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**CONTENTS**

**OPTIONS FOR DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURES  
AND MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS**

**A paper submitted to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of the  
New Northern Ireland Assembly**

**17 August 1998**

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**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
Introduction	1
Current Structure	1
Strategic Objectives	1
Practical Considerations	3
Review of Public Administration	5
Possible Options for Departmental Structures in the Short Term	6
Cross-Functional Portfolios	8
Legal Mechanisms	9
The 'Office of the Executive'	10
CONCLUSION	10
Annex A	Current Structure of Departments
Annex B	Public Expenditure by Departments in 1998/99
Annex C	Departmental Structures from 1921-1982
Annex D	NDPBs in Northern Ireland
Annex E	A model based on 10 Departments <i>(Option 1)</i>
Annex F	A model based on 9 Departments <i>(Option 2)</i>
Annex G	A model based on 8 Departments <i>(Option 3)</i>
Annex H	A model based on 7 Departments <i>(Option 4)</i>
Annex I	A model based on 6 Departments <i>(Option 5)</i>

## **Introduction**

1. This introductory paper has been prepared to assist the First and Deputy First Ministers in their consideration of the departmental structures and ministerial portfolios. It takes account of discussions with senior officials in the Northern Ireland Departments on operational aspects of these issues.

## **Current Structure**

2. The current structure of departments was established in 1982. It was in place throughout the Assembly of 1982-1986 and was reflected in the Assembly's committee structure. Annex A outlines the current structure of departments. Annex B provides information on the public expenditure covered by departments in the current financial year. Annex C outlines the various departmental structures from 1921-1982. Annex D outlines the current structure of Non-Departmental Public Bodies in Northern Ireland.

## **Strategic Objectives**

3. The new Administration will wish to address a number of pressing strategic objectives. For example, under the Agreement, the Secretary of State has undertaken to make rapid progress with:

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- a. a new Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland (co-ordinated by DOE);
  - b. a new Economic Development Strategy for Northern Ireland (co-ordinated by DED); and
  - c. the issues contained in the White paper ("Partnership for Equality") eg anti-discrimination legislation, a new more focused Targeting Social Need initiative and a range of initiatives aimed at tackling unemployment etc.
4. A review of the structure and organisation of the administration of Health and Personal Social Services in Northern Ireland is currently underway (co-ordinated by DHSS).
5. The outcome of these strategic reviews may influence the setting of new and challenging objectives for the social and economic management of the region. Discussions on the most appropriate machinery of government should take into account these reviews.
6. There may also be public expectations regarding the Assembly's potential to deliver improved and more accountable government and

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the achievement of greater efficiency, effectiveness and value for money in public administration will probably be emphasised.

### Practical Considerations

7. The provision in the Agreement for up to 10 Ministerial posts will almost certainly mean creating new departments/portfolios immediately.
8. In so doing there are a number of practical issues to be considered by the First and Deputy First Ministers.
  - a. the machinery of government in Northern Ireland is already extensive, with a wide range of Non-Departmental Public Bodies, Executive Agencies, Statutory Corporations, Advisory Bodies and District Councils. Public administration in the region is currently delivered in the following tiered manner:
    - **Government Departments (6)**
    - **Regional and Sub Regional Bodies;**  
Some 145 Non-Departmental Public Bodies, including for example:  
Northern Ireland Housing Executive

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Education & Library Boards (5)  
Health & Social Services Boards (4)  
Health & Social Services Councils (4)  
Health & Social Services Trusts (19)

- **District Councils (26)**

- b. Government has recently undertaken a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) of all public expenditure throughout the UK, the outcome of which in relation to future Northern Ireland public expenditure plans would need to be factored into discussions on departmental structures; there is also a cost and efficiency dimension involved in the creation of new free-standing departments; (ie new central personnel and finance machinery and senior structures to support new Ministers)
- c. the new Administration may wish to have an early impact on a number of key social and economic issues. This might be affected by some changes to departmental structures in the short term;
- d. new structures should lead to more integrated policies and processes which cut across departmental boundaries and avoid the criticisms of departments operating as 'functional silos'; and

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- e. with regard to year on year public expenditure and accounting cycles the timing of any division of departmental functions will be important. Early agreement on departmental structures would prevent accounting problems emerging for 1998/99.

