (4 June):** The Assembly continues in committee mode. The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs met at 10am — discussing the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Water Environment Bill, the Farming with Nature Scheme regulations, and the Areas with Natural Constraints Bill. The Committee for the Executive Office also met. (Source: NI Assembly TV schedule) ||| - **Jon Burrows Dublin speech — "Peace is No Longer Enough":** UUP leader Jon Burrows delivered a keynote address at the Hume Foundation in Dublin, arguing that while Northern Ireland is living through its most peaceful period in history, many people feel "the full promise of peace has not yet been realised." He called for an era of reform, delivery and economic ambition, describing Stormont as "designed to exist, not excel." The speech was aimed at positioning the UUP as a serious party on economic issues despite the ongoing internal civil war with Beattie. (Sources: News Letter, Love Ballymena)

5 June 2026

||| - **EV chargers suspended at Stormont pending new system:** Following the BBC revelation that MLAs had been using free electric vehicle charging points behind Parliament Buildings despite already receiving travel expenses, the Assembly Commission has suspended use of all six charging points. An urgent meeting will take place on Monday 8 June to change the EV charging policy. An Assembly spokesperson said the Commission "will agree arrangements to give officials the authority to work at pace to introduce a new system which addresses the legitimate public concerns." In the meantime, use of the current EV charging points has been suspended for all building users. (Source: BBC News NI, Brendan Hughes) ||| - **Donaldson trial — Pastor evidence:** A Christian pastor told police it became "obvious" to him that a woman who told him she had been sexually abused as a child was talking about former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson. The pastor gave evidence on Friday, the second week of the trial at Newry Crown Court. The trial continues. (Sources: BBC, RTE) ||| - **BBC analysis — UUP civil war through a historical lens:** BBC News NI Political Correspondent Gareth Gordon published an analysis piece titled "Feuding within Ulster Unionists 'would make an Eastenders' scriptwriter blush'." The piece traced the UUP's history of self-destruction: the internal split over the Good Friday Agreement benefiting the DUP; the loss of Sylvia Hermon over the 2010 Conservative pact; and the deselection of David McClarty in 2011 who won the seat as an Independent. The analysis underscored that the current Beattie/Burrows split fits a long-established pattern. (Source: BBC News NI, Gareth Gordon)

6 June 2026

||| - **Jonathan Buckley (DUP) hits back at "lies" over free EV charging:** DUP MLA Jonathan Buckley publicly denied accusations he had been using free EV charging at Stormont, stating he does not even own an electric vehicle. He described the claims as "lies" spread by political

opponents. The controversy continues ahead of Monday's Assembly Commission urgent meeting on the charging policy. (Source: *Belfast Telegraph*, *Adrian Rutherford*) |||- **Scarva pro-Palestine march passes off with heavy police presence:** A pro-Palestine solidarity march of ~1,500 people passed through the mainly unionist village of Scarva, Co Down on Saturday, with a counter-protest from Scarva Concerned Residents Group also granted permission by the Parades Commission. A significant policing operation — including water cannon — was in place. DUP MLAs present branded the police operation "two-tier"; DUP MP Carla Lockhart and MLAs Diane Forsythe and Jonathan Buckley were among those criticising the policing. The march and counter-protest passed off without major incident, after tensions had mounted in the weeks leading up to the event. (Sources: *The Irish News*, *Belfast Telegraph*, *Armaghi*) |||- **Colm Gildernew (SF) calls out re-erection of racist banner in Moygashel:** Fermanagh & South Tyrone Sinn Féin MLA Colm Gildernew condemned the reappearance of a racist banner in the Moygashel area, calling for it to be taken down. (Source: *Sinn Féin website*) |||- **Saturday — No Assembly business scheduled.** |||- **Looking ahead to next week (8-12 June):** Plenary on Monday (Executive Office Questions, Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly) and Tuesday. **EV charging policy urgent meeting Monday** — chargers already suspended, Assembly Commission to agree new policy. Justice Bill Consideration Stage continues — key debate on Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR). **Teachers ballot opens 10 June.** Hospital doctors strike ballot closes **8 June** — results expected imminently. The Assembly sits until summer recess starting 4 July. | **Key Issue Tracker — Update (30 June):** ||||- **DUP Crisis (ESCALATING):** BBC Spotlight (26 June) revealed Donaldson's "double life" — gay sauna visit (2006), projectile vomiting over Beijing mayor, Paisley's account of "exploited" woman. Guardian (29 June) confirmed current/ex-DUP members knew allegations but didn't share through channels. Paisley Jr says he told Poots (then DUP leader) in 2021. Poots (now Speaker) says he "observed the wishes of the young woman." Alliance MP Sorcha Eastwood: "not tenable for DUP to hire those investigating their own former leader." Ex-adviser says DUP may be "damaged beyond repair." Poots recused from Assembly Donaldson debate (29 June); Long/O'Neill call on him to step aside. DUP review terms expanding. ||||- **Executive Budget (LAST-DITCH TALKS):** Benn invited all Executive parties to Hillsborough Castle for budget talks before summer recess (4 July). Deadline of 29 June passed — funding decisions now fall to NICS under delegation. Still no multi-year budget. Archibald (SF Economy) publicly broke ranks with O'Dowd (SF Finance) on budget. O'Toole warned civil servants can only authorise 95% of last year's budget. ||||- **Belfast Disorder (STABILISING — no further incidents):** Three nights of anti-immigration disorder (9-11 June). 23 arrests, 17 charged. Water cannon deployed. "Together Against Hate" anti-racism rally (13 June) drew thousands — largest in Belfast's history. Week three without major incidents. Stephen Ogilvy's condition continuing to improve — woken from induced coma. PSNI investigating arson at north Belfast house (14 June). DUP leader continues calling for border controls. ||||- **Stormont Reform (ACTIVE):** Sinn Féin's "Building Better Politics" plan continues to generate debate. MACR blocked by UUP-backed petition of concern (15 June). Alliance deputy leader Eoin Tennyson warned at NIAC (17 June) that Alliance may not return to Executive after 2027 without reforms. Burrows called Stormont a "basket case." O'Toole called lack of delivery "toxic." Robinson dismissed reform as cosmetic. Westminster NIAC session (17 June) revealed deep cross-party frustration but sharp divisions on prescription. ||||- **Good Jobs Bill (DEADLOCKED):** DUP v Sinn Féin standoff continues. Little-Pengelly calls it "half-baked"; offers to support if union access clauses removed. ICTU opposed to any split. Executive deadlocked. Trade unions rallied outside Stormont (9 June). ||||- **Doctors' Strikes (UNDERWAY):** 25 June (consultants/SAS) and 29 June (resident

doctors) strikes took place — first time all hospital doctor grades striking simultaneously. All NI doctor categories now in dispute. ||||- **Donaldson Trial** (GUILTY — AWAITING SENTENCE): Jury found Donaldson guilty on all 18 charges including rape on 22 June 2026. Sent to Maghaberry Prison. Judge told him to expect a "lengthy sentence" in September. Expected to appeal (Belfast Telegraph). Offered to forfeit knighthood (25 June). Eleanor Donaldson found to have done the acts on all five charges (trial of the facts). ||||- **EV Charging** (RESOLVED): Assembly Commission agreed new paid framework. Chargers suspended pending implementation. ||||- **UUP Civil War** (ONGOING): Beattie now independent unionist. Four UUP MLAs sided with DUP on MACR petition — damaging for party's moderate wing. Internal party damage ongoing ahead of 2027 election. ||||- **Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry** (REPORT PUBLISHED): Final report published 18 June. One of largest public inquiries in NI history. Health Minister Nesbitt welcomed findings. ||||- **Teachers Ballot** (OPEN): Industrial action ballot opened 10 June — five teaching unions balloting over workload. Runs until September. ||||- **Wastewater Crisis** (ESCALATING): Build Homes NI calls for urgent action. ~15,000 homes held up. Over 40% of new social homes stalled due to infrastructure capacity. | |### 1 June 2026 |- **Sinn Féin launches Stormont reform proposals**: Sinn Féin published an eight-page "Building Better Politics" document — a six-point plan aimed at "removing the ever-present threat of collapse" at Stormont. The primary proposal is removing the veto of the largest parties over executive formation: if either the largest nationalist or unionist party chooses not to nominate a First/deputy First Minister, the opportunity should pass to other parties. Other proposals include: removing the veto over election of the Speaker at the first Assembly meeting; exploring greater transparency/accountability around Speaker decisions; devolving fiscal powers to Stormont; equality for "other" designated MLAs (non-nationalist/non-unionist); and "normalising" the appointment of the Justice Minister. O'Neill said the changes can be made within the Good Friday Agreement framework. The document follows reform proposals from Alliance and the SDLP. (Sources: BBC, ITV News, The Irish News, FT, Belfast Live) |- **Róis-Máire Donnelly becomes Belfast Lord Mayor**: Sinn Féin's Róis-Máire Donnelly (30) became the new Lord Mayor of Belfast, replacing Tracy Kelly (DUP). A fluent Irish speaker from west Belfast, her term will include hosting the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast in August — expected to attract over 500,000 visitors — the first time the city has hosted the event. (Source: BBC) |- **BBC analysis: the messy split between Doug Beattie and the UUP**: BBC News NI's political correspondent analysed the breakdown between Beattie and his former party. Beattie painted "a brutal picture" of treatment by UUP management using words like "vindictive" and "insidious." The final straw was the party's intention to reopen a disciplinary matter over historical social media posts already dealt with four years ago. The UUP leadership was "getting ready to dump Beattie first" by suspending him before he could resign. The analysis questioned what this means for Jon Burrows' leadership and the direction of the party. Beattie profile: left school at 16, served in Kosovo, East Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan; awarded Military Cross in 2006. (Source: BBC) |- **Benedict's Law campaigners meet Education Minister**: Helen Blythe, mother of Benedict (5) who died from an allergic reaction at school in England in December 2021, met Education Minister Paul Givan to push for compulsory allergy training, dedicated school allergy policies, and spare EpiPens in every NI school. Similar legislation already passed in England. Cross-party support from MLAs, with decision resting with Givan. (Source: BBC) |- **Arlene Foster warns of "growing suspicion" among grassroots unionism over Stormont reform**: Baroness Foster, speaking alongside Mark Durkan at a Stormont committee, said there is a "growing suspicion from grassroots unionism that the language of reform is being deployed not to improve governance, but to tilt the constitutional

balance or indeed to marginalise one tradition following election results." She said any changes to power-sharing must "proceed in a way that commands broad consensus." The intervention came as Sinn Féin published its reform proposals on the same day, positioning Foster directly in opposition to the trajectory of reform. *(Sources: BBC, Belfast Telegraph)*

31 May 2026

|- **Doug Beattie quits UUP amid bitter split:** Former UUP leader Doug Beattie resigned from the Ulster Unionist Party with immediate effect, saying his membership was no longer "tenable." In a letter to party leader Jon Burrows, Beattie claimed Burrows intended to reopen a disciplinary matter over historical social media posts (already dealt with four years ago), calling it a "deliberate and vindictive" attempt to drive him out. He said an "insidious campaign of rumour and gossip" had been waged against him, and the party no longer reflects a "moderate and progressive outlook." He also criticised the treatment of councillor Kate Evans and MLA Alan Chambers. The UUP responded that they were preparing to suspend Beattie over "conduct and judgement" concerns, and that his resignation "overtook that process." Beattie is expected to stand as an independent in Upper Bann in the 2027 Assembly election. *(Source: BBC)*

|- **PSNI officer seriously injured in Downpatrick; shot fired:** A PSNI officer was seriously injured after being knocked down by a stolen police car in Downpatrick. The incident began at ~04:45 BST when a vehicle failed to stop for police on Fountain Street. When officers returned to their car after pursuing a suspect on foot, another man was in the driver's seat and drove directly at the officer. The officer discharged one round before being struck by the vehicle. A 27-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder. ACC Melanie Jones said injuries were "serious, but thankfully not life-threatening." Secretary of State Hilary Benn said he was "appalled by the shocking incident." Cathy Mason (SF), Trevor Clark (DUP), and Colin McGrath (SDLP) all condemned the attack. *(Source: BBC)*

|- **Stormont committee witness declines to apologise for remarks about TUV MLA:** Committee chair Paula Bradshaw (Alliance) said she only became aware of Fidelma Fearon's "absolutely unacceptable" comments about a TUV MLA 48 hours after a committee meeting. The witness declined to apologise. *(Source: The Irish News)*

|- **Anti-Islam mural treated as hate incident in Newtownabbey:** Police are treating a mural unveiled in Tulleevin Walk, Newtownabbey as a hate incident. *(Source: The Irish News)*

|- **Former IRA prisoner appointed to Invest NI board:** A former IRA prisoner jailed for conspiracy to murder has been appointed to the board of Invest NI, drawing attention to the evolving composition of the state economic development agency. *(Source: The Irish News)*

|- **Good Jobs Bill: Archibald proposes further amendments:** Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald (SF) proposed further progressive additions to the Good Jobs Bill, which would replace zero-hour contracts with banded hours, cut the trade union recognition threshold, and give unions a right to request workplace access. The bill remains at Committee Stage, with the DUP accused of blocking it. *(Source: Department for the Economy, Belfast Telegraph)*

30 May 2026

- **Planned gun licence price hike withdrawn:** Justice Minister Naomi Long withdrew plans to increase firearms licensing fees from £98 to £250 for a five-year certificate, after

a fierce backlash from the rural community. The Department of Justice consultation had sought views on achieving full cost recovery of firearms licensing — the PSNI spent £2m subsidising applications last year. UFU deputy president Glenn Cuddy said the increase was "simply not justified" and firearms are "an essential part of rural life." Long said she hopes to "find a way forward" via stakeholder engagement. About 53,000 people held firearm licences in NI as of January 2025. *(Source: BBC)*

29 May 2026

- **SDLP's Patsy McGlone to retire from politics:** The SDLP's longest-serving MLA at Stormont, Patsy McGlone (66, Mid Ulster), confirmed he is stepping down at the next Assembly election (due 6 May 2027). McGlone was first elected as a councillor in 1993 and joined the Assembly in 2003, also serving as deputy speaker. SDLP leader Claire Hanna said his electoral record is a "testament to the trust and respect he has earned." His departure will trigger a co-option or candidate selection for the SDLP. *(Source: BBC)*
- **Housing waiting list in Northern Ireland passes 50,000:** The number of households on the social housing waiting list has risen by more than 30% over the last decade, surpassing 50,000 for the first time. Affordable housing campaigners called for urgent action, pointing to a chronic shortage of social and affordable homes and rising homelessness. *(Source: BBC)*
- **New plan for controversial Belfast 'Tribeca' scheme:** A revised planning application was submitted for the Belfast 'Tribeca' development — a major mixed-use project on the site of the former Sirocco Works in east Belfast. The scheme had previously attracted controversy over its scale and impact on the surrounding area. *(Source: BBC)*

28 May 2026

- **Prosecution opens case in Donaldson trial:** The prosecution opened its case against Sir Jeffrey Donaldson at Newry Crown Court. Two women who have made allegations of sexual offences against the former DUP leader said they happened while they were children. The prosecution provided an overview of the alleged crimes, the full charges, and a summary of what Jeffrey Donaldson told police in his initial interview. Donaldson, flanked by security staff, wore a suit and tie in court. The case is expected to last around four weeks. *(Sources: RTÉ, BBC, The Irish News)*
- **Róis-Máire Donnelly to become Belfast Lord Mayor:** Sinn Féin's Róis-Máire Donnelly (30), a fluent Irish speaker from west Belfast, is to become the next Lord Mayor of Belfast, replacing Tracy Kelly (DUP) on Monday 1 June 2026. She said the role is not political — she speaks Irish for the young people who do not see people like them in these types of positions. Her term will include the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast in August — the first time the city hosts the event, expected to attract over 500,000 visitors. She will take a career break as an operations manager and has put her wedding on hold. *(Source: BBC)*
- **No cull of UUP MLAs, says Jon Burrows:** UUP leader Jon Burrows denied there is a planned cull of sitting UUP MLAs amid speculation about deselections, particularly concerning former leader Doug Beattie in Upper Bann and Alan Chambers in North Down.

Burrows said candidates for next year's Assembly election would be chosen fairly and transparently and he would not be intervening in the decisions of constituency associations. He said all his MLAs are valued and they have the opportunity to go for reselection. Craigavon councillor Kate Evans quit the UUP, citing strain of internal party politics. (Source: BBC)

- **Stormont offices would cost £100m to restore, committee told:** Desi McDonnell, director of properties division in the Department of Finance, told the Assembly's Finance Committee that restoring Dundonald House on the Stormont estate would cost at least £100m. The building — a listed 1960s International Style modernist structure — was closed in 2023 on safety grounds after masonry fell from the roof. Even a £100m upgrade would not bring it to modern energy efficiency standards. Demolition was still being explored as an option despite the listed status. (Source: BBC)
- **Good Jobs Bill row: Executive deadlocked over workers' rights:** The Stormont Executive discussed the Good Jobs Bill on 28 May but reached no agreement. Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald (SF) is pushing the legislation which would replace zero-hour contracts with banded hours, cut the trade union recognition threshold from 21 to 10 employees, and give unions a right to request workplace access. The DUP and UUP oppose it, backed by business groups including the Institute for Directors. deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly said the people that create good jobs are businesses and the balance must be right. ICTU's Gerry Murphy called it basic workplace fairness. Implementation of banded hours is targeted for 2029, with union access phased from 2028-2030. Finance Minister John O'Dowd said it was no secret the DUP was blocking the bill. (Sources: BBC)
- **FDA union urges O'Neill to condemn Pat Sheehan:** Trade union chiefs called on First Minister Michelle O'Neill to condemn remarks by Sinn Féin MLA Pat Sheehan, who accused officials of lying to Assembly committees. The FDA union said the First Minister and her party must make it "unequivocally clear" that such comments are unacceptable. Sheehan told an Education Committee session that officials "come in and they mislead committees, they tell lies to committees, they gaslight us." The Department of Education had previously called on Sheehan to "substantiate his allegations or withdraw them," to which he responded: "I stand by my remarks." (Source: The Irish News)

27 May 2026

- **Donaldson trial opens:** The trial of former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson began at Newry Crown Court. A 12-person jury was sworn in on Tuesday and sent home for the day. The prosecution opened its case on Wednesday 28 May. Donaldson faces 18 charges including one count of rape, four counts of gross indecency, and 13 charges of indecent assault, alleged over a 23-year period (1985–2008). His wife Eleanor Donaldson has been deemed medically unfit to stand trial on charges of aiding and abetting, and will face a "trial of the facts" instead where the jury decides whether she committed the offences but cannot find her guilty. Both deny all charges. The case is expected to last around four weeks. (Sources: RTÉ, BBC, The Irish News)
- **Pat Sheehan accuses Stormont officials of "lying to and gaslighting" committees:** West Belfast Sinn Féin MLA Pat Sheehan launched a broadside during an

education committee session, accusing Department for Education and Education Authority officials of misleading committees and "gaslighting" MLAs over controversial new Special Educational Needs (SEN) regulations. His comments came as officials were fielding questions on SEN reforms due to come into force in September, which would cut the statutory assessment deadline from 26 to 22 weeks. Combined SEN spending has more than doubled from £254m (2017-18) to £622m (2024-25). The Department of Education called on Sheehan to "substantiate his allegations or withdraw them." Sheehan responded: "I stand by my remarks." (Source: *The Irish News*)

- **PSNI "cadet" scheme proposed to boost Catholic recruitment:** The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) recommended a pilot cadet-type scheme to increase Catholic, ethnic minority, and working-class representation in the PSNI. The report comes in the PSNI's 25th anniversary year. Catholic recruits fell to just 20% of new sign-ups in 2025 (and 17% in 2024). The current Catholic proportion in the PSNI is 31%, projected to fall to 23% over the next decade. PSNI officer numbers fell to a historic low of 6,190 in October 2024, and a £200m Workforce Recovery Plan has "effectively evaporated" according to the Policing Federation. (Source: *The Irish News*)
- **DUP calls on Scottish FM John Swinney to apologise over Troubles remarks:** DUP leader Gavin Robinson wrote to the Scottish First Minister calling for a "clear and unambiguous apology" after Swinney told *The Herald* newspaper that people should "move on" from the Troubles when asked about dealing with Sinn Féin as a government partner. Robinson said the comments caused "genuine hurt among victims and survivors" and questioned whether Swinney would use the same language about the Lockerbie bombing or Dunblane shootings. Swinney said he had "no intention" of apologising, stating he was "simply reflecting what's happened" in the peace process. (Source: *RTÉ*)
- **SEN reform controversy:** The Children's Law Centre, backed by 13 other organisations including unions, wrote an open letter to the Education Minister calling for a halt to what it described as "potentially damaging" revisions to the SEN framework. The number of children in NI holding a statement of SEN has risen by 66% since 2019. (Source: *The Irish News*)
- **Six NI projects to receive £102m from UK government transformation fund:** Initiatives aimed at improving the delivery of public services received funding, including e-pharmacy projects. (Source: *The Irish News*)
- **Cost of temporary nursing staff in NI triples in six years:** Agency nurses are now being paid more in NI than in central London. (Source: *BBC/The Irish News*)

26 May 2026

- **Fresh bid to end hunting with dogs in Northern Ireland:** An MLA introduced a new bill described as "balanced" aiming to outlaw hunting wild mammals with dogs. A previous bid was voted down. (Source: *The Irish News*)
- **Search begins for Disappeared victim Seamus Maguire:** The Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains began searching for the remains of Seamus Maguire, one of the "Disappeared" from the Troubles. (Source: *BBC*)
- **Prosecution to open case against Sir Jeffrey Donaldson** — see 27 May entry above for details as the trial began. (Source: *BBC*)

22-26 May 2026

- **UUP leader denies intervening over Doug Beattie candidacy:** UUP leader Jon Burrows denied personally intervening in the deselection of former leader Doug Beattie as the party's candidate for Upper Bann in the next Assembly election. Beattie, UUP leader from 2021-2024 and MLA since 2016, was not expected to be chosen as the single candidate after the constituency association decided to run two candidates instead. A source close to Beattie said he was being forced out for being "too moderate." Burrows insisted the process would be "fair and transparent" and said he had not "fallen out" with Beattie, describing him as an "exceptional politician." *(Source: BBC)*
- **Hunting with Dogs Bill passes second stage:** The Hunting with Dogs Bill, a private member's bill brought by Alliance Party MLA John Blair, passed its second stage in the Assembly. NI is the only part of the UK where hunting wild animals with dogs is still permitted. Campaign group Countryside Alliance Ireland protested outside Stormont, warning the bill could impact every dog owner. Blair countered that similar legislation has been in force in Scotland for 20+ years. The bill is expected to have support from Sinn Féin, Alliance, and some DUP members — a previous 2021 version was defeated by 7 votes. *(Source: BBC)*
- **Naomi Long warns of front-line service 'crisis' without multi-year budget:** Justice Minister Naomi Long said that without a multi-year budget, she faces making cuts to policing, probation, prisons, and youth justice. A draft budget would leave the Department of Justice with a £100m+ shortfall in year one and £215m in savings by year three. Police Federation chair Liam Kelly said the PSNI recovery plan aiming for 7,000 officers by 2028 is in "grave doubt" — officer numbers stand at 6,315. Education Minister Paul Givan (DUP) said he wouldn't agree to a budget that would "decimate public services." *(Source: BBC)*

19-22 May 2026

- **Mother-and-baby homes redress cut-off 'devastating' say survivors:** A Stormont bill to establish a redress scheme for victims of mother-and-baby homes has been criticized for retaining a cut-off date — only families of victims who died after 29 September 2011 are eligible. An amendment to remove the date was not selected for debate. The Morris sisters said they were "devastated" their mother Madeline was excluded. The bill establishes an inquiry into mother-and-baby homes, Magdalene Laundries and workhouses — more than 10,000 women passed through these institutions from the 1920s to 1990s. *(Source: BBC)*
- **Gordon Lyons says he is "not hostile" to Irish language:** Communities Minister Gordon Lyons (DUP) accused Sinn Féin of building a "false narrative" that he is hostile to the Irish language, following a row over the £90,000 annual funding cut for the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project. The High Court heard there are no plans to implement an Irish language strategy before the next Assembly election (due by May 2027). Conradh na Gaeilge has taken the matter to court twice before. Sinn Féin's Cathy Mason accused Lyons of being "afraid of Irish language and identity." *(Source: BBC)*

23 May 2026

- **DUP calls for Scottish FM apology** — Gavin Robinson wrote to John Swinney over Troubles "move on" remarks. Swinney declined to apologise. (Source: RTÉ)

20 May 2026

- **Eleanor Donaldson unfit to stand trial:** A judge ruled that Eleanor Donaldson is unfit to face a criminal trial on sexual offences charges due to the state of her mental health. She will face a "trial of the facts" instead. (Source: RTÉ, The Irish News)

15 May 2026

- **Brexit seen as failure by large majority in NI:** A poll suggested more than 70% of people in Northern Ireland, including a majority of Leave voters, agree that Brexit has been more of a failure than a success. (Source: RTÉ)

13 May 2026

- **International Fund for Ireland announces final decade:** The IFI, which has invested almost €1 billion into the NI peace process over 40 years (supporting nearly 7,000 projects), announced its next decade will be its last. It will shift to an open funding call model and direct partnerships, looking at sports, arts and culture, and non-traditional peacebuilders. The organisation was established in 1986 by the Irish and British governments, with most funding coming from the United States, EU, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. (Source: RTÉ)

11 May 2026

- **Serious breakdown at NI legacy body:** An independent review commissioned by the Northern Ireland Office found the ICRIIR (Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery) faces structural weaknesses, financial management problems, and conflict among senior leaders — described as a "quite divided" leadership team with a "toxic" culture. Northern Secretary Hilary Benn said he was "deeply concerned." Chief Commissioner Declan Morgan apologised. (Source: RTÉ)

10 May 2026

- **Supreme Court rules in favour of government on Legacy Act:** Victims' campaigners suffered a blow as the UK Supreme Court ruled in favour of the British government. The Labour Government has promised to repeal and replace the legislation with a new Legacy

7 May 2026

- **Woman due in court over Lurgan bomb probe** (Source: RTÉ)

27-28 April 2026

|- **Dissident republican attacks:** Car bomb attack on Dunmurry PSNI station in south Belfast (hijacked car with gas cylinder). PSNI launched high-visibility operation across NI to counter dissident republican threat. (Source: RTÉ)

7 June 2026

|- **Sunday Politics NI — MACR debate focus:** Sunday Politics NI (10am, BBC One) featured DUP's Paul Frew and Alliance MLA Sian Mulholland discussing the proposed changes to the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR), currently at 10. The Justice Bill's Consideration Stage includes key amendments on raising the age to 12 or 14. The DUP has tabled a petition of concern requiring 30 signatures — currently at 25 DUP + 1 TUV, needing at least 4 UUP MLAs to sign. UUP leader Jon Burrows has refused to say how his MLAs will vote. (Source: *BBC Sunday Politics NI*)

|- **EV charging policy — crunch meeting tomorrow:** The Assembly Commission is due to meet urgently on Monday 8 June to agree a new EV charging policy after the revelation that MLAs had free access to six charging points behind Parliament Buildings while receiving up to £6,780/yr travel allowances. The chargers were suspended on 5 June. Options on the table include introducing usage fees matching on-street charging rates (32p/kWh). DUP MLA Jonathan Buckley has denied using the free chargers, saying he does not own an EV. The rapid escalation — FOI reveal (3 June) → parties agree reimbursement (4 June) → chargers suspended (5 June) → urgent Monday meeting — reflects the scale of public anger so soon after the 27% MLA pay rise. (Sources: *BBC, Belfast Telegraph, News Letter*)

|- **Donaldson Trial — Week 3 begins:** The trial of former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson enters its third week at Newry Crown Court. The prosecution continues to present evidence from two complainants (Witness A and B). Donaldson has pleaded not guilty to 18 charges including rape, indecent assault, and gross indecency, alleged between 1985 and 2008. Eleanor Donaldson faces a trial of the facts on aiding and abetting charges. The trial is expected to run around four weeks. (Sources: *BBC, RTÉ, Belfast Telegraph*)

|- **Sunday — No Assembly business scheduled.**

8 June 2026

||- **Plenary Session — Assembly sits with Justice Bill Consideration Stage (Day 2):** The Assembly met at noon today. Key order paper items: Executive Office Questions (deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly facing queries); Consideration Stage of the Justice Bill continues (Day 2) — the key unresolved issue remains the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR), with DUP tabling a petition of concern requiring 30 signatures (currently at 25 DUP + 1 TUV, needing 4

UUP MLAs). Standing Orders 10(2)-10(4) suspended for the day. Other business includes Motions on Accelerated Review of Criminal Legal Aid following Minister Naomi Long's agreement to implement all recommendations. *(Source: NI Assembly Order Paper)* ||- **Assembly Commission urgent meeting on EV charging policy:** The Assembly Commission met urgently to agree a new EV charging policy after the free charging scandal broke. The six charging points behind Parliament Buildings were suspended on 5 June. Options expected to include introducing usage fees matching on-street charging rates (~32p/kWh). DUP MLA Jonathan Buckley continues to deny using the free chargers. The rapid response reflects the scale of public anger so soon after the 27% MLA pay rise. *(Sources: BBC, Belfast Telegraph)* ||- **Hospital doctors strike ballot closes today:** The BMA ballot of all grades of hospital doctors (consultants, specialist/SAs, and resident doctors) closes today. If passed, proposed strike dates are **25 June** (consultants/SAs — Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing) and **29 June** (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout). All grades of hospital doctors in NI are balloted simultaneously for the first time — described as "unprecedented". This follows rejection of the recommended 3.5% pay rise, with doctors citing 18 years of pay erosion. *(Source: The Irish News, Belfast Telegraph)* ||- **Racially-motivated arson attack in north Belfast — Indian community 'afraid':** A grocery store in a former Gospel Hall on the Shankill Road that was due to open in the coming months was destroyed by fire in the early hours of Saturday 6 June, in what police are treating as a racially-motivated hate crime. Dr Satyavir Singhal (Indian Community Centre chair) said the Indian community "feel afraid" and people are stockpiling food. People Before Profit MLA Gerry Carroll said migrant communities are "fearful of another summer of unrest." The owner, originally from India and in NI for 18 years, said he was heartbroken. The PSNI said the building was "totally gutted". *(Source: BBC News NI, 7 June 2026)* ||- **Teachers ballot for industrial action opens 10 June:** The five main teaching unions (NASUWT, INTO, UTU, NAHT, NEU) will open their ballot from Wednesday 10 June over "unsustainable" workload. Ballot runs until September, potentially leading to strike action in the new school year. Education Minister Paul Givan said he was "genuinely disappointed." *(Source: BBC News NI)* ||- **Donaldson trial — Week 3 continues:** The trial of former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson enters its third week at Newry Crown Court. The prosecution continues to present evidence from two complainants. Donaldson denies 18 charges including rape, indecent assault, and gross indecency (alleged 1985–2008). Eleanor Donaldson faces a trial of the facts on aiding and abetting charges. Trial expected to run around four weeks. *(Sources: BBC, RTÉ, Belfast Telegraph)* ||- **Stormont pests double: Rats, flies and wasps infestation revealed:** A Belfast Telegraph FOI revealed that the number of pests detected at Stormont doubled last year. *(Source: Belfast Telegraph, 1 June 2026)* ||- **Aggressive marketing of addictive nicotine pouches to children condemned:** A Stormont MLA has condemned the surge in adverts for nicotine pouches visible across Belfast, calling them "unethical". *(Source: The Irish News, 8 June 2026)*

9 June 2026

|||- **Good Jobs Bill row escalates — Little-Pengelly calls plan "half-baked":** Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly (DUP) accused Sinn Féin of trying to "bully and bounce her" into supporting the Good Jobs Bill during Assembly exchanges on Monday 8 June. She described the proposed legislation as "half-baked" with no business support, but offered to back it if Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald (SF) agreed to split the bill and remove new trade union access clauses — which would give unions a "right to request" workplace access for recruitment and

representation. Archibald said she wouldn't "be leaving anyone behind." ICTU said the DUP's position showed "blatant disregard for the democratic process" and described it as "an affront to workers." ICTU chair Gerry Murphy said workers' rights and trade union rights were "flipsides of the same coin." The Executive remains deadlocked on the bill. (Source: BBC News NI, Enda McClafferty)

||| **Hospital doctors vote to strike — walkouts confirmed for 25 & 29 June:** The BMA confirmed that all grades of hospital doctors in NI (consultants, specialist/SAs, and resident doctors) have voted for strike action, in the first simultaneous ballot of its kind. Strikes will take place on **Thursday 25 June** (consultants/SAs — Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing) and **Monday 29 June** (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout). Doctors rejected the recommended 3.5% pay rise, citing 18 years of pay erosion and NI being the lowest-paid doctors in the UK and Ireland. Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said even the 3.5% can't be guaranteed without an agreed Stormont budget. All categories of NI doctors (GPs, consultants, SAs, residents) are now in dispute. (Source: BBC News NI, Marie-Louise Connolly) ||| **EV charging scandal — Assembly**

Commission agrees new paid framework: Speaker Edwin Poots confirmed to the Assembly on Monday 8 June that the Assembly Commission formally agreed to implement a new EV charging framework ensuring consistent payment for all charging points under its responsibility. Chargers in the upper car park will remain suspended until the new system is operational. Data retention arrangements will also be reviewed. The rapid response — FOI reveal, parties agree reimbursement, chargers suspended, Commission formalises new policy in under a week — reflects the scale of public anger so soon after the 27% MLA pay rise. (Source: PA Media/Yahoo News UK, Rebecca Black) ||| **Carla Lockhart defends Scarva protest presence:** DUP MP Carla Lockhart rejected criticism after being pictured with masked men at the Scarva counter-protest (6 June). She said she was there to stand with her community and prevent "tensions escalating." DUP leader Gavin Robinson said she "stood with the community." The Parades Commission had granted permission for both the pro-Palestine march (~1,500 people) and the Scarva Concerned Residents counter-protest. A significant policing operation — including water cannon — was in place. (Source: BBC News NI) ||| **Assembly Plenary — Justice Bill Consideration Stage (Day 3):** The Assembly continued the Consideration Stage of the Justice Bill on Tuesday 9 June. The key unresolved issue remains the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) — currently at 10. Sinn Féin, Alliance and SDLP back raising it to 12 or 14; the DUP opposes. The DUP has tabled a petition of concern requiring 30 signatures — currently at 25 DUP + 1 TUV, needing at least 4 UUP MLAs to sign. UUP leader Jon Burrows has refused to say how his MLAs will vote. The outcome will be a significant test of whether the UUP can act independently of the DUP. (Source: NI Assembly Order Paper) ||| **Donaldson trial — Week 3 continues:** Former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson told police the sex abuse allegations against him were "unbelievable," the court heard. The prosecution continues to present evidence from two complainants. Donaldson denies 18 charges including one count of rape, four counts of gross indecency, and 13 charges of indecent assault, alleged between 1985 and 2008. Eleanor Donaldson faces a trial of the facts on aiding and abetting charges. Trial expected to run around four weeks. (Source: BBC News NI) ||| **Noah Donohoe inquest — may have had depression symptoms:** The inquest into the death of Noah Donohoe (14, died June 2020) heard he may have had symptoms of depression in the months before his death. The inquest continues at Belfast Coroner's Court. (Source: BBC News NI) ||| **Teachers ballot for industrial action opens 10 June:** The five main teaching unions (NASUWT, INTO, UTU, NAHT, NEU) begin balloting from Wednesday 10 June over "unsustainable" workload. Ballot runs until September, potentially leading to strike action in the new school year. Education Minister Paul Givan said he was "genuinely disappointed," citing an existing workload action plan. The unions

said the department's plan "did not go far enough." (Source: BBC News NI) ||| - **Church of Ireland safeguarding failings — BBC Spotlight:** An investigation uncovered alleged safeguarding failings linked to an east Belfast church where a man with 45 convictions was appointed as a lay pastor. Several whistleblowers spoke to BBC Spotlight. (Source: BBC News NI) ||| - **Looking ahead:** Justice Bill Consideration Stage continues this week. Teachers ballot opens 10 June. Hospital doctors strikes confirmed for 25 & 29 June. The Assembly sits until summer recess starting 4 July. Executive still without multi-year budget. UUP internal civil war continues to simmer.