### Review Of Public Administration

- 9. There have been suggestions, including for example, during the course of the first two 'Transitional Programme' seminars, to undertake a comprehensive review of public administration in Northern Ireland; this does have a number of attractions:
  - a. substantive improvements to efficiency and effectiveness are more likely to be achieved by adopting a strategic approach to public sector administration;
  - b. the process of initiating a comprehensive review of public administration could itself challenge Assembly Members to develop a shared vision for the region. This in turn could lead to a programme of government, which identifies strategic challenges and the most appropriate structures to meet these challenges;

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- c. the review might facilitate the Executive and the Assembly to consider a wide range of innovative institutional options across all 3 tiers of public administration rather than simply adopt or make small adjustments to existing forms of government. This holds out the potential of formulating an entirely new pattern of public administration that might well be beneficial to the region internally and externally. This could also result in the Assembly, in time, serving as a model of devolved and strategically co-ordinated government.
10. The potential magnitude and complexity of such a review (not attempted since the Macrory Report in the early 70s) should not be underestimated. There is a potential danger that such exercises can get bogged down, and end up delaying change rather than promoting it.
11. If there is merit in this approach, a draft paper could be prepared setting out the rationale, methodology and terms of reference for initiating a review. If appropriate such a paper could be laid before the Assembly by the First and Deputy First Ministers during the deliberations on departmental structures.

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### Possible Options for Departmental Structures in the Short Term

12. **Option 1:** Annex E sets out an option of 10 departments configured with the new institutional arrangements laid down in the Agreement Document. This option is achieved by:

- creating a Department of Equality (achieved by transferring the Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU) functions from the Department of Finance & Personnel);
- creating a Department of Arts, Culture and Heritage (achieved by transferring some functions from the Department of Education and the Department of the Environment);
- splitting the Department of the Environment into (i) Regeneration and Development; and (ii) Environmental Protection and Public Services;
- retaining the existing Departments of Education (with minor changes), Agriculture, Health and Social Services, Economic Development and Finance and Personnel; and
- creating a tenth Department from one of the following:  
Community Relations  
Training & Employment

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Social Security  
Department of the Civil Service

Clearly, there would be consequential effect(s) on one or more of the other departments depending on which of the above list of 4 were chosen as the tenth department.

13. **Option 2:** Annex F sets out an option of 9 departments.
14. **Option 3:** Annex G sets out an option of 8 departments.
15. **Option 4:** Annex H sets out an option of 7 departments.
16. **Option 5:** Annex I sets out the current structure of 6 departments.

### Cross-Functional Portfolios

17. To address some strategic issues which cross the whole Administration there may be merit in allocating "cross-functional" responsibilities to some Ministers on top of their own departmental portfolios eg Minister for Belfast, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Promoting Social Inclusion, Minister for Womens Issues, Minister for European Affairs, Minister for Public Health, Minister for Children.

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18. There may also be merit in giving a Minister, (which could be the First or Deputy First Minister) responsibility for information services. The Executive and the Assembly will potentially be the most closely observed small legislature in the world. Likewise the expectation within the local community concerning the evolution of the Assembly is such that the strategic management of information and public relations will be critical to building up community confidence in the functioning of the Assembly and its Executive Committee.

### Legal Mechanisms

19. The exercise of setting up new Northern Ireland departmental structures would need to be done in two stages:
- a. primary legislation to create new departments or rename existing departments, since they are statutory bodies; and
  - b. subordinate legislation under the Ministries Act (Northern Ireland) 1944 to transfer or reallocate functions.
20. The first part of the exercise is relatively straightforward, once the names of the new departments are known. The second part is somewhat more complex and time consuming since it involves identifying and listing the functions in question by reference to the

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relevant statute law. However, Departments have been commissioned to undertake this baseline review and this should not hinder any decisions.

21. To establish any new departmental structures or non-departmental “portfolios” the Secretary of State will need to secure the necessary legislative provision during the shadow period in time for changes to be in place for devolution. Any further changes thereafter will require legislation by the Assembly. An early indication of requirements will enable the preparatory legislative groundwork to be initiated.

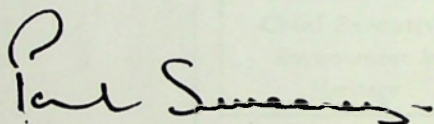
### **The ‘Office of the Executive’**

22. The role and functions of the “Office of the Executive”, the duties of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister within the Office, and their required Executive Secretariat support arrangements, are all inextricably linked to discussions on departmental structures, ministerial Portfolios and Assembly committees. A separate discussion paper on “Organisation at the Centre of the New Administration” will be available for early consideration by the First and Deputy First Ministers.

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**Conclusion**

23. This paper reviews some possible options for departmental structures to support the new devolved Northern Ireland administration. It will clearly require further detailed discussion involving the Government, the First and Deputy First Ministers, advisers and officials. Following initial consideration by the First and Deputy First Ministers the paper can be amended and/or additional material included with a view to providing a framework for taking forward consultations with the other parties in the Assembly.