Key Issue Tracker — Update (16 June): || - **Belfast Disorder** (STABILISING — no further incidents): Three nights of anti-immigration disorder (9-11 June) across multiple towns. 23 arrests, 17 charged. Weekend passed calmly. "Together Against Hate" anti-racism rally (13 June) drew thousands — largest in Belfast's history. PSNI maintaining presence. Stephen Ogilvy's condition improving. PSNI investigating arson at house in north Belfast (14 June). DUP leader continues pressing for border controls. Second week without major incidents. || - Stormont Reform: Sinn Féin's "Building Better Politics" plan continues to generate debate. MACR blocked by UUP-backed petition of concern (15 June) — raising questions about the petition mechanism and Stormont reform. || - Good Jobs Bill: DUP v Sinn Féin standoff intensifies. Little-Pengelly calls it "half-baked"; offers to support if union access clauses removed. ICTU opposed to any split. Executive deadlocked. || - Doctors' Strikes: Ballot passed. 25 June (consultants/SAs) and 29 June (resident doctors) — first time all grades strike simultaneously. All NI doctor categories now in dispute. || - EV Charging: Assembly Commission agrees new paid framework; chargers suspended pending implementation. || - UUP Civil War: Beattie now independent unionist. Four UUP MLAs (Burrows, Armstrong, Chambers, Butler) sided with DUP on MACR petition — damaging for party's moderate wing. Internal party damage ongoing ahead of 2027 election. || - Executive Budget: Still deadlocked. No multi-year budget. Emergency financial procedures since April. || - Donaldson Trial: Week 4 at Newry Crown Court. Donaldson denies all charges; gave evidence in own defence. Jury deliberations expected soon. || - Teachers Ballot: Industrial action ballot opened 10 June — five teaching unions balloting over workload. Runs until September.

10 June 2026

||| - **Assembly in committee mode:** Committee on Procedures meets at 10am. No plenary session scheduled today. ||| - **Belfast disorder — suspect due in court:** The 30-year-old Sudanese man charged with attempted murder over the north Belfast knife attack (Monday 8 June) is due to appear at Belfast Magistrates' Court. The suspect also faces charges of possession of a bladed article in a public place and threats to kill. Police confirmed he entered the UK in February 2023 via Dublin-Paris flight, crossed the Irish border, claimed asylum, and was granted leave to remain until 2028. PSNI do not treat the attack as terror-related. The victim, a man in his 40s, remains in hospital with serious injuries to his eyes, neck, and back — may have been blinded. (Source: BBC News NI) ||| - **Night of disorder across Belfast:** On Tuesday 9 June, serious disorder broke out across Belfast following the knife attack. Houses and cars were set on fire; a Glider bus was hijacked and set alight on the Newtownards Road in east Belfast; a group of ~100 masked men were seen saying they were "getting the foreigners out." The NIFRS responded to 62 incidents across the Greater Belfast area. Disorder also reported in Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, Ballymena, Antrim, Bangor, Londonderry, and Portadown. A police Land Rover was attacked on the

Crumlin Road. Translink suspended all services. First Minister Michelle O'Neill said "groups of masked men burning families out of their homes is nothing less than disgusting cowardice." Justice Minister Naomi Long said there is no place for "masked thugs." A cross-party joint statement condemned the violence. Chief Constable Jon Boutcher promised increased police presence. PSNI ACC Ryan Henderson appealed for "voices of influence" to encourage peaceful protest. Far-right figures Elon Musk and Tommy Robinson amplified the attack video on social media, calling for protests. *(Sources: BBC News NI, Belfast Telegraph, The Guardian, ITV News, PA)* ||| **Teachers industrial action ballot opens:** The five main teaching unions — NASUWT, INTO, UTU, NAHT, and NEU — begin balloting members from today over what they describe as an "unsustainable" workload crisis. The ballot runs until 1 September. If passed, strike action could begin in the new school year. Education Minister Paul Givan said he was "genuinely disappointed," citing an existing workload action plan. The unions said the department's plan "did not go far enough." NASUWT General Secretary Matt Wrack said teachers in NI have "exhausted every possible avenue." *(Sources: BBC News NI, NASUWT, NEU)* ||| **Justice Bill Consideration Stage continues:** The Assembly continues debate on the Justice Bill in committee. The key outstanding issue remains the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) — currently at 10. The DUP has tabled a petition of concern requiring 30 signatures (currently at 25 DUP + 1 TUV, needing at least 4 UUP MLAs). UUP leader Jon Burrows continues to refuse to say how his eight MLAs will vote. Sinn Féin, Alliance, and SDLP back raising the age to 12 or 14. *(Source: NI Assembly Order Paper)* ||| **Donaldson trial — Week 3 continues:** The trial of former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson continues at Newry Crown Court. The prosecution continues to present evidence from two complainants. Donaldson denies 18 charges including rape, indecent assault, and gross indecency (alleged 1985–2008). Eleanor Donaldson faces a trial of the facts on aiding and abetting charges. Trial expected to run around four weeks. *(Sources: BBC, RTE, Belfast Telegraph)* ||| **Noah Donohoe inquest continues:** The inquest into the death of 14-year-old Noah Donohoe (died June 2020) continues at Belfast Coroner's Court, having heard evidence that he may have had symptoms of depression before his death. *(Source: BBC News NI)* ||| **Looking ahead:** Committee on Procedures meets today. Teachers ballot now open (until 1 September). Plenary returns Monday 15 June (next scheduled sitting). Assembly sits until summer recess starting 4 July. Hospital doctors strikes confirmed for 25 & 29 June. Executive still without multi-year budget. UUP internal civil war continues. Justice Bill consideration continues. Major Belfast disorder aftermath — PSNI monitoring for further protests.

|

11 June 2026

||- **Second night of widespread disorder — water cannon deployed:** For the second night running, serious anti-immigration disorder broke out across Belfast and beyond. In Newtownabbey and Glengormley, police deployed a water cannon for the first time in years to disperse crowds of rioters. Projectiles — bricks, masonry, bottles — were thrown at officers. Aerial footage showed multiple fires and crowds facing off against police in tactical gear. The PSNI described the protests as "coordinated" and warned that anyone involved "should expect to get arrested." NIFRS responded to multiple incidents across Greater Belfast. The violence follows the brutal knife attack on Monday 8 June in north Belfast. *(Sources: BBC News NI, Sky News, Belfast Telegraph, DW)* ||- **Stephen Ogilvy family appeal — "unrest is not welcome":** The family of Stephen Ogilvy —

the NHS radiographer critically injured in Monday's knife attack — issued a statement pleading for calm. They said the unrest was "not welcome" and called for "peaceful protest [as] the only way forward." Court proceedings confirmed Ogilvy has lost his left eye, has damage to his right eye, and injuries to his neck and back. He remains in a coma. *(Sources: BBC News NI, The Independent, PA)* ||- **Hadi Alodid remanded in custody for four weeks:** The 30-year-old Sudanese man charged with attempted murder over the north Belfast knife attack appeared via videolink at Laganside Magistrates' Court. He was remanded in custody. He also faces an additional charge of threatening to kill an NHS radiographer on the same day. The court heard the attack was not terror-related. *(Sources: BBC News, AP News, ITV News)* ||- **Second man charged over violent protests:** A 42-year-old man has been charged with riot, attempted criminal damage, and assault on a police designated person in connection with the disorder. *(Source: PSNI)* ||- **Westminster debates Belfast disorder:** The House of Commons held a debate on "Belfast: Violent Disorder" on 10 June — Hansard records the session. UK PM Keir Starmer appealed for calm. DUP leader Gavin Robinson used the debate to call for the "open porous border" between NI and the Republic to be closed, arguing the suspect entered the UK via the Common Travel Area. Labour's chair Anna Turley accused Elon Musk of "throwing firewood at the bonfire" by amplifying calls for protests. *(Sources: Hansard, The Independent, The Guardian)* ||- **Committee on Procedures meets (10 June):** The Assembly's Committee on Procedures met at 10am in Room 21, Parliament Buildings. Agenda items included Standing Order 42A (Legislative Consent Motions). *(Source: NI Assembly Business Diary)* ||- **Committee mode continues today (11 June):** No plenary sitting. The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs meets at 10am (Room 21) and the Public Accounts Committee meets at 2pm. The Committee for Communities also meets at 10am (Room 29). *(Source: NI Assembly TV Schedule)* ||- **Justice Bill Consideration Stage continues:** The Assembly's consideration of the Justice Bill continues in committee. The Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) remains the key unresolved issue. The DUP's petition of concern still needs at least 4 UUP MLAs to sign — UUP leader Jon Burrows continues to refuse to say how his eight MLAs will vote. *(Source: NI Assembly Order Paper)* ||- **Teachers industrial action ballot opens:** The five main teaching unions began balloting members from 10 June over "unsustainable" workload. Ballot runs until 1 September. Strike action could begin in the new school year if passed. *(Sources: BBC News NI, NASUWT)* ||- **Donaldson trial — Week 3 continues:** The trial of former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson continues at Newry Crown Court. The prosecution continues to present evidence from two complainants. Donaldson denies 18 charges including rape, indecent assault, and gross indecency (alleged 1985–2008). Donaldson told police the allegations were "unbelievable," the court heard. *(Sources: BBC, RTÉ)* |||- **Noah Donohoe inquest continues:** The inquest into the death of 14-year-old Noah Donohoe (died June 2020) continues at Belfast Coroner's Court. *(Source: BBC News NI)* |||- **Looking ahead:** Committee mode continues for the rest of the week. Plenary returns Monday 15 June. Assembly sits until summer recess starting 4 July. Hospital doctors strikes confirmed for 25 & 29 June. Teachers ballot now open. Executive still without multi-year budget. Major Belfast disorder — PSNI preparing for further possible protests tonight. Justice Bill consideration continues.

12 June 2026

|||- **Donaldson takes the stand — denies raping child under cross-examination (Day 13):** Former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson gave evidence in his own defence for the first time, telling

Newry Crown Court that the sex abuse allegations against him are "lies." Having spent the morning being questioned by his own defence barrister, he was cross-examined by the prosecution in the afternoon. Donaldson denied raping a child and repeatedly rejected the claims of both complainants. He described the allegations as "unbelievable" and said he "can't get my head around" why they would make such claims — the same denials he gave to police in his initial interview, extracts of which have already been played to the jury. The BBC's "State of Us" podcast released episode 12 of the Donaldson trial series, titled "Jeffrey in the witness box." (*Sources: BBC News NI, Belfast Telegraph, PA*)

|||- **Belfast disorder — third night passes relatively quietly:** Following two nights of major anti-immigration disorder (9-10 June), the third night (11-12 June) passed without major incident across Belfast. However, a significant PSNI presence — including water cannon on standby — remained deployed across the city as a precaution. NIFRS reported fewer call-outs compared to previous nights. The PSNI said the relative calm was the result of "proactive policing" and community appeals for calm. Assistant Chief Constable Ryan Henderson thanked community leaders for their voices of influence and warned that police would continue to maintain a "high-visibility presence." The family of Stephen Ogilvy — the critically injured radiologist — repeated their appeal for peaceful protest only. (*Sources: BBC News NI, PSNI, Metro*)

|||- **Political fallout continues — DUP calls for border controls:** DUP leader Gavin Robinson continued to press his call for the Irish border to be "closed" in the wake of the knife attack, arguing that the Sudanese suspect entered the UK via the Common Travel Area from the Republic of Ireland and should not have been able to do so. The issue dominated Westminster exchanges and PMQs. Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch condemned the Belfast violence at Prime Minister's Questions. Labour's chair Anna Turley accused Elon Musk of "throwing firewood at the bonfire" by amplifying calls for protests on his X platform. (*Sources: Hansard, The Guardian, The Independent*)

|||- **Hadi Alodid remanded in custody — appears by videolink:** The 30-year-old Sudanese man charged with attempted murder over the north Belfast knife attack appeared by videolink from custody at a brief court hearing. He was remanded for a further four weeks. He also faces charges of possession of a bladed article and threats to kill. The PSNI continues to treat the attack as non-terror related. (*Sources: BBC News, AP*)

|||- **Second man charged over disorder:** A 42-year-old man was charged with riot, attempted criminal damage, and assault on police following the Tuesday night disorder. (*Source: PSNI*)

|||- **No plenary — Assembly in committee mode (Friday):** No plenary session scheduled for Friday. The Assembly continues in committee mode, with the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Public Accounts Committee having met on Thursday 11 June. (*Source: NI Assembly Business Diary*)

|||- **Justice Bill Consideration Stage continues in committee:** The Justice Bill remains under consideration with the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) the key unresolved issue. The DUP's petition of concern still needs at least 4 UUP MLAs to sign — UUP leader Jon Burrows continues to refuse to say how his eight MLAs will vote. (*Source: NI Assembly Order Paper*)

|||- **Looking ahead:** No plenary until Monday 15 June. Justice Bill Consideration Stage expected to continue. Hospital doctors strikes confirmed for 25 & 29 June. Teachers ballot now open (until 1 September). Executive still without multi-year budget. Assembly sits until summer recess starting 4 July. Donaldson trial continues next week in its fourth and potentially final week. |

13 June 2026

|||- **No Assembly business (Saturday):** The Assembly is not in session. No plenary or committee meetings scheduled on Saturdays. The next plenary sitting is Monday 15 June. |||- **"Together Against Hate" — thousands attend anti-racism rally at Belfast City Hall:** United Against Racism organised a "Together Against Hate" demonstration at 1pm outside Belfast City Hall, in response to the anti-immigration disorder earlier this week (9-10 June). Drone footage showed crowds stretching across the grounds. Police closed roads to facilitate. Attendance estimated in the thousands — described by organisers as "Belfast's largest ever anti-racism rally." Speakers included: Ivanka Antova (chair of United Against Racism Belfast), Lord Mayor Róis-Máire Donnelly (SF), Kate Nicholl (Alliance), Matthew O'Toole (SDLP), Gerry Carroll (PBP), Mal O'Hara (Green), and Carmel Gates (ICTU). Chants of "refugees are welcome here" were repeated. A separate anti-racism protest also took place at Derry's Guildhall. The PSNI confirmed 23 arrests had been made and 17 people charged in connection with the disorder. The event was billed as a show of solidarity with migrant communities and opposition to the far-right violence. *(Sources: BBC News NI, Darran Marshall; Belfast Telegraph; RTÉ)* |||- **DUP leader calls for border to close — dominates weekend headlines:** Gavin Robinson continued to press his call for the Irish border to be "closed" after the Sudanese suspect in the north Belfast knife attack was found to have entered the UK via the Common Travel Area from the Republic. The News Letter led its Saturday edition with "DUP leader calls for Northern Ireland and Republic's 'open border' to close." The issue dominated Westminster exchanges earlier this week, with the UK Labour government resisting calls for unilateral action. Taoiseach Simon Harris said the Common Travel Area needs to be managed as people will "endeavour to abuse it." Robinson's demand is seen as an attempt to capitalise politically on the disorder, though critics note it risks inflaming cross-border relations and the wider peace process. *(Sources: News Letter, BBC, Irish Times, RTÉ)* |||- **Notorious Shankill Butcher and UVF double killer 'headed gang that set fire to Belfast knife attack victim':** The Belfast Telegraph/Sunday Life reported that paramilitaries — including a notorious Shankill Butcher and a UVF double killer — had been linked to the gang that firebombed the home of the north Belfast knife attack victim. The reporting suggested UVF/UDA elements were "calling the shots in riots" and using the stabbing as an excuse. *(Sources: Belfast Telegraph/Sunday Life)* |||- **Over 100 DeLoreans gather at Stormont for 45th anniversary:** More than 100 DeLorean cars from across Europe gathered at Stormont's Parliament Buildings to celebrate the iconic car's 45th anniversary. *(Source: Belfast Telegraph)* |||- **Steven Baker — anti-migrant protest chief charged over Belfast riot:** The leader of an anti-migrant protest group was charged in connection with the Belfast disorder. A police drone observed him during the unrest, the court heard. *(Source: Belfast Telegraph)* |||- **Newlyweds join Belfast anti-racism rally — "We'd have been here if it wasn't our wedding day":** A couple in wedding attire joined the Belfast anti-racism rally on Saturday, saying the cause was more important than their celebration. *(Source: Belfast Telegraph)* |||- **Education Minister accuses Sinn Féin of 'culturally weaponising' Irish language:** DUP Education Minister Paul Givan clashed with Sinn Féin during an Education Committee session, accusing the party of weaponising the Irish language. The Department was revealed to have called in the Labour Relations Agency to mediate in a workload dispute. *(Sources: Belfast Telegraph, Irish News)* |||- **Teenager charged in connection with Belfast race riots refused bail:** A teenager appeared in court charged over the Belfast disorder and was refused bail. *(Source: Belfast Telegraph)* |||- **Common Travel Area in focus in wake of Belfast attack:** The Taoiseach said the Common Travel Area needs to be managed as people will "endeavour to abuse it." The issue gained prominence after the Sudanese suspect in the north Belfast knife attack

entered the UK via the CTA from the Republic. (*Source: RTÉ*) ||||- **Nicola Sturgeon set for Féile an Phobail event in Belfast:** Former Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is scheduled to appear at a Féile an Phobail event in Belfast, according to the Irish News. (*Source: The Irish News*) ||||- **Liverpool Uni NI poll — key findings still reverberating:** The University of Liverpool/Irish News/Sunday Times poll (published 7-8 June) continued to generate analysis. Slugger O'Toole's Mick Fealty wrote a detailed piece (9 June) headlined "Beyond Green and Orange: Northern Ireland's New Political Reality" — noting that 55.2% of voters would refuse to support any party that brought down Stormont; the "neither" bloc (neither nationalist nor unionist) is now ~30% of the electorate and is 41% Catholic, 45% Protestant, 15% non-religious — a genuinely new political constituency. Key polling figures: SF 26.1% (-2.9% vs 2022), DUP 18.9% (-2.2%), TUV +2%, UUP +2%, Greens +4%, Alliance -1%. 56.2% view Stormont structures as the best basis for governance (present or reformed). Healthcare reform ranked #1 priority (35.4%), economy #2 (28.8%). Constitutional issues ranked far lower. The survey of 1,534 electors suggests no movement towards a border poll — 49.7% would vote to remain in the UK, 35.8% for a united Ireland. (*Sources: Liverpool Uni/IIS, Slugger O'Toole, Sunday Times*) ||||- **Newton Emerson: Sinn Féin's opt-out power-sharing plan "historic, naturally being ignored":** Newton Emerson's Irish Times column (4 June) argues that Sinn Féin's reform proposals are genuinely historic — the first of its five proposals would abolish mandatory power-sharing between the largest parties of unionism and nationalism. But he notes the proposals are being quietly ignored because they challenge the foundational logic of the GFA and neither the British nor Irish governments want to reopen that debate. (*Source: Irish Times, 4 June*) 330||- **Lessons need to be learned from the latest UUP squabble:** The Irish News opinion section ran a column analysing the ongoing UUP civil war, arguing there are lessons for the party if it wants to survive. (*Source: The Irish News*) 331||- **John Manley: Unionism's indulgence of intolerance will only alienate right-thinking people:** Irish News columnist John Manley argued that unionism's tolerance of intolerance during the Belfast disorder will alienate moderate voters. (*Source: The Irish News*) 332| 333|### 14 June 2026 334||- **PSNI investigating arson at house in north Belfast:** Detectives appealed for information following a report of an arson incident at a house in north Belfast in the early hours of Sunday 14 June. The attack is being treated as a hate-motivated incident, coming after the nights of anti-immigration disorder earlier in the week. (*Source: PSNI*) 335||- **Stephen Ogilvy's condition improving — may be woken from coma:** DUP leader Gavin Robinson said Belfast knife attack victim Stephen Ogilvy's condition is "improving" and he could be woken from a coma within 48 hours (as of ~13 June). The NHS radiographer was attacked on 8 June in north Belfast, sparking three nights of disorder. His family repeated their appeal for peaceful protest only. (*Source: Belfast Telegraph*) 336||- **No Assembly business (Sunday).** 337|

15 June 2026

||- **MACR blocked — UUP MLAs join DUP petition of concern, SF walks out:** In a dramatic evening session, the DUP's petition of concern blocking the raise of the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) from 10 to 14 succeeded after four UUP MLAs signed — **Jon Burrows, Diana Armstrong, Alan Chambers, and Robbie Butler**. The petition passed the 30-signature threshold (25 DUP + 1 TUV + 4 UUP). Sinn Féin MLAs walked out of the chamber in protest. The petition triggers a 14-day "consideration period" before any MACR amendments can be voted on, after which cross-community support from a majority of unionists AND nationalists would be

required — effectively killing the amendment. Alliance deputy leader Eoin Tennyson described it as "grubby, stroke politics at its worst" and a "further blow to public confidence in the assembly's ability to deliver." SDLP opposition leader Matthew O'Toole called it an "utter farce." SF's Emma Sheerin accused Burrows of allowing himself to be "used as a pawn in the DUP's game." Burrows said the amendments were "flawed" and needed to be fundamentally rewritten. The joint SF/Alliance/SDLP amendment had proposed raising the age to 14 with exceptions (murder, manslaughter, rape — age 12). The Ten is Too Young coalition said it was "incredibly disappointing." PBP's Gerry Carroll said the petition of concern was "weaponised." This is the first major political test of the UUP under Burrows — and the decision to side with the DUP will be damaging for the party's moderate/liberal wing, already reeling from Beattie's resignation. (Source: BBC News NI, Jayne McCormack, 15 June 2026) ||- **Fiscal Council Bill and**

Administrative/Financial Provisions Bill pass Final Stage: The Assembly passed the Final Stage of the **Northern Ireland Fiscal Council Bill** (NIA Bill 18/22-27) — moved by Finance Minister John O'Dowd — establishing the NI Fiscal Council as a statutory body providing independent scrutiny of the Executive's finances. The **Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill** (NIA Bill 28/22-27) also passed its Final Stage. Question Time covered Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (Minister Andrew Muir) and Communities (Minister Gordon Lyons). (Source: NI Assembly Order Paper, BBC) ||- **Donaldson Trial — Week 4 begins:**

The trial of former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson enters its fourth week at Newry Crown Court. Donaldson has given evidence in his own defence, denying all 18 charges and describing the allegations as "lies." He was cross-examined by the prosecution on Friday 12 June. The jury is expected to begin deliberations later this week or early next week. Eleanor Donaldson faces a trial of the facts on aiding and abetting charges. (Sources: BBC, Belfast Telegraph) ||- **Belfast disorder aftermath — weekend calm, political focus on root causes:** Saturday's "Together Against Hate" rally at Belfast City Hall drew thousands — described as Belfast's largest ever anti-racism demonstration. No major incidents were reported over the weekend period. The PSNI confirmed 23 arrests and 17 charges from the disorder. DUP leader Robinson continued pressing for border controls. The Guardian ran analysis on "Belfast riots trigger renewed scrutiny over loyalist paramilitary influence" and "Ugly scenes in Belfast expose a broken politics." Sunday Politics NI featured Health Minister Mike Nesbitt reflecting on the disorder's impact on healthcare workers. (Sources: BBC, Belfast Telegraph, The Guardian, PSNI) ||- **Teachers ballot continues:** The five main teaching unions' industrial action ballot over workload opened 10 June and runs until 1 September. (Source: BBC News NI) || || || || 16 June 2026 ||- **Plenary — Dilapidation Bill Consideration Stage; Justice Bill (Day 5):** The Assembly sits at 10.30am today. On the order paper: Executive Committee Business — **Consideration Stage: Dilapidation Bill** (NIA Bill 21/22-27) moved by Agriculture Minister Andrew Muir; **Consideration Stage: Justice Bill (Day 5)** moved by Justice Minister Naomi Long. The Justice Bill debate continues without the MACR amendments, which are now effectively blocked by the petition of concern. Members' Statements and Private Members' Business also scheduled. (Source: NI Assembly Order Paper) ||- **Donaldson Trial — Week 4**

continues: The fourth week of the Donaldson trial continues at Newry Crown Court. Jury deliberations could begin later this week. (Sources: BBC, Belfast Telegraph) ||- **Belfast disorder aftermath — week two without major incidents:** A second week without major disorder in Belfast, though PSNI maintains a visible presence. Stephen Ogilvy's condition continues to improve — reports suggest he may be woken from a coma. The PSNI continues to investigate the arson attack at a house in north Belfast on 14 June as a hate-motivated incident. DUP leader Robinson

continues to press for border controls. The political aftermath continues to dominate discussion, with the MACR vote (blocked on Monday evening) adding further fuel to the debate about Stormont's functionality. *(Sources: BBC, Belfast Telegraph, PSNI)* ||| - **Looking ahead — Rest of week:** ||| - **Wednesday 17 June:** Committee meetings — Economy (9.45am), AERA, Education, Finance, Executive Office, Health. ||| - **Thursday 18 June:** Committee meetings — Public Accounts, Agriculture. ||| - **Week after (22 June):** Question Time rota shows Agriculture/Communities (Monday 22), Health (Tuesday 23). ||| - **25 June:** Hospital doctors strike (consultants/SAS — Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing). ||| - **29 June:** Hospital doctors strike (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout). ||| - **4 July:** Summer recess begins. ||| ||| **Evening developments 16 June:** ||| - **Sinn Féin push through Stormont Hotel care home plans on knife-edge vote:** On two knife-edge votes at Belfast City Council Planning Committee, Sinn Féin councillors pushed through plans to convert the Stormont Hotel on the Upper Newtownards Road into a 97-bed care home and assisted living complex. The first application involves change of use from hotel to care home and diagnostic medical facility; the second covers 62 assisted living units and demolition of homes on Castlevue Road and Summerhill Parade. The council's own tourism team had objected, warning the Stormont Hotel is the only purpose-built hotel of over 100 rooms in East Belfast and its loss would leave the area with no significant hotel for visitors. 47 third-party representations — all objections — were received. Planning officials had recommended approval. Local residents raised concerns about parking, overshadowing, loss of privacy, antisocial behaviour, and loss of affordable family homes. The applicant, Summerhill Retirement Developments Ltd, said the care home would create 65-70 full-time jobs. *(Sources: The Irish News, Belfast Live — 16 June 2026, 9:55pm BST)* ||| - **Prosecution closing speech in Donaldson trial:** Prosecution barrister Rosemary Walsh KC delivered her closing speech at Newry Crown Court, urging the jury not to "brush under the carpet" the consequences of the alleged abuse by former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson. She said the two women who made allegations had "put their lives on hold" and described their evidence as "compelling." The defence is expected to give its closing speech on Wednesday 17 June, with the judge's summing up to follow and jury deliberations likely later this week. Donaldson denies 18 charges including rape. *(Sources: BBC News NI, The Irish News, ITV News — 16 June 2026)* ||| - **Pivotal report calls for Stormont reform:** The independent think tank Pivotal published "Improving the Institutions" — a report suggesting structural changes to the Assembly and Executive to improve decision-making. The report adds to growing momentum for reform, following recent proposals from Sinn Féin, Alliance, and the SDLP. *(Sources: Pivotal, Belfast Live — 15-16 June 2026)* |||

17 June 2026

|||| - **Stormont reform evidence session at Westminster NI Affairs Committee — major cross-party testimony:** The Westminster Northern Ireland Affairs Committee held a one-off evidence session on Stormont reform, hearing from the four main party leaders at Stormont. Key quotes: ||||| - **Eoin Tennyson (Alliance deputy leader)** — warned Alliance may not return to the Executive after the 2027 election without reforms or a "significant change in attitude" from Sinn Féin and the DUP. Said the party would not return "without either a significant change in attitude from the two largest parties, or some change to the structures, or at least a process to get there." Called the use of the petition of concern to block MACR "a perversion of democracy" and "grubby, stroke politics at its worst." Described SF and DUP as "wielding vetoes at the Executive table to

hold one another's legislative proposals hostage." Said most people believe Stormont has "served them fairly poorly" in delivery. Acknowledged the Irish government has "moved and honoured their word" on reform, while the Secretary of State "indicated he wishes to have engagement." If progress "stalled" or party felt "taken for granted," they would "take a different course." (*Sources: BBC News NI, Gareth Gordon; PA*) ||||| - **Jon Burrows (UUP leader)** — said most people regard Stormont as a "basket case" and described a "palpable disconnect" with the public. Called for reform focused on delivery rather than constitutional tinkering. Said he wanted the Executive's empty ministerial seats filled and for proper functioning. His evidence came amid ongoing internal UUP tensions following Doug Beattie's resignation. (*Sources: PA, Alloa Advertiser, Yahoo News*) ||||| - **Matthew O'Toole (SDLP/Opposition leader)** — argued a "lack of delivery" from Stormont is "toxic." Said people "can't really see the benefit of devolved government," which is "pernicious" in a society where democracy has "been so challenged for so much of our history." Warned civil servants can only authorise 95% of last year's budget, delivering an effective 5% cut. Called for structural AND cultural change — arguing SF and DUP have "a structural political interest in permanent opposition to one another, while being in permanent government with one another." (*Sources: PA, Alloa Advertiser*) ||||| - **Gavin Robinson (DUP leader)** — rejected suggestions his party would be unwilling to serve in a future Executive as having "no basis whatsoever." Also separately commented that a "joint first minister" title at Stormont "won't fix a single pot hole," dismissing the symbolism of renaming the positions. Criticised those who "talk up crisis purely for electoral benefit" ahead of the 2027 election. (*Sources: BBC, News Letter, Belfast Telegraph — 17-18 June*) ||||| The session underscored the depth of cross-party frustration with Stormont's functioning but revealed sharp divisions in diagnosis and prescription — Alliance and SDLP seeking structural change, DUP dismissing reform as cosmetic, UUP caught in the middle. ||||| - **Committee mode — Economy, AERA, Education, Finance, Executive Office, Health:** The Assembly is in committee mode today. The Committee for the Economy meets at 9.45am (Senate Chamber) — agenda includes the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme (Closure) Regulations, followed by a concurrent meeting with the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. Other committees sitting today include Education, Finance, Executive Office, and Health. (*Source: NI Assembly Business Diary*) ||||| - **Donaldson trial — defence closing speech delivered; accusers described as 'not sufficiently reliable':** Defence barrister Kieran Vaughan KC delivered his closing speech to the jury at Newry Crown Court, telling them the two women accusing Sir Jeffrey Donaldson were "not sufficiently reliable" for a guilty verdict. He said there were "significant and fundamental issues" with each complainant. He urged the jury to "ignore the noise" and "focus on the evidence." Complainant A was a "very, very unreliable witness" — her allegation of an encounter using a light to look at her private parts was a "misunderstanding." Vaughan said the evidence showed "nothing happened." He also pointed to a letter written by Donaldson in 2020 which the complainant believed was an apology. The defence argued the context was not about the allegations. The prosecution's Rosemary Walsh KC had told the jury on Tuesday not to "brush under the carpet" the consequences of the alleged abuse, describing the complainants' evidence as "compelling." Judge Paul Ramsey is expected to sum up on Thursday 18 June, with jury deliberations beginning thereafter. The trial has lasted four weeks. Donaldson denies 18 charges including rape. Eleanor Donaldson faces a trial of the facts on aiding and abetting charges. (*Sources: BBC News NI, Lyndsey Telford; Irish Times; Reuters*) ||||| - **Belfast disorder aftermath — community tensions remain:** The PSNI continues to maintain a visible presence across Belfast following the three nights of disorder last week (9-11 June). Stephen

Ogilvy's condition is reported to be improving. 23 arrests and 17 charges have been made. The "Together Against Hate" rally on 13 June drew thousands in the largest anti-racism demonstration in Belfast's history. Political focus remains on border security, paramilitary involvement, and community cohesion. (Sources: BBC, PSNI) | ### 19 June 2026 386|386| | | | - **Donaldson trial — jury continues deliberations (no verdict yet):** The jury in the trial of former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson began their deliberations on Thursday 18 June after Judge Paul Ramsey completed his summing up of the evidence. They were sent home for the evening on Thursday and returned on Friday morning (19 June) to continue considering their verdict. **They were sent home for the weekend on Friday evening — deliberations to resume Monday 22 June.** The jury of seven men and five women must decide on 18 charges against Donaldson (one count of rape, four counts of gross indecency, and 13 charges of indecent assault, alleged over a 23-year period), plus the trial of the facts for Lady Eleanor Donaldson on aiding and abetting charges. The trial has lasted four weeks at Newry Crown Court. (Sources: BBC, ITV, RTÉ, Belfast Telegraph) 387|387| | | | - **Committee mode — Agriculture and Public Accounts:** The Assembly continues in committee mode on the final scheduled committee day of the week. The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs meets at 10am (Room 21) — agenda includes Fisheries, Aquaculture and Water Environment Bill, Farming with Nature Scheme, and Areas with Natural Constraints Bill. The Public Accounts Committee meets at 2pm (Room 30). No plenary session today. (Source: NI Assembly Business Diary) 388|388| | | | - **Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry — first responses:** Following the publication of the Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry report on Thursday 18 June, initial responses from victims' families and campaign groups came through. Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said he "welcomed" the report and paid tribute to patients, families and carers who raised the alarm. The Belfast Trust acknowledged patients were "failed on many levels over many years." The inquiry — one of the largest public inquiries in NI's history — investigated decades of systemic abuse of patients with learning disabilities and mental health conditions at the County Antrim facility. (Source: BBC News NI, Dept of Health) 389|389| | | | - **Belfast disorder aftermath — week two of calm continues:** The second week since the three nights of anti-immigration disorder (9-11 June) has passed without major incidents. Stephen Ogilvy's condition continues to improve — he has been woken from his induced coma, according to family statements. 23 arrests and 17 charges have been made to date. The PSNI maintains a visible presence across affected areas. The political aftermath continues, with the MACR veto (15 June), the NIAC Stormont reform session (17 June), and ongoing DUP calls for border controls dominating the political agenda. (Sources: BBC, PSNI, Belfast Telegraph) 390|390 391|391| ### 20 June 2026 392|392| | | | - **No Assembly business (Saturday).** Parliament Buildings sits empty. 393|393| | | | - **Donaldson trial jury sent home for weekend — verdict expected next week:** The Donaldson trial jury began deliberations on Thursday 18 June and continued Friday 19 June before being sent home for the weekend. Deliberations will resume on Monday 22 June. The jury must decide on 18 charges against former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson (one count of rape, four counts of gross indecency, 13 charges of indecent assault, alleged 1985-2008), plus the trial of the facts for Lady Eleanor Donaldson on aiding and abetting charges. (Sources: BBC News NI, ITV News) 394|394| | | | - **Looking ahead to week commencing 22 June:** 395|395| | | | - **Monday 22 June:** Plenary (11am) — Question Time: Executive Office (Q to First Minister Michelle O'Neill) & Education. Opposition Business: Trust in Public Appointments (cont'd). Further Consideration Stage: Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses Inquiry and Redress Scheme Bill. Standing Orders 10(2)-10(4) suspended for the day. (Source: NI Assembly Order Paper)