**PAUL SWEENEY**

Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers

17 August 1998

# DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT - STRUCTURE

Minister

Permanent Secretary

Central Policy and Management Unit

Deputy Secretary  
Resources

Chief Executive  
Public Record Office  
of Northern Ireland

Chief Executive  
Land Registers  
of Northern Ireland

Deputy Secretary  
Planning, Environment,  
Roads & Transport

Chief Executive  
Planning Service

Chief Executive  
Roads Service

Chief Executive  
Environment &  
Heritage

- Planning/Water Appeals
- Commissions
- Council for Nature
- Conservation & the countryside
- Historic Monuments Council
- Historic Buildings Council
- NI Transport Holding Co.
- Lough Neagh Advisory Committee
- Strangford Lough Advisory Committee

Deputy Secretary  
Urban Regeneration &  
Local Government

- Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Travellers
- Laganaside Corporation
- Northern Ireland Local Government Staff Commission

Deputy Secretary  
Housing, Water,  
Fire Policy, Property  
Services & Road Safety

Chief Executive  
Driver & Vehicle  
Testing Agency

Chief Executive  
Rate Collection  
Agency

Chief Executive  
Ordnance Survey  
of Northern Ireland

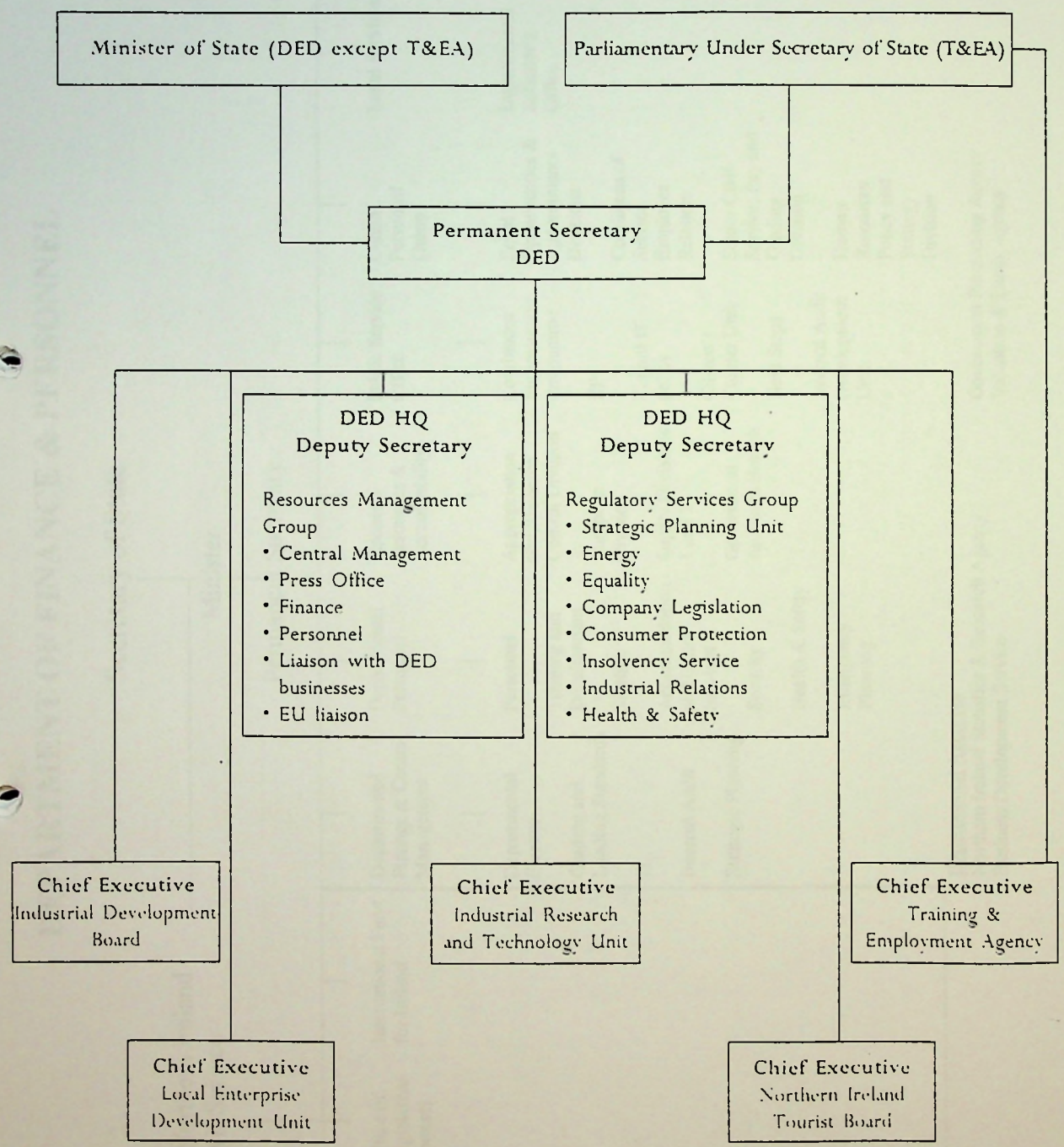
Chief Executive  
Construction Service

Chief Executive  
Driver & Vehicle  
Licensing (NI)