396|396| | | | | - **Tuesday 23 June:** Plenary — Health Question Time. Private Members' Business.
397|397| | | | | - **Wednesday 24 June:** Committee meetings. 398|398| | | | | - **Thursday 25 June:**
Hospital doctors strike (consultants/SAS — Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing). First all-grades
simultaneous strike. 399|399| | | | | - **Friday 26 June:** No plenary. 400|400| | | | | - **Monday 29 June:**
Hospital doctors strike (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout). 401|401| | | | | - **4 July:** Summer
recess begins. 402|402| | | | | - **Donaldson trial verdict** — expected early next week after jury
resumes Monday. 400|### 18 June 2026 | | | - **Donaldson trial — Judge sums up; jury begins
deliberations:** Judge Paul Ramsey completed his summing up of the evidence at Newry Crown
Court, sending the jury of seven men and five women out to begin their deliberations on Thursday
afternoon. The jury must decide on 18 charges against former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson
(one count of rape, four counts of gross indecency, 13 charges of indecent assault, alleged 1985-
2008), plus the trial of the facts for Lady Eleanor Donaldson on aiding and abetting charges. The
trial has lasted four weeks. (*Sources: BBC, ITV, RTÉ*) | | | - **Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry
report published:** The long-awaited final report of the public inquiry into systemic abuse at
Muckamore Abbey Hospital was published. The inquiry, chaired by Tom Kark KC, investigated
decades of physical and psychological abuse of patients with learning disabilities and mental health
conditions at the County Antrim facility. Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said he "welcomed" the report
and paid tribute to patients, families and carers who raised the alarm. The Belfast Trust
acknowledged patients were "failed on many levels over many years." (*Sources: Muckamore Abbey
Hospital Inquiry, BBC*) | | | - **Committee mode — Agriculture and Public Accounts:** The
Assembly continues in committee mode. The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural
Affairs meets at 10am. The Public Accounts Committee meets at 2pm. (*Source: NI Assembly
Business Diary*)

19 June 2026

| | | - **Donaldson trial — jury continues deliberations (no verdict yet):** The jury in the trial of
former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson continued their deliberations at Newry Crown Court on
Friday. They were sent home for the evening and will return on Monday 22 June to continue
considering their verdict. (*Sources: BBC, ITV, RTÉ, Belfast Telegraph*) | | | - **Committee mode —
final committee day:** The Assembly continues in committee mode on the final scheduled
committee day of the week. No plenary session. (*Source: NI Assembly Business Diary*)

20 June 2026

| | | - **No Assembly business (Saturday).** Parliament Buildings sits empty. | | | - **Donaldson trial
jury sent home for weekend — verdict expected next week:** The Donaldson trial jury were
sent home for the weekend on Friday evening (19 June). Deliberations will resume on Monday 22
June. (*Sources: BBC News NI, ITV News*)

22 June 2026

- **Assembly Plenary sits — FM Question Time, Mother and Baby Bill:** The Assembly sat at 11am. Question Time covered the First Minister (Michelle O'Neill). The Further Consideration Stage of the Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses Inquiry and Redress Scheme Bill was also on the order paper. Opposition Business on Trust in Public Appointments continued. Standing Orders 10(2)-10(4) suspended for the day. *(Source: NI Assembly Order Paper)*
- **Donaldson trial — jury resumes deliberations, verdict expected this week:** The jury in the trial of former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson returned to Newry Crown Court today after being sent home for the weekend. They must decide on 18 charges (one count of rape, four counts of gross indecency, 13 charges of indecent assault, alleged 1985-2008), plus the trial of the facts for Lady Eleanor Donaldson on aiding and abetting charges. The trial has lasted over four weeks. A verdict could come today or Tuesday. *(Sources: BBC News NI, ITV News, Belfast Telegraph)*
- **Hospital doctors strikes — 3 days away:** The first of two hospital doctors strikes is on Thursday 25 June (consultants/SAS — Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing). The second is Monday 29 June (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout). This will be the first time all hospital doctor grades strike simultaneously. *(Source: BMA, BBC)*
- **Budget deadlock continues:** The Executive remains without a multi-year budget, operating under emergency financial procedures since April. Civil servants can only authorise 95% of last year's budget. *(Source: Stormont proceedings)*
- **Speaker Poots performs vast U-turn on mother & baby home amendment:** Assembly Speaker Edwin Poots reversed his controversial decision to block an amendment to the Mother and Baby Institutions Redress Scheme Bill that would have removed a "cut-off date" for redress. Assembly advisers had previously cleared the amendment for debate, but Poots unilaterally blocked it. Survivors welcomed the U-turn, but Poots still refuses to explain his original decision. The Belfast Telegraph reported that veteran Stormont figures could not recall a comparable instance of a Speaker blocking an amendment that had been cleared by the Assembly's own legal and procedural advisers. The only party to oppose the amendment was the DUP. *(Sources: Belfast Telegraph, The Irish News, BBC)*
- **Invest NI special adviser — conflict of interest flagged:** The Irish News revealed that the top civil servant in the Department for the Economy, Permanent Secretary Ian Snowden, flagged a "potential perceived conflict of interest" over Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald's special adviser and their role in an Invest NI appointment. The story adds to scrutiny of SpAd appointments and governance at the department. *(Source: The Irish News, Conor Coyle)*

23 June 2026

- **Donaldson found guilty of all 18 charges including rape — sent to prison:** Sir Jeffrey Donaldson was convicted on all 18 counts of historical sexual abuse against two women when they were children, including one count of rape, four counts of gross indecency, and 13 counts of indecent assault (alleged 1985-2008). The 63-year-old former DUP leader showed no emotion as verdicts were read out at Newry Crown Court. The jury of seven men and five women deliberated for 10 hours over three days. Judge

Paul Ramsey remanded Donaldson in custody and told him to expect a "lengthy sentence" when sentenced in September. He was taken to Maghaberry Prison in his former constituency of Lagan Valley. Lady Eleanor Donaldson faced a "trial of the facts" on mental health grounds — the jury found she had done the acts on all five charges including four counts of aiding and abetting her husband's offending. *(Sources: BBC News NI, Julian O'Neill/Luke Sproule; PA Media)*

- **Donaldson's first night in prison — downfall shakes NI politics:** Donaldson spent his first night in Maghaberry Prison. His downfall — from the heights of DUP leadership to convicted child sex abuser — has sent shockwaves through NI politics. Calls have grown for his knighthood to be revoked. *(Sources: BBC News NI, RTÉ, The Irish News)*
- **Calls for Donaldson's knighthood to be removed:** There were immediate calls to revoke Donaldson's knighthood following his conviction for 18 historical sexual offences. *(Source: RTÉ)*
- **Baby loss certificates applied for in NI for the first time:** An "emotional" day as the first baby loss certificates were applied for in Northern Ireland under new legislation. *(Source: BBC News NI)*
- **Belfast Fleadh: Car-free zone in city centre:** Belfast city centre will have a car-free zone during the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in August, expected to attract over 500,000 visitors. *(Source: BBC News NI)*
- **Hospital doctors strikes — 2 days away:** The first strike is on Thursday 25 June (consultants/SAS — Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing). The second is Monday 29 June (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout). All NI doctor categories are now in dispute. *(Source: BMA, BBC)*
- **Budget deadlock continues:** The Executive remains without a multi-year budget, operating under emergency financial procedures since April. *(Source: Stormont proceedings)*
- **Assembly not sitting today (Tuesday).** Next scheduled plenary is Tuesday 23 June — Health Question Time. *(Source: NI Assembly Order Paper)*
- **Economy Minister Archibald: department "at breaking point" — opposes own party's budget:** Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald (Sinn Féin) told the Committee for the Economy that her department is "now at breaking point" and she could not support the draft budget proposed by Finance Minister John O'Dowd (also Sinn Féin). Archibald said her department's budget was "acutely impacted" by the loss of EU funding and cuts to baseline allocations. The extraordinary public split between two Sinn Féin ministers underscores the severity of the budget crisis. Slugger O'Toole asked: "Is the Executive's proposed budget unravelling?" *(Sources: The Irish News, Belfast Telegraph, Newsletter, Slugger O'Toole)*
- **Finance Minister O'Dowd accused of being "in horizontal mode" over budget:** O'Dowd faced sharp criticism for inaction on the budget, with MLAs saying he is in "horizontal mode." He has published a draft budget for 2026/27 but the Executive has not agreed on it — insisting they need more financial support from the Treasury. O'Dowd previously hit back at a Treasury report suggesting Stormont could solve its own problems. *(Sources: The Irish News, BBC)*

21 June 2026

||||- **No Assembly business (Sunday).** The Assembly does not sit on Sundays. ||||- **Donaldson trial — verdict expected Monday or Tuesday:** The jury in the Donaldson trial returns Monday 22 June to continue deliberations. A verdict could come as early as Monday or Tuesday. The trial has now lasted over four weeks at Newry Crown Court. *(Sources: BBC, Belfast Telegraph)* ||||- **Looking ahead to week commencing 22 June:** |||| - **Monday 22 June:** Plenary (11am) — Question Time: Executive Office (First Minister Michelle O'Neill) & Education. Opposition Business: Trust in Public Appointments. Further Consideration Stage: Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses Inquiry and Redress Scheme Bill. |||| - **Tuesday 23 June:** Plenary — Health Question Time. Private Members' Business. |||| - **Wednesday 24 June:** Committee meetings. |||| - **Thursday 25 June:** Hospital doctors strike (consultants/SAS — Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing). First all-grades simultaneous strike. |||| - **Friday 26 June:** No plenary. |||| - **Monday 29 June:** Hospital doctors strike (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout). |||| - **4 July:** Summer recess begins.

25 June 2026 (Thursday)

- **Hospital doctors strike begins — consultants/SAS walk out:** The first of two hospital doctors strikes began today (Thursday 25 June). Consultants and Specialist/SAS doctors are on a 24-hour strike (Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing) after rejecting the 3.5% pay rise. Resident doctors strike Monday 29 June (full 24-hour walkout). This is the first time all hospital doctor grades in NI have struck simultaneously. Health Minister Mike Nesbitt expressed disappointment but said he cannot go above the 3.5% offer without an agreed multi-year budget. The BMA said doctors are "demoralised" as UK medics get pay deals on time and southern counterparts are paid more. Routine and elective services are cancelled. *(Sources: BBC News NI, ITV/UTV, BMA)*
- **Donaldson asks to forfeit knighthood:** Following his conviction on all 18 charges of historical sexual abuse, former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson has written to the Prime Minister through his solicitor offering to renounce his knighthood. He is currently on remand at Maghaberry Prison awaiting sentencing in September. Political leaders across all parties have called for him to be stripped of all state honours. *(Sources: ITV/UTV, BBC, PA)*
- **Committee mode — final before recess:** The Assembly sits in committee mode today. Committee for Health meets (likely discussing the doctors' strike impact). This is one of the last scheduled sittings before summer recess begins 4 July. *(Source: NI Assembly AIMS Portal)*
- **Looking ahead:** Friday 26 June — no plenary. Monday 29 June — resident doctors strike. Monday 30 June — Assembly business resumes (TBC). Summer recess begins 4 July.

27 June 2026 (Saturday)

- **No plenary sitting:** The Assembly is not in session today (Saturday). Next scheduled business is next week. Summer recess begins 4 July.
- **DUP formally denounces Donaldson as "wicked deceiver":** The DUP issued a formal statement denouncing former leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson as a "wicked deceiver" who led

a "double and duplicitous life" (23 June). DUP MLA Jonathan Buckley described him as an "evil sexual predator" and "fraudulent monster" in a video statement. The party has moved to distance itself from its former leader in the wake of his conviction on all 18 charges of historical sexual abuse. Donaldson has offered to forfeit his knighthood. (Sources: *The Guardian*, *Belfast Telegraph*, *Belfast Live*, *Newsletter*)

- **Edwin Poots invokes Bible after Donaldson conviction:** Stormont Speaker Edwin Poots (former DUP leader) issued a statement quoting Jesus' warning about those who harm children — "better if a millstone was put around their neck and they were cast into the depth of the sea." Poots said he had "caught Donaldson out on lies too many times" over the years. Donaldson's photos have been removed from the Assembly website. (Sources: *BBC News NI*, *Premier Christian News*, *Belfast Telegraph*)
- **Donaldson's "double life" — Gript investigation:** Gript published an investigation into Donaldson's "double life," revealing a visit to a "gay sauna" and allegations disclosed to former DUP MP Ian Paisley. The investigation is due to air as a documentary. (Source: *Gript*, 26 June)
- **Orange Order membership terminated:** Jeffrey Donaldson's Orange Order membership has been automatically terminated following his conviction for child sex offences. Questions raised about what the Orange Order knew and when. (Sources: *Belfast Live*, *Republican News*)
- **Doctors strike — resident doctors walk out Monday:** The second strike action takes place Monday 29 June (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout). The consultants/SAS strike (25 June) has ended. This is the first time all hospital doctor grades in NI have struck simultaneously. (Source: *BBC News NI*, *BMA*)
- **BBC Parliament broadcast — IVF Equality debate:** BBC Parliament aired coverage of an IVF Equality debate/statement from the Assembly (27 June). The issue relates to unequal access to IVF treatment in NI compared to the rest of the UK. (Source: *BBC Parliament schedule*)
- **Summer recess approaching:** The Assembly's summer recess begins 4 July 2026. Committees are in their final meetings. The Assembly has effectively concluded its legislative business for the 2025-26 session.

28 June 2026 (Sunday)

- **No plenary sitting:** The Assembly is not in session today (Sunday). No committees scheduled. Summer recess begins 4 July.
- **DUP commissions independent review into Donaldson issues:** The DUP announced it is commissioning a "specialised and detailed" independent review into a "number of issues arising" following the conviction of former leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson. The review will probe who knew what about claims of inappropriate behaviour by Donaldson before his arrest. A BBC News NI investigation revealed that two senior DUP members were made aware of different allegations against Donaldson five years before charges were brought. Education Minister Paul Givan admitted there were "rumours about Donaldson's lifestyle" but said there was no evidence, and none of a "criminal nature." DUP leader Gavin Robinson said the party "acted swiftly" when Donaldson was charged in March 2024. The

review is expected to report before the next Assembly election. (Sources: BBC News NI, ITV/UTV, RTÉ, Irish Times, Belfast Telegraph, 26 June)

- **£16m economic inactivity scheme — Communities Minister Lyons announces plan:** Communities Minister Gordon Lyons (DUP) announced a £16m scheme to tackle persistently high levels of economic inactivity in Northern Ireland. NI has the worst rates of economic inactivity across the UK over the last 15 years, with many unable to work due to long-term ill health. The scheme includes pilot programmes in Derry and Belfast, funded from Stormont's public services transformation fund. UUP deputy leader Diana Armstrong warned "Fermanagh must not be an afterthought." (Sources: BBC News NI, ITV/UTV, Communities NI, 24 June)
- **Resident doctors strike — countdown to Monday 29 June:** Resident doctors will stage a full 24-hour walkout on Monday 29 June — the second strike action following the consultants/SAS action on 25 June. Pickets planned at Royal Victoria Hospital, Craigavon Area Hospital, and other sites from 8:30am. Health Minister Nesbitt issued a statement urging the public to use services wisely during the strike. Over 90% of services will still be available, according to the Department of Health, but routine and elective procedures will be cancelled. (Sources: BMA, Department of Health, 25–28 June)
- **Stormont roof repairs enter second phase:** Long-running work to repair the roof of Parliament Buildings at Stormont is moving into a second phase, MLAs have heard. Scaffolding has been in place since 2024 following leaks at the historic building. (Sources: Belfast Telegraph, The Irish News, 23 June)
- **Speaker Poots controversy continues:** Questions persist about Speaker Edwin Poots' handling of Assembly business following his U-turn on the mother & baby home amendment (22 June) and his refusal to explain his original decision. The Belfast Telegraph editorialised that "Stormont has a Speaker problem." (Sources: Belfast Telegraph, The Irish News)
- **Stormont reform — Westminster NI Affairs Committee evidence published:** The official transcript was published from the 17 June evidence session where party leaders and senior figures gave evidence on Stormont reform. Alliance's Eoin Tennyson warned the party may not return to the Executive without reforms; UUP's Jon Burrows called Stormont a "basket case"; SDLP's Matthew O'Toole said the lack of delivery was "toxic"; DUP's Gavin Robinson dismissed reform as cosmetic. (Sources: UK Parliament Committees, Pivotal PPF, 22 June)
- **Looking ahead:** Monday 29 June — resident doctors strike (full 24-hour walkout). Tuesday 30 June — last scheduled plenary before recess. Friday 4 July — summer recess begins.

Key Current Issues

1. **Jeffrey Donaldson Conviction & Fallout (June 2026)** — Former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson found guilty on all 18 charges of historical sexual abuse (including rape) against two women when they were children. Sent to Maghaberry Prison on 22 June 2026. Judge told him to expect a "lengthy sentence" in September. Eleanor Donaldson found to have done the acts on all five charges via trial of the facts. Donaldson has written to the

PM offering to renounce his knighthood. **DUP formally denounced him as a "wicked deceiver"** (23 June); DUP MLA Jonathan Buckley called him an "evil sexual predator." **DUP commissions independent review** (26 June) into who knew what about claims of inappropriate behaviour — BBC revealed two senior DUP members were aware of different allegations five years before charges. Education Minister Givan admitted there were "rumours" but "no evidence of a criminal nature." **Speaker Edwin Poots** invoked Jesus' warning about those who harm children. **Donaldson's Orange Order membership terminated automatically.** Gript investigation revealed a visit to a "gay sauna" and allegations disclosed to Ian Paisley. Donaldson's photos removed from Assembly website. One of the most dramatic falls from grace in NI political history. (*Sources: BBC News NI, The Guardian, PA Media, RTÉ, ITV/UTV, Gript*)

2. **Stormont Reform Debate** — Sinn Féin published a six-point "Building Better Politics" reform plan (1 June 2026) to remove party vetoes over executive formation, election of the Speaker, and to devolve fiscal powers. Newton Emerson (Irish Times, 4 June) called the plan "historic" — noting the first proposal would abolish mandatory power-sharing between the largest parties of unionism and nationalism — but said it was being "naturally ignored" because neither the British nor Irish governments want to reopen the GFA's foundational logic. Arlene Foster warned of "growing suspicion" among grassroots unionism about reform being used to "tilt the constitutional balance." Alliance and SDLP have also published reform proposals. On 17 June, the Westminster NI Affairs Committee held a major evidence session where Alliance deputy leader Eoin Tennyson warned the party may not return to the Executive after 2027 without reforms; UUP leader Jon Burrows called Stormont a "basket case"; and SDLP's Matthew O'Toole described the lack of delivery as "toxic." The DUP's Gavin Robinson dismissed reform as cosmetic, saying a "joint first minister" title "won't fix a single pot hole." The Liverpool Uni poll (June 2026) found 55.2% of voters would refuse to back any party that collapsed Stormont — and 56.2% view the current structures as the best basis for governance (either present or reformed form).
3. **Windsor Framework / Protocol** — Post-Brexit trading arrangements remain contentious. DUP returned to power-sharing Feb 2024 after securing "Safeguarding the Union" deal, but TUV continues to oppose. Polling suggests 70%+ see Brexit as failure for NI.
4. **Executive Stability** — Executive restored Feb 2024 after 2-year DUP boycott (May 2022–Feb 2024). Mandatory coalition model under strain.
5. **Legacy Act** — NI Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 opposed by all NI parties except DUP. ICRIR leadership in crisis — independent review found "toxic" culture, "quite divided" leadership. Labour Government pledged to repeal and replace. Secret group linked to security services helped devise the Act (revealed May 2026 by The Detail/CAJ).
6. **Public Sector Funding / Health Worker Strikes** — Chronic underfunding; NHS waiting lists worst in UK. Temporary nursing costs have tripled in six years. £102m transformation fund announced for Stormont projects. All categories of hospital doctors (consultants, SAS, resident) voted for strike action in first simultaneous ballot of its kind — after rejecting 3.5% pay rise. **Strike underway: 25 June** (consultants/SAS — Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing) **COMPLETED; 29 June** (resident doctors — full 24-hour walkout) **IMMINENT.** GPs already taking collective action. Teachers also balloting from 10 June over workload (runs until September). Health Minister Nesbitt can't guarantee even the 3.5%

pay award without an agreed multi-year budget. **The Executive remains deadlocked on a multi-year budget. Economy Minister Archibald (SF) publicly opposed the draft budget of Finance Minister O'Dowd (also SF)**, saying her department is "at breaking point" due to loss of EU funding and baseline cuts (23 June). O'Dowd accused of being "in horizontal mode" over the crisis. Slugger O'Toole asks if the Executive's budget is "unravelling." (*Sources: The Irish News, Belfast Telegraph, BBC, ITV/UTV, Slugger O'Toole*)

7. **Casement Park** — Redevelopment stalled; UK government withdrew £62.5m Euro 2028 funding.
8. **Housing Crisis** — Acute shortage of social and affordable housing; growing homelessness. Housing waiting list passed 50,000 for the first time in May 2026, up 30% over the last decade. Hundreds of new social homes stalled due to water infrastructure "capacity restrictions." Social housing fraud cost ~£8m in 2024/25. (*Source: BBC*)
9. **Irish Language Act** — Identity and Language (NI) Act 2022 finally passed, granting official status to Irish and Ulster Scots.
10. **Border Poll / Unity Debate** — Sinn Féin's electoral dominance raises questions about constitutional future. O'Neill called for unity referendum by 2030. However, the Liverpool Uni poll (June 2026) showed no movement towards constitutional change — only 35.8% would vote for a united Ireland, with 49.7% wishing to remain in the UK. Professor Pete Shirlow noted NI's unemployment is the lowest in the UK and growing fintech/cybersecurity/advanced manufacturing sectors weaken the economic case for unity.
11. **PSNI Recruitment Crisis** — Officer numbers at historic low (6,190). Catholic recruitment falling (just 20% of new recruits in 2025). Patten-style 50:50 recruitment and cadet scheme being discussed.
12. **SEN Reform Controversy** — Controversial new SEN regulations due September 2026 face opposition from Children's Law Centre and 13 organisations, with spending doubling to £622m.
13. **UUP Civil War** — Former leader Doug Beattie quit the party (31 May 2026) with a blistering attack on leader Jon Burrows, who Beattie accused of running a "toxic" party. Beattie admitted to lying in a social media post subsequently. Burrows denies the claims. At the NI Affairs Committee on 17 June, Burrows called Stormont a "basket case" — a candid admission of the party's weakened position. Beattie expected to stand as independent in Upper Bann in 2027. The split severely weakens the UUP ahead of the next Assembly election.
13. **Belfast Anti-Immigration Disorder** — Three nights of major disorder across Belfast and beyond (9-11 June) after a violent knife attack by a Sudanese asylum seeker in north Belfast (8 June). Homes, cars, and a Glider bus set alight; migrants specifically targeted. Water cannon deployed for first time in years. PSNI described the violence as "coordinated." 23 arrests and 17 charged to date. Hadi Alodid (30, Sudanese) remanded in custody over attempted murder. Anti-migrant protest chief Steven Baker charged with riot (observed by police drone). The Belfast Telegraph/Sunday Life reported that paramilitaries — including a notorious Shankill Butcher and a UVF double killer — were linked to the firebombing. DUP leader Gavin Robinson called for the Irish border to be closed — the suspect entered the UK via the Common Travel Area. Westminster held an emergency debate; Labour accused Elon Musk of "throwing firewood at the bonfire" by

amplifying far-right calls on X. A "Together Against Hate" counter-demo at Belfast City Hall on 13 June drew thousands, described as the largest anti-racism rally Belfast has ever seen. A separate rally in Derry also drew hundreds. Victim Stephen Ogilvy's condition is improving — his family says he may be woken from a coma within 48 hours. (Sources: BBC, PSNI, News Letter, The Guardian, Belfast Telegraph/Sunday Life, RTÉ)

14. **Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry Report** — The long-awaited final report of the public inquiry into systemic abuse at Muckamore Abbey Hospital was published on 18 June 2026. The inquiry, chaired by Tom Kark KC, investigated decades of physical and psychological abuse of patients with learning disabilities and mental health conditions at the County Antrim facility. Health Minister Mike Nesbitt welcomed the report and paid tribute to patients, families and carers who raised the alarm. The Belfast Trust acknowledged patients were "failed on many levels over many years." The report's publication marks the culmination of one of the largest and most significant public inquiries in Northern Ireland's history. (Source: Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry; BBC News NI)
15. **Wastewater Infrastructure Crisis** — Build Homes NI and the housebuilding sector called on Stormont party leaders to agree a way forward on fixing Northern Ireland's wastewater infrastructure, which is holding up the delivery of thousands of homes. NI Water has recommended that plans for almost 15,000 homes be refused due to lack of infrastructure capacity. The crisis has been described as "toxic" for housing delivery, with over 40% of new social homes stalled. A plan to allow developer contributions towards wastewater upgrades was announced in March 2026, but the sector says progress is too slow. (Sources: Water Magazine, Housing Today, Belfast Telegraph)
16. **Irish Language Implementation** — First Minister Michelle O'Neill rejected criticism that implementation of Irish Language legislation has been slower than expected, defending the pace of rollout. Communities Minister Gordon Lyons (DUP) said he is "not hostile" to the Irish language, but the High Court heard there are no plans to implement an Irish language strategy before the next Assembly election. Conradh na Gaeilge has taken legal action twice. (Sources: Belfast Live, BBC)

Twitter/X Discussion

📌 Source: Nitter search, 27 May 2026

No significant discussion found on Nitter/X for this period — Nitter returned empty results, possibly rate-limited.

Reddit Discussion

🔍 Source: Web search, 3 June 2026 — Reddit API unauthenticated access blocked for direct scraping.

r/northernireland — Key active threads (28 June 2026):

Jeffrey Donaldson guilty of 18 historical sex offences (thread 22 June, score: ~1,100, ~1,000 comments) — Massive thread on the Donaldson verdict. Top comments emphasised the significance of the conviction for the DUP and NI politics broadly. Many noted the irony of Donaldson's public moralising. Discussion of the impact on the party and whether more people knew. (*r/northernireland*, 22 June)

Jeffrey Donaldson spent his first full day behind bars reading a Bible (thread 24 June) — Follow-up thread on Donaldson's time on remand at Maghaberry. (*r/northernireland*, 24 June)

Investigation delves into the double life of Jeffrey Donaldson (thread 26 June) — Discussion of Gript/BBC Spotlight investigation into Donaldson's secret life, including the gay sauna visit and allegations disclosed to Ian Paisley. (*r/northernireland*, 26 June)

Government says Jim Allister's claims over Donaldson 'leverage' are... (thread 25 June) — Discussion of TUV leader Jim Allister's claims about political leverage related to Donaldson. (*r/northernireland*, 25 June)

"I knew Jeffrey was a wrong'un" (thread 26 June) — Anecdotal thread with people claiming to have suspected Donaldson. (*r/northernireland*, 26 June)

DUP commissions independent review over Donaldson (thread 26-27 June) — Discussion of the DUP's announced independent review. Commenters sceptical about scope and independence; questions about whether the review will actually hold anyone accountable. (*r/northernireland*, 26-28 June)

Alliance may quit Executive without reforms, warns deputy leader (thread ~17 June, score: moderate-high) — Discussion of Eoin Tennyson's warning to the NI Affairs Committee that Alliance may not return to the Executive after 2027 without reforms. Comments mixed — some praising Alliance for taking a stand, others sceptical it's a negotiating tactic ahead of the election. Several commenters noted the irony of Alliance being the party most committed to the institutions now threatening to walk away. Link to BBC article: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c04y5x75v2go> (*r/northernireland*, 17 June)

United Against Hatred — Rally in Belfast (thread 13 June, score: ~634) — Highly active thread sharing photos and videos from the "Together Against Hate" anti-racism rally at Belfast City Hall. Comments emphasised the scale of the turnout and counter-narrative to the far-right disorder

earlier in the week. Many users posting footage from the event. Separate discussion about the Derry rally. (*r/northernireland, 13 June*)

Thoughts on the SDLP? (thread ~14 June) — Political discussion thread about the SDLP's position in NI politics, generating 24 comments. Mixed views — some noting the SDLP is squeezed between SF and Alliance, others defending its social democratic principles. (*r/northernireland, 14 June*)

Why are they throwing about the term HMO to be such a bad thing? (thread ~14 June) — Discussion about HMO (House in Multiple Occupation) housing, connected to the wider racial tensions and targeting of migrant housing. (*r/northernireland, 14 June*)

How many have been arrested so far for their role in the Pogroms? (thread ~14 June) — 10 comments questioning the PSNI's arrest numbers. (*r/northernireland, 14 June*)

New Assembly Poll from Liverpool Uni (thread 7 June, score: high) — Continued discussion around the University of Liverpool/Irish News/Sunday Times poll showing SF at 26.1% (-2.9%), DUP at 18.9% (-2.2%), TUV +2%, UUP +2%, Greens +4%, Alliance -1%. Commenters noted the "neither" bloc at ~30% as a major shift in NI politics. Top comments highlighted the finding that 55.2% would not back a party that collapsed Stormont. Discussion of the seat projection suggested DUP could lose seats to TUV while SF might face erosion from both Alliance and apathy. Several commenters pointed out that the combined unionist vote (DUP + UUP + TUV) is falling, making the constitutional question increasingly complex. (*r/northernireland, 7-13 June*)

Belfast disorder — ongoing megathread/collated coverage (threads from 9 June) — Multiple threads tracking the anti-immigration disorder across Belfast. Key sub-discussions: the PSNI's use of water cannon for the first time in years; Elon Musk and Tommy Robinson accused of fuelling the violence; the DUP's call for border controls; the Together Against Hate counter-demo on Saturday 13 June. Sentiment broadly condemned the violence, with significant discussion about the root causes and the PSNI response. (*r/northernireland, 9-14 June*)

Sinn Féin launches Stormont reform proposals (thread 1 June) — Discussion around SF's six-point "Building Better Politics" plan. Comments noted the irony of Sinn Féin (who collapsed Stormont in 2017 over the RHI scandal) now proposing to remove the ability of parties to collapse Stormont. Some commenters pointed out the proposal essentially allows any party to become First Minister if the largest unionist/nationalist party declines to nominate — a potential path around DUP boycotts. Broader sentiment: reform is needed but trust in any party's motives is low. (*r/northernireland, 1 June*)

Doug Beattie resigns from the UUP (thread 31 May, score: 127) — Active discussion with 138 comments. Top sentiment: "He seems like a decent enough guy which is why he has been driven out of his party. No space in the middle anymore." Another commenter: "It will be the death of the party. They can't outdo the DUP, just as the DUP are realising they can't outdo the TUV." Discussion about whether political unionism is "very fragile" with a squeeze from both Alliance and TUV. Beattie's subsequent admission of lying in a social media post added further comment. (*r/northernireland, 31 May-3 June*)

Unionists suspicious of Stormont reform, says Foster (thread ~1 June) — Arlene Foster's committee evidence generated discussion about unionist defensiveness. Mixed views — some agreeing with Foster that SF's proposals are a power grab, others noting that the current system gives the DUP a veto it has repeatedly abused. (*r/northernireland*, 1-2 June)

Previous key threads still relevant:

Eleanor Donaldson unfit to stand trial — The news (from 20 May) that Eleanor Donaldson was deemed medically unfit to stand trial on aiding and abetting charges, and will instead face a "trial of the facts," generated discussion. The thread links to the Irish Times coverage. (*r/northernireland*, 20 May)

Secret group linked to security services helped devise Legacy Act — A significant investigative story from The Detail/CAJ revealed that policing and state agency figures participated in a confidential government working group (the Senior Legacy Investigations Working Group) that met in mid-2020 and helped shape the Legacy Act. Documents were marked "official secret." Daniel Holder from the CAJ spent eight months securing their release. Victims' groups were already critical of the legislation. (*r/northernireland*, recent)

Sinn Féin calls for return to 50-50 police recruitment — Discussion around the ongoing PSNI recruitment crisis and the debate over reintroducing Patten's 50:50 recruitment policy, which ended in 2011. The thread links to BBC coverage. (*r/northernireland*, recent)

PSNI Catholic recruitment falls to new low — Multiple threads covering the decline in Catholic recruits, with one thread noting that just one in five new PSNI recruits are Catholic. An exclusive about one of the PSNI's first Catholic recruits quitting in dismay ("I regret joining... I just feel scarred by it") also generated discussion. (*r/northernireland*, various)

Lough Neagh controversy — DUP and Sinn Féin criticised over the state of Lough Neagh, three years after toxic algae first appeared. A substack opinion piece argued no meaningful action has been taken despite promises of "urgent action" from the First Minister in 2023. (*r/northernireland*)

Possession of puberty blockers could lead to prosecution in NI — Health Minister Mike Nesbitt's correspondence with Ministers Naomi Long and Andrew Muir about potential prosecution for procurement or possession of puberty blockers for gender dysphoria treatment. (*r/northernireland*)

DUP leader criticises deal negotiated by Gavin Robinson — A self-referential criticism thread where Gavin Robinson was noted to have criticised a deal he himself negotiated. (*r/northernireland*)

NI Commonwealth Games team to use Ulster Banner — Discussion of identity and representation. (*r/northernireland*)

Stormont assembly members set to see £14,000 pay rise — Discussion on MLA pay increases. (*r/northernireland*)

Latest Updates — Week of 29 June 2026

1. Assembly Sits for Plenary Session (29 June)

The Assembly sits at noon today. On the Order Paper:

- **Oral Ministerial Statement** on the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Inland Waterways Sectoral Format Meeting (held 29 May 2026)
- **Public Petition** — "Save Our Trees" (Mr Alan Chambers, up to 3 mins)
- **Motion: Suspension of Standing Orders** 10(2) to 10(4) — Business Committee
- Members' Statements
- Question Time: Finance (Minister John O'Dowd) and Assembly Commission

(Source: [AIMS Portal — Today's Business 29 June](#))

2. NI Civil Service Withdraws from Pride Events (25 June)

The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) withdrew from participating in Pride 2026 events — the first time since 2018 it has done so. NICS cited "the current legal and case law context" as the reason. Key reactions:

- **Andrew Muir** (Alliance, Agriculture Minister) said he was "very disappointed"
- **Gerry Carroll** (PBP) called the decision "regressive and reckless"
- **Belfast Pride** organisers said they were "deeply disappointed"
- The **Rainbow Project** (NI's largest LGBTQIA+ organisation) criticised the move
- The **Christian Institute** welcomed the decision
- Belfast Pride parade is scheduled for **25 July 2026**

(Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [GCN](#), [The Irish News](#), [PBP](#))

3. SDLP Hosts "Future of These Islands" Conference (25 June)

The SDLP held its major conference "The Future of These Islands: Preparing for Change" at the MAC Theatre in Belfast on Thursday 25 June. The event was sold out. Key participants included:

- **Claire Hanna** (SDLP leader)
- **Jim O'Callaghan TD** (Irish Justice Minister)
- **Mark Drakeford** (former First Minister of Wales)
- **Justin McNulty** (SDLP MLA)

The conference explored constitutional change and preparedness for a potential border poll. Notably, **no elected unionists attended**. The Newsletter reported the event was framed around "Abolition of Northern Ireland" — a characterisation the SDLP disputed.

(Sources: [SDLP](#), [The Newsletter](#), [Slugger O'Toole](#))

4. £16m Work Commission Launched (24–25 June)

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons pledged £16m to tackle economic inactivity in Northern Ireland, where 315,000 people are economically inactive — the worst rate in the UK for 15 years. The scheme aims to support people with long-term health conditions back into work. **Diana Armstrong** (UUP deputy leader) warned that Fermanagh and rural areas must not be overlooked. The funding comes from a wider £2.5bn investment programme over 5 years.

(Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [NI Digest](#), [Impartial Reporter](#))

5. Good Jobs Bill Moves to Assembly Scrutiny Stage (18 June)

The Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill — described as the most significant reform of employment law in NI — has moved to the Assembly scrutiny stage. The bill would abolish exploitative zero/low-hour contracts, introduce rights to request flexible/remote working, and strengthen protections for workers. The DUP maintains "significant concerns remain" about the legislation. Business groups (IoD NI) have warned of "significant concerns" despite welcoming progress.

(Sources: [CDI NI](#), [DfE](#))

6. Westminster NI Affairs Committee Hears Stormont Reform Evidence (17 June)

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at Westminster held a major one-off evidence session on Stormont reform, hearing from the four main party leaders:

- **Eoin Tennyson** (Alliance) warned Alliance may not return to the Executive after 2027 without reform

- **Jon Burrows** (UUP) said most people regard Stormont as a "basket case"
- **Matthew O'Toole** (SDLP) argued "lack of delivery" from Stormont is "toxic"
- **Gavin Robinson** (DUP) also gave evidence

(Sources: [UK Parliament](#), [Pivotal Policy](#))

7. Donaldson Offers to Forfeit Knighthood; DUP Review Continues (25–26 June)

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, convicted on all 18 charges, has written to the Prime Minister offering to renounce his knighthood. He remains on remand at Maghaberry awaiting sentencing in September. The DUP's independent review into who knew what and when continues. Education Minister Paul Givan acknowledged there were "rumours about [Donaldson's]" lifestyle but insisted none were of a "criminal nature."

(Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [ITV/UTV](#))\n\n|---\n\n### Latest Updates — 1–4 July 2026 (Summer Recess Begins)\n\n### 1. 'Progress Made' on Stormont Budget at Hillsborough Castle Talks (2 July)\n\nSecretary of State Hilary Benn hosted all Executive parties at Hillsborough Castle on Thursday 2 July for budget talks — a last-ditch effort before summer recess. Benn said they had "agreed a programme of work" that will "look, first of all, at the pressures that the Executive's finances are facing." The work will begin on Friday 4 July and involve officials from the Treasury, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), and the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).\n\n"We certainly have had a productive day in our talks with the party leaders. There's been a lot of plain speaking and we are making some progress," Benn told the media. He said the Treasury needs to "fully understand" the financial pressures the Executive is facing, adding "that detailed work can now begin with full disclosure." The work will also look at the Executive's plan for "fiscal sustainability and efficiencies and public services transformation." Benn emphasised: "What we're all agreed on is we can't deal with this by finding another one-off fix. We need a long term sustainable plan for the future of Northern Ireland's finances and this is the start of a political process with that objective in mind." \n\nThis follows months of deadlock on a multi-year budget — the draft 2026/27–2029/30 budget was published in January but never agreed by the Executive. Senior officials had warned that some services will face cuts if a budget is not agreed by the end of July. Public services have been operating with contingency budgets since the start of the financial year in April.\n\n**Sources:** \n- [BBC News NI — 'Progress made' on bid to agree Stormont budget at castle talks](#)\n\n### 2. Sign Language Bill Passes Final Stage (late June/Early July)\n\nThe Sign Language Bill (NIA Bill 10/22-27) passed its Final Stage in the Assembly in the final sitting days before recess. The bill gives legal recognition to British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) in Northern Ireland, requiring public bodies to promote and facilitate their use. The Bill passed its Further Consideration Stage and Final Stage in the closing weeks of the session.\n\n**Source:** [NI Assembly TV](#)\n\n### 3. Ministers Attend Somme Memorial Events (3 July)\n\nDeputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly and Communities Minister Gordon Lyons attended commemorative events at the Ulster Tower in France to mark the 110th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme (1 July 1916).

The ministers took part in a number of commemorative events, paying respects to the thousands of soldiers from the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions who died in the battle.\n\n**Source:** [The Executive Office](#)\n\n### 4. Public Inquiry and Redress Scheme Bill Passes (30 June)\n\nFirst Minister Michelle O'Neill and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly welcomed the passage of the Inquiry into Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses and the Redress Scheme Bill. The legislation establishes a statutory inquiry and redress framework for the thousands of women who passed through these institutions. Speaker Edwin Poots had controversially blocked an amendment to remove a cut-off date for redress eligibility, then performed a U-turn after cross-party pressure.\n\n**Source:** [The Executive Office](#)\n\n### 5. Jacqui Durkin Appointed New Police Ombudsman (24 June)\n\nFirst Minister Michelle O'Neill and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly announced the appointment of Jacqui Durkin as the new Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. Durkin takes over the role of overseeing complaints against the PSNI, replacing outgoing office-holder Marie Anderson.\n\n**Source:** [The Executive Office](#)\n\n### 6. Assembly Enters Summer Recess (4 July)\n\nThe Northern Ireland Assembly rose for summer recess on Saturday 4 July 2026. The last plenary session was on Tuesday 30 June, which included the Final Stage of the Justice Bill and the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill Second Stage. The Assembly is scheduled to return on **31 August 2026** (August Bank Holiday). Key outstanding business awaiting return:\n- **Multi-year budget** — still unresolved; Hillsborough talks a step forward but no deal yet\n- **Good Jobs Bill** — remains at Committee Stage, deadlocked between DUP and SF\n- **DUP Donaldson review** — independent review to report before 2027 election\n- **Teacher industrial action ballot** — runs until September; strike possible in autumn term\n- **Justice Bill** — Final Stage passed 30 June; MACR petition of concern still in effect\n- **Speaker Poots** — facing calls to step aside pending outcome of DUP review\n- **Doctors' strikes** — both strikes concluded (25 & 29 June); no further strike dates announced\n\n**Source:** [NI Assembly Order Papers](#)\n\n### 7. Reddit — r/northernireland Discussion (Late June/Early July)\n\n*Direct Reddit access was unavailable this cycle (bot blocking during browser session). Key recurring threads based on ongoing stories:*\n- DUP Donaldson aftermath — Spotlight revelations, double life, Poots' role, review terms\n- Budget talks at Hillsborough — scepticism about progress given track record\n- Assembly recess — commentary on what the Executive did/didn't achieve this session\n- Good Jobs Bill — continued debate on workers' rights\n- Sign Language Bill passing Final Stage — generally welcomed across the spectrum\n- Somme commemorations — annual marking, with political attendance noted\n- Noah Donohoe inquest — adjourned after jury couldn't reach unanimous verdict (RTE, 2-3 July)\n- Lyra McKee trial — three men found not guilty of her murder (RTE, ~3 July)\n\n**Key sources consulted for this update:**\n- BBC News NI: [Progress made on budget](#)\n- The Executive Office: Somme events, Redress Scheme, Police Ombudsman announcements\n- NI Assembly TV: Latest Question Times and Plenary sessions\n- RTE News: Noah Donohoe inquest, Lyra McKee trial outcome\n- Irish News: Council City Deal concern, Invest NI/IRA appointment, Economy skills cuts\n- NI Assembly Order Papers: Final week business\n\n---\n\n### Latest Updates — Week of 30 June 2026

Latest Updates — Week of 30 June 2026

1. DUP Crisis Deepens — Double Life Revelations (26-29 June)

BBC Spotlight episode (26 June) exposed the "double life" of Sir Jeffrey Donaldson:

- **2006 gay sauna visit:** Two senior police officers observed Donaldson entering a London sauna marketed as a meeting place for gay men, the same year he described homosexuality as "sinful."
- **"Exploited" woman:** Former DUP MP Ian Paisley Jr told Spotlight that five years ago (during 2021 DUP leadership contest), a young woman approached him saying Donaldson "exploited" her and "used me." Paisley described her as a "victim" and said he relayed the claim to Edwin Poots (then DUP leader). Poots told Spotlight: "We observed at all times the wishes of the young woman." The woman did not want to make a formal complaint.
- **Drunken incidents:** Paisley Jr said Donaldson was often drunk on overseas trips, including an occasion in New York when he tried to kiss a female DUP assembly member, and a trade mission where he "projectile vomited over the mayor of Beijing."
- DUP statement: "has no knowledge of these issues raised and is shocked to learn of these alleged incidents."

Guardian (29 June) confirmed that **former and current DUP members knew of allegations** but did not share them through "appropriate channels." Gavin Robinson admitted some individual members had information they didn't share. Alliance MP Sorcha Eastwood (who won Donaldson's seat): "It is not tenable for the DUP to be hiring those who will be investigating extremely grave allegations against their former party leader." DUP founding member Wallace Thompson: "almost like a nuclear explosion in political terms." Ex-adviser said DUP may be "damaged beyond repair."

Donaldson expected to appeal conviction (Belfast Telegraph).

Sources:

- [BBC Spotlight investigation](#)
- [The Guardian — DUP members knew](#)
- [Belfast Live — Poots urged to step aside](#)
- [Belfast Telegraph — DUP damaged beyond repair](#)

2. Speaker Poots Recused from Donaldson Debate (29 June) — Says "Nothing to Answer For" (30 June)

Assembly Speaker Edwin Poots recused himself from presiding over the Matter of the Day debate on Jeffrey Donaldson (29 June). He also did not involve himself in the decision on whether the matter of the day tabled by Sinn Féin would be accepted for debate. Justice Minister Naomi Long called on Poots to consider stepping aside from the Speaker role entirely pending the outcome of investigations, citing "precedent in the past for people stepping aside for a short period of time whilst investigations into their conduct have taken place." First Minister Michelle O'Neill urged Poots to make clear what steps he took when he became aware of the woman's concerns.

On Tuesday 30 June, Poots told the Assembly "I would never have protected Jeffrey Donaldson in any circumstance." He insisted he has "nothing to answer for" over his handling of the woman's concerns, and claimed "a number of people" in the DUP also knew about her claims. Sinn Féin called on him to "stand aside" as Speaker. *(Sources: BBC, ITV/UTV, Newsletter)*

Source: [Belfast Live](#)

3. Benn Invites Executive to Hillsborough Budget Talks (29-30 June)

Secretary of State Hilary Benn invited all Executive parties to Hillsborough Castle for budget talks before the summer recess begins (4 July). The talks come after the passing of a statutory deadline (29 June) which means funding allocation decisions now fall to the Northern Ireland Civil Service under delegated authority. The Executive has still not agreed a multi-year budget for 2026/27–2029/30 despite the draft being published in January. Benn will discuss the "exact scale" of budget pressures and "offer support to find a way forward."

Sources:

- [Belfast Telegraph](#)
- [The Irish News](#)

4. Assembly Sits for Final Plenary Before Summer Recess (29-30 June)

The Assembly sat on Monday 29 June (Matter of the Day on Donaldson, Members' Statements) and Tuesday 30 June (committee sessions). The summer recess begins **Saturday 4 July** — returning 31 August (Bank Holiday). This is the last plenary before the break.

Latest Updates — Week of 28 June 2026 (archived)

1. Doctors' Strike Begins (25 June)

Consultants and SAS doctors began a 24-hour strike on 25 June (Christmas Day rota, minimum staffing). Resident doctors strike on 29 June (full 24-hour walkout). First time all hospital doctor grades in NI have struck simultaneously. Rejected 3.5% pay rise, citing 18 years of pay erosion. Health Minister Nesbitt cannot guarantee even 3.5% without an agreed multi-year budget.

(Sources: *BBC News NI, ITV/UTV, BMA*)

2. Donaldson Offers to Forfeit Knighthood (25 June)

Former DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, convicted on all 18 charges of historical sexual abuse, has written to the Prime Minister offering to renounce his knighthood. He is on remand at Maghaberry Prison awaiting sentencing in September. Cross-party calls for immediate revocation of all state honours. (Sources: *ITV/UTV, BBC, PA*)

3. SDLP Tables Motion on Executive Budget Failure (22–23 June)

The SDLP tabled a motion in the Assembly on Monday 22 June noting "with extreme concern the failure of the Northern Ireland Executive to agree a multi-year budget" and calling for action. The motion was debated on **Tuesday 23 June 2026** — the first plenary session after the summer solstice. The Executive has still not agreed a multi-year budget despite the draft 2026/27–2029/30 budget being published in January. The Budget Act 2026 (which dealt with the 2025–26 supply) received Royal Assent on 20 March 2026, but departments remain without a long-term financial plan. Finance Minister John O'Dowd and Treasury negotiations remain gridlocked.

Sources:

- [SDLP motion — AIMS Portal \(22 June\)](#)
- [BBC — Budget 2026-27 Debate coverage](#)

- [NI Executive draft budget — NIFiscalCouncil](#)

4. Blasphemy Repeal Passes (9 June — follow-up coverage)\$

MLAs voted **57 to 24** in favour of repealing Northern Ireland's blasphemy laws on 9 June. This historic move abolishes the common-law offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel in NI. The UK already abolished the offence in England and Wales in 2008; Scotland abolished it in 2021. Northern Ireland was the last jurisdiction in the UK where it was still technically enforceable (though not prosecuted in modern times).

Source: [Humanists UK](#)

5. Petition of Concern Blocks Criminal Age Reform (15 June)

A proposal by Alliance MLA Sian Mulholland to raise the age of criminal responsibility in Northern Ireland from **10 to 14** was blocked by a petition of concern — the DUP's veto mechanism. This was the first use of the petition of concern since the NDNA reforms introduced a 14-day cooling-off period (MLAs can change their mind within 14 days if they backed it). The reform would have brought NI in line with England, Wales, and Scotland, as well as the Republic of Ireland and most of Europe, where 14 is the norm. NI currently has one of the lowest ages of criminal responsibility in Europe.

Sources:

- [BBC — Petition of concern blocks reform](#)
- [BBC — Unionist parties blocked move](#)

6. UK Social Media Ban for Under-16s (announcements 10–15 June)

The UK Government announced plans to ban social media access for under-16s under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026. This includes platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, and X (Twitter). First Minister Michelle O'Neill questioned the timing of the announcement (15 June), noting the sensitivity post-riots. The UK-wide ban automatically extends to Northern Ireland per the devolution settlement. The Assembly had earlier debated a motion on social media restrictions for children (10 Feb 2026).

Sources:

- [Holyrood — Ban would also apply in NI](#)
- [Irish Times — Ireland monitoring UK ban](#)
- [TheyWorkForYou — 15 Jun 2026 debate](#)

7. Aftermath of June 9–12 Riots (ongoing political fallout)

Three nights of anti-immigration rioting across Belfast and Newtownabbey (9–11 June) continue to dominate political debate. Key developments in the Assembly context:

- The PSNI used water cannon for the first time in years to disperse crowds in Newtownabbey.
- Multiple homes, vehicles, and businesses were set alight; community groups and politicians condemned the violence.
- The "Together Against Hate" counter-rally at Belfast City Hall on 13 June drew thousands.
- Political parties traded blame over inflammatory rhetoric, with SF and the SDLP facing criticism over their response amid tensions around immigration and social media discourse.
- **Committee for Executive Office** met on **Wednesday 24 June 2026** — expected to discuss post-riot recovery and community relations.
- The stabbing attack that triggered the riots (a knife incident involving a Sudanese national) led to charges being brought against a suspect by 8 June.

Sources:

- [Wikipedia — 2026 Northern Ireland riots](#)
- [BBC — How the riots were organised](#)
- [BBC — PSNI stakeholder update](#)
- [AP Photos — Aftermath](#)

8. DUP Commissions Independent Review (26 June)

Following the conviction of Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, the DUP announced a "specialised and detailed" independent review into "a number of issues arising" from the case. The review will examine who in the party knew about allegations of inappropriate behaviour before Donaldson's arrest. BBC News NI revealed that **two senior DUP members** were made aware of different allegations against Donaldson **five years before charges were brought**. Education Minister Paul Givan acknowledged there were "rumours about [Donaldson's] lifestyle" but insisted there was no evidence, and none of a "criminal nature." DUP leader Gavin Robinson said the party "acted swiftly" when charges were laid in March 2024 and suspended Donaldson immediately. The review will

report before next year's Assembly election (May 2027).

Sources:

- [BBC — DUP commissioning review](#)
- [ITV/UTV — DUP minister says there were rumours](#)
- [RTÉ — DUP launches review](#)
- [Irish Times — DUP announces independent review](#)

9. Economy Minister Breaks Ranks on Budget — SF Internal Split (23 June)

Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald (Sinn Féin) told the Committee for the Economy her department is "now at breaking point" and she **could not support** the draft budget proposed by Finance Minister John O'Dowd — **also a Sinn Féin minister**. Archibald cited the loss of EU funding and cuts to her department's baseline as key reasons. The public split between two ministers from the same party is unprecedented in this mandate and underscores how severe the budget crisis has become. O'Dowd was separately accused of being "in horizontal mode" by MLAs frustrated at the lack of progress. Sluggie O'Toole asked whether the Executive's proposed budget is "unravelling." The Executive has still not agreed a multi-year budget for 2026/27–2029/30 despite the draft being published in January.

Sources:

- [The Irish News — Department at breaking point](#)
- [Belfast Telegraph — SF Economy Minister opposes SF Finance Minister's budget](#)
- [Sluggie O'Toole — Is the Executive's budget unravelling?](#)

Latest Updates — 5-9 July 2026 (Summer Recess)

1. Mother and Baby Homes Report Published — "Systemic Failures" by State (7 July)

The **Truth Recovery Independent Panel** published its final report on mother and baby homes, Magdalene laundries and workhouses in Northern Ireland on 7 July 2026. Key findings:

- **Over 12,000 women and girls** were sent to mother and baby homes — higher than the previously estimated 10,000. An additional 3,750 were admitted to Magdalene Laundries and Thorndale Industrial Home.
- The panel found "systemic failures" by the state led to "serious human rights issues". Those who gave testimony spoke of abuse, neglect, degrading treatment and experiences likely to "reach the threshold of inhuman treatment".
- **Almost 300 victims, survivors** and their relatives gave testimony to the 10-person panel appointed by the Executive in 2023.
- **Key recommendation: "Sister Z"** — a Good Shepherd Sister now deceased who was at the Marianville home in Newry — should be investigated for **sexual abuse**. One contributor said internal examinations carried out by Sister Z were "very, very intrusive" and concluded she "used us young girls for sexual gratification".
- **Key recommendation: "Social Worker A"** — active in adoption placements between the 1960s and 1980s — should be investigated for **"baby trading"**. Adoptions she organised were described as "totally wrong and illegal".
- The report made **70 recommendations** overall. Testimonies gathered will be used to inform a planned public inquiry.

(Sources: [BBC News NI — Inquiry urged to investigate sex abuse and 'baby trading'](#), [The Irish Times](#))

2. Mother-and-Baby Home Survivors React — "Thank God We Have Some Justice" (1 July)

Survivors of mother-and-baby homes welcomed the redress scheme extension and the panel's findings. The Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses Inquiry and Redress Scheme Bill continues through the Assembly, though survivor groups remain concerned about the scope of the inquiry and the cut-off date for redress eligibility.

(Sources: [BBC News NI](#))

3. Stormont Budget — "Progress Made" at Hillsborough Castle Talks (2 July)

Secretary of State Hilary Benn hosted all Executive parties at Hillsborough Castle on Thursday 2 July for what was described as a "productive day" of talks. Benn said they had "agreed a programme of work" that will examine the financial pressures facing the Executive, with officials from the Treasury, NIO, and NICS beginning detailed work on 4 July. The work will also look at "fiscal sustainability and efficiencies and public services transformation." Benn emphasised: "What we're all agreed on is we can't deal with this by finding another one-off fix." The Executive has still not agreed a multi-year budget for 2026/27–2029/30. Public services have been operating with contingency budgets since April. (Source: [BBC News NI](#))

4. DfE to Cut Skills Funding Amid Budget Stalemate (Early July)

The Department for the Economy announced cuts to skills funding as the Executive remains deadlocked on a multi-year budget. The Chair of the NI Skills Council hit out at the planned cuts, warning of the impact on training and development programmes. This follows Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald's (SF) public break with Finance Minister John O'Dowd (SF) over the draft budget in late June. (Source: *The Irish News*)

5. Racial Equality Laws Stalled by Executive Stand-Off (~8-9 July)

The Irish News reported that updated racial equality legislation for Northern Ireland remains stalled due to the stand-off between Stormont's leaders. The Executive's failure to agree a Programme for Government means proposals to strengthen racial equality protections cannot advance — a particularly pointed issue given the anti-immigration disorder in June and ongoing community tensions. (Source: *The Irish News*)

6. Newton Emerson: Thread from Donaldson's Downfall to a Border Poll (9 July)

Newton Emerson's Irish Times column (9 July) argues the DUP could be "destroyed" by the Jeffrey Donaldson scandal, with fresh accusations dragging in more leading figures. He notes every other party — including other unionist parties — is demanding answers. TUV leader Jim Allister suggested the British government may have known about Donaldson's "proclivities" and could have blackmailed him into accepting the Brexit sea border. The central argument: unhappy voters stay at home, so unionism could **cease to be Stormont's largest designation** at the May 2027 election — a development that would have major constitutional implications. (Source: [The Irish Times](#))

7. Invest NI Chief Distances Himself from Former IRA Prisoner Board Appointment (1-2 July)

Invest NI Chief Executive Kieran O'Donoghue told the BBC that the appointment of a former IRA prisoner to the board of the economic development agency was "entirely the minister's call" — referring to Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald (SF). The appointment had drawn criticism from unionist politicians. Separately, O'Donoghue defended Invest NI's silence over a US firm's abandoned investment, saying the agency was bound by commercial confidentiality. (Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [The Irish News](#))

8. Racist Violence Led to 1,100+ Outpatient Appointment Cancellations (Early July)

The Irish News reported that the racist violence during the June disorder (9-11 June) led to more than 1,100 outpatient appointment cancellations across Belfast health trusts. Operations for people with life-threatening conditions were also affected, as the NHS struggled to maintain services during the unrest. (Source: [The Irish News](#))

9. Stormont in Summer Recess

The Assembly is currently in summer recess (since 4 July) and is not expected to resume until **31 August 2026** (Bank Holiday). Committees are not scheduled to meet. The Executive remains without a multi-year budget, with civil servants operating under contingency arrangements. Donaldson awaits sentencing in September.

Latest Updates — 9-11 July 2026 (Summer Recess)

1. Assembly Launches Review into Donaldson's Conduct at Parliament Buildings (10 July)

The Northern Ireland Assembly has launched a formal review into Jeffrey Donaldson's behaviour while he was an MLA (2003–2010) and later a visitor to Parliament Buildings as an MP and DUP leader. The review was requested by Speaker Edwin Poots on 29 June and formally began on 10

July.

Review details:

- Conducted by the **Director of Parliamentary Services** (the Assembly's senior safeguarding officer)
- Guided by experts in trauma-informed practices
- Reports directly to the Clerk/Chief Executive
- Open from **10 July to 21 August** for anyone to come forward
- Report due to the Clerk/Chief Executive by **28 August**
- Contact: donaldsonreview@niassembly.gov.uk

Purpose: To enable any current/former MLA, Assembly or party staff, or other user of Parliament Buildings to bring forward, in a "safe and supported manner", any incidents of abuse or inappropriate behaviour they directly experienced while Donaldson was an MLA or visitor.

The review runs alongside the DUP's own independent review led by Jim Gamble. (Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [NI Assembly Press Release](#), [RTE](#), [The Irish News](#))

2. Jeffrey Donaldson Removed from Privy Council (10 July)

Jeffrey Donaldson has been officially removed from the Privy Council. The convicted child sex abuser had written to the Prime Minister in June asking for his membership to be revoked following his conviction on 18 counts of sex abuse (including one count of rape). The Privy Council met at Buckingham Palace on Wednesday 9 July and agreed to remove his name from the list of members. A formal order was published stating his letter was read out at the meeting.

Donaldson has also asked for his knighthood to be forfeited, but this has not yet been made official. (Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [ITV/UTV](#))

3. DUP Appoints Jim Gamble to Lead Independent Review (9 July)

The DUP announced that child safety expert and former senior police officer **Jim Gamble** will lead the party's independent review into what was known about Jeffrey Donaldson's behaviour while he was in the DUP. The review is being conducted by the Belfast-based iNEQE Safeguarding Group.

Key details from the published terms of reference:

- The review will investigate "what information was known within the party" about Donaldson's behaviour

- Will examine whether appropriate action was taken
- Will report before the next Assembly election (May 2027)
- Gamble is a former RUC officer who previously headed the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

The DUP stated that Donaldson "abused various positions of power" — a characterisation notably stronger than the party's initial response. (Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [ITV/UTV](#), [Belfast Telegraph](#), [The Irish Times](#))

4. Newton Emerson: Donaldson's Downfall Could Destroy the DUP — Unionism May Lose Largest Designation (9 July)

Newton Emerson's Irish Times column (9 July) argues the currency of the DUP's collapse is so severe that unionism could **cease to be Stormont's largest designation** at the May 2027 election — a development with major constitutional implications. He notes that every other party — including other unionist parties — is demanding answers, and TUV leader Jim Allister has suggested the British government may have known about Donaldson's "proclivities" and could have blackmailed him into accepting the Brexit sea border. The central argument: unhappy unionist voters stay at home, potentially tipping the balance. (Source: [The Irish Times](#))

5. MoD Paid Donaldson ~£12,000 for Cameroon "Peace Process" Consultancy (Revealed Early July)

The Irish News revealed that the **Ministry of Defence paid Sir Jeffrey Donaldson almost £12,000** for consultancy work linked to peace efforts in Cameroon — payments made **after his arrest** in March 2024. The MOD confirmed two payments were made to Donaldson outside of his role with several registered peace-building companies. TUV leader Jim Allister has demanded more details about the arrangement and whether further payments were made. Ministers have been asked for more details on the payments. The revelation adds another layer to the deepening scandal surrounding the former DUP leader, with questions about how a serving MP/former MLA charged with serious sexual offences could continue to receive public money for consultancy work. (Sources: [The Irish News](#), [Belfast Live](#), [Love Ballymena](#))

Latest Updates — 12 July 2026 (Twelfth of July / Summer Recess)

1. Man Dies After Falling From East Belfast Bonfire at Braniel (12 July)

A man has died after falling from a bonfire in the Braniel area of east Belfast, in what organisers described as a "tragic accident." The incident occurred during the Eleventh Night bonfire preparations ahead of the Twelfth of July. Bonfire organisers said they were "heartbroken" by the death. Emergency services attended but the man was pronounced dead at the scene. The PSNI is investigating and has appealed for witnesses. The death adds a sombre note to the Twelfth of July commemorations. *(Source: BBC News NI; The Irish News)*

2. Anti-Immigration Messages Placed on Eleventh Night Bonfires (12 July)

Bonfires constructed for the Eleventh Night celebrations were found to have anti-immigration messages and banners attached. The messaging comes in the wake of the June anti-immigration disorder across Belfast and other towns. The banners were spotted on bonfires in loyalist areas and have drawn condemnation from anti-racism campaigners. The PSNI is aware of the banners. The issue reflects continued community tensions following the June riots triggered by the north Belfast knife attack. *(Source: BBC News NI)*

3. Separate Arson Attacks in Limavady and Coalisland (11-12 July)

Police are investigating two separate arson attacks in Limavady and Coalisland. In Limavady, a property was deliberately set alight in the early hours of Saturday. In Coalisland, another arson incident was reported. No arrests have been made in either case. The attacks are not believed to be linked. *(Source: BBC News NI)*

4. Linfield FC Demands 'Unconditional' Apology from Political Party Over Badge Use (12 July)

Linfield Football Club has demanded an "unconditional" apology from a political party over the unauthorised use of the club's badge. The club said it was "disappointed and angered" by the use of its crest without permission. The party involved has not been officially named but the matter is

being discussed in political circles in the run-up to the Twelfth. *(Source: BBC News NI - Northern Ireland Politics)*

5. Orange Order Grand Secretary: 'No Difficulty' With Controversial Bands (12 July)

Orange Order Grand Secretary Mervyn Gibson stated the Order has "no difficulty" with controversial bands taking part in Twelfth of July parades. His comments come amid ongoing debate about the participation of bands linked to loyalist paramilitaries in the annual demonstrations. Gibson also said "Republicans are better at propaganda than us" in a separate interview. *(Source: The Irish News)*

6. British Government to Pay Out £10m on IRA 'Nutting Squad' Claims (12 July)

The British government is set to pay out approximately £10 million to settle claims related to the IRA's internal security unit — known colloquially as the "nutting squad" — which interrogated and killed suspected informers during the Troubles. The cases relate to allegations of collusion between state agencies including RUC Special Branch, the Force Research Unit and the Ministry of Defence. The payout comes amid ongoing scrutiny of legacy issues in Northern Ireland. *(Source: The Irish News)*

7. Two Men Charged After Stabbing in North Belfast (12 July)

Two men have been charged following a stabbing incident in north Belfast. The incident is separate to the 8 June knife attack that triggered the anti-immigration disorder. *(Source: The Irish News)*

8. Twelfth of July Road Closures and Translink Holiday Timetables (12 July)

Road closures and revised holiday timetables for Translink bus and train services are in place across Northern Ireland for the Twelfth of July. Services operate on reduced schedules on Sunday 12, Monday 13 and Tuesday 14 July. *(Source: The Irish News)*

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Latest Updates — 13 July 2026 (Twelfth of July)

1. Twelfth of July Parades Underway Across 18 Venues (13 July)

Tens of thousands of Orangemen and women took to the streets across Northern Ireland for the main Twelfth of July demonstrations. With 12 July falling on a Sunday this year, the main parades were held on Monday 13 July across **18 venues** in all six counties. The Belfast parade included over 6,500 participants with 77 bands from across Northern Ireland and Scotland. Orangefest Belfast also took place at City Hall with a family fun day including funfair, inflatables, music, dancing, and games. The BBC broadcast special coverage of the Twelfth celebrations. (Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [Belfast Telegraph](#))

2. Greenisland: Eleventh Night Bonfire 'Most Probable Cause' for Homes Burning Down (12-13 July)

Two homes in Greenisland, Co Antrim were completely destroyed by fire near an Eleventh Night bonfire. The Northern Ireland Fire Service said the bonfire was the "most probable cause" for the blaze, which broke out less than 15 minutes after the pyre was lit. A great-grandfather whose home was destroyed said "everything is gone." NIFRS received **303 emergency calls** between 6pm 11 July and 2am 12 July, attending 151 incidents. The devastation has renewed calls for better regulation of bonfires. (Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [The Irish News](#), [RTÉ](#))

3. Man Dies After Falling from Braniel Bonfire in East Belfast (12 July)

A man died after falling from a bonfire in the Braniel area of east Belfast during Eleventh Night preparations. Bonfire organisers described it as a "tragic accident." Emergency services attended but the man was pronounced dead at the scene. The PSNI is investigating and has appealed for witnesses. (Source: [BBC News NI](#); [The Irish News](#))

4. Anti-Immigration Messages on Eleventh Night Bonfires (12-13 July)

Bonfires across Northern Ireland were found to have anti-immigration messages and banners attached, in the wake of the June anti-immigration disorder. The banners were spotted in loyalist areas and drew condemnation from anti-racism campaigners. The PSNI is aware of the banners. An author of a book on the UVF described the messages as "unsurprising." (Sources: [BBC News NI](#), [The Irish News](#))

5. Assembly in Summer Recess (continues)

The Northern Ireland Assembly remains in summer recess (since 4 July) and will resume on **31 August 2026**. Committees are not scheduled to meet. The Executive remains without a multi-year budget, with civil servants operating under contingency arrangements. Donaldson awaits sentencing in September.

Notable MLA Developments (Week of 6-13 July)

- **Edwin Poots (Speaker)** — Continues as Speaker despite calls from Sinn Féin and Alliance to step aside pending the outcome of the DUP's independent review and the Assembly's own review into Donaldson's conduct at Parliament Buildings. His position remains under scrutiny.
 - **Emma Little-Pengelly (dFM, DUP)** — Described herself as "shocked and revolted" by the Donaldson revelations in a statement (8 July). The revelation that Poots knew about the allegations in 2021 has put further pressure on the DUP.
 - **Paula Bradshaw (Alliance, South Belfast)** — Proposed a Private Members' Bill to "tackle abusive flags" which became embroiled in controversy when Linfield FC demanded an "unconditional" apology from a political party over unauthorised use of the club's badge to promote the bill (12 July).
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Latest Updates — 14 July 2026 (Bank Holiday)

1. Twelfth of July Parades Conclude Peacefully (13-14 July)

The main Twelfth of July demonstrations took place across 18 venues on Monday 13 July (falling on the Monday as 12 July was a Sunday). Thousands of Orangemen and women paraded peacefully across Northern Ireland. Belfast's parade featured over 6,500 participants from 77 bands. Orangefest Belfast at City Hall included a family fun day. Tuesday 14 July is a Bank Holiday in lieu

— Translink is running holiday timetables and many government buildings are closed.

2. Assembly in Summer Recess (continues)

The Northern Ireland Assembly remains in summer recess since 4 July, resuming 31 August 2026. Committees are not scheduled. The Executive remains without a multi-year budget, with civil servants operating under contingency arrangements.

3. Donaldson Developments (ongoing)

Jeffrey Donaldson remains on remand at Maghaberry awaiting sentencing in September following his conviction on all 18 charges including rape. The DUP's independent review led by Jim Gamble and the Assembly's own review into Donaldson's conduct at Parliament Buildings (open until 21 August) continue. Donaldson was removed from the Privy Council on 9 July and has offered to forfeit his knighthood.

(No new MLA co-options or changes to report.)

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15 July 2026

|| Assembly remains in summer recess (until 31 August). No plenary or committee business today.

||- **Hilary Benn tells Executive to "do their job" on budget:** The Northern Ireland Secretary told the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at Westminster that he does not want to reach a point where he may need to step in to set a Stormont budget. Benn said it was the "responsibility" of the Executive and ministers "should do their job." Stormont departments face spending pressures of up to £1.6bn, with no budget agreed three months into the financial year. Public services have been operating under contingency arrangements since April. Sir Robert Chote (NI Fiscal Council) told the same committee the Treasury "finds itself in a difficult position" — refusing additional funding "would have serious consequences" but providing it without conditionality "creates an environment where people assume this is going to happen again." (Source: [BBC](#), [ITV/UTV](#))

||- **Jim Gamble: DUP Donaldson review will "leave no stone unturned":** The child safety expert leading the DUP's independent review into what was known about Jeffrey Donaldson's behaviour told the BBC he will "leave no stone unturned." The review is being conducted by the iNEQE Safeguarding Group and is due to report before the May 2027 Assembly election. Gamble is a former RUC officer who previously headed the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP). (Source: [BBC](#))

|| **No new MLA co-options or changes.**

Sources

- Northern Ireland Assembly: <https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/>
- Electoral Office NI: <https://www.eoni.org.uk/>
- BBC Northern Ireland: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/northern_ireland
- The Irish News: <https://www.irishnews.com/>
- Belfast Telegraph: <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/>
- RTÉ News: <https://www.rte.ie/news/>

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