Chief Executive  
Water Service

- NI Building Regulations Advisory Committee
- NI Construction Industry Advisory Council
- Review Body (Driver Operator & Vehicle Licensing)
- Fire Authority
- NI Housing Executive
- Housing Benefit Review Boards
- Rent Assessment Panel

# DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - STRUCTURE



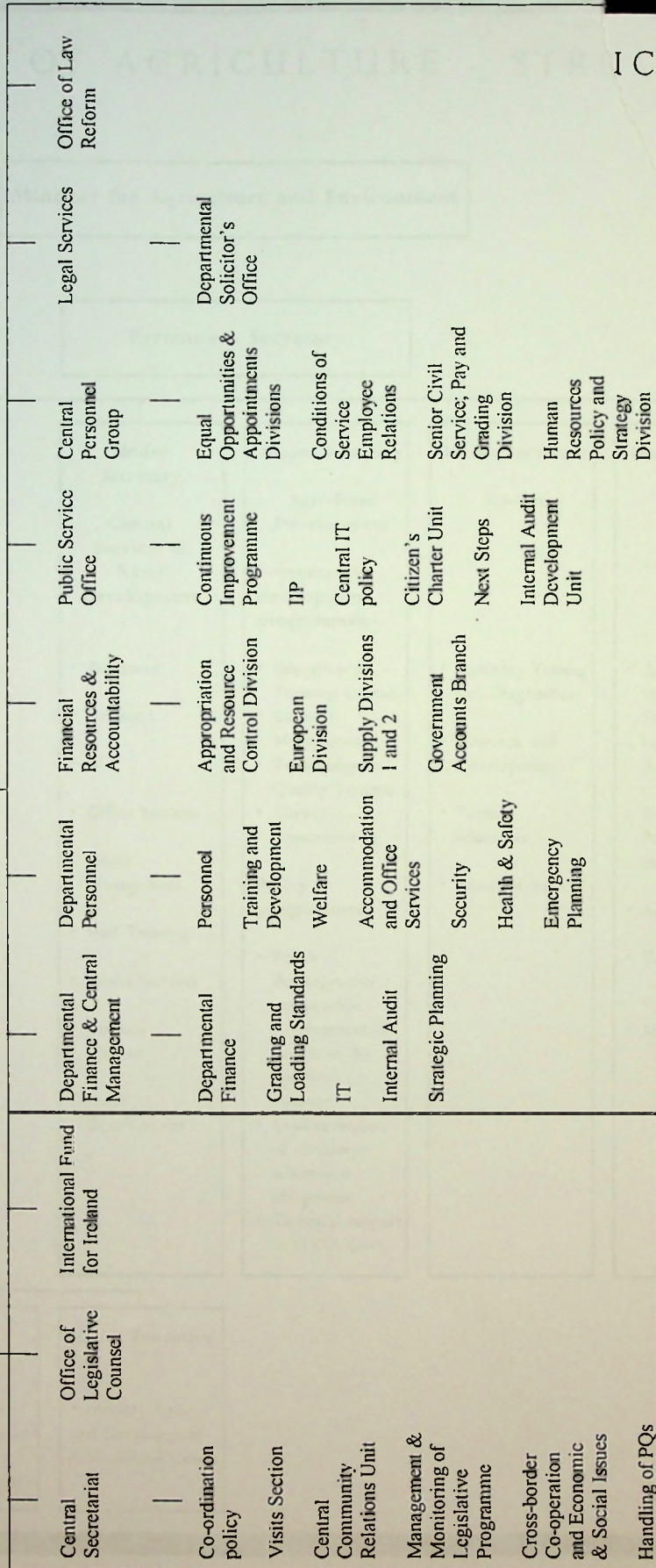
# DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE & PERSONNEL

Secretary of State

Head of Northern Ireland  
Civil Service

Minister

Permanent Secretary



Departmental Agencies  
Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency  
Business Development Service

Government Purchasing Agency  
Valuation & Lands Agency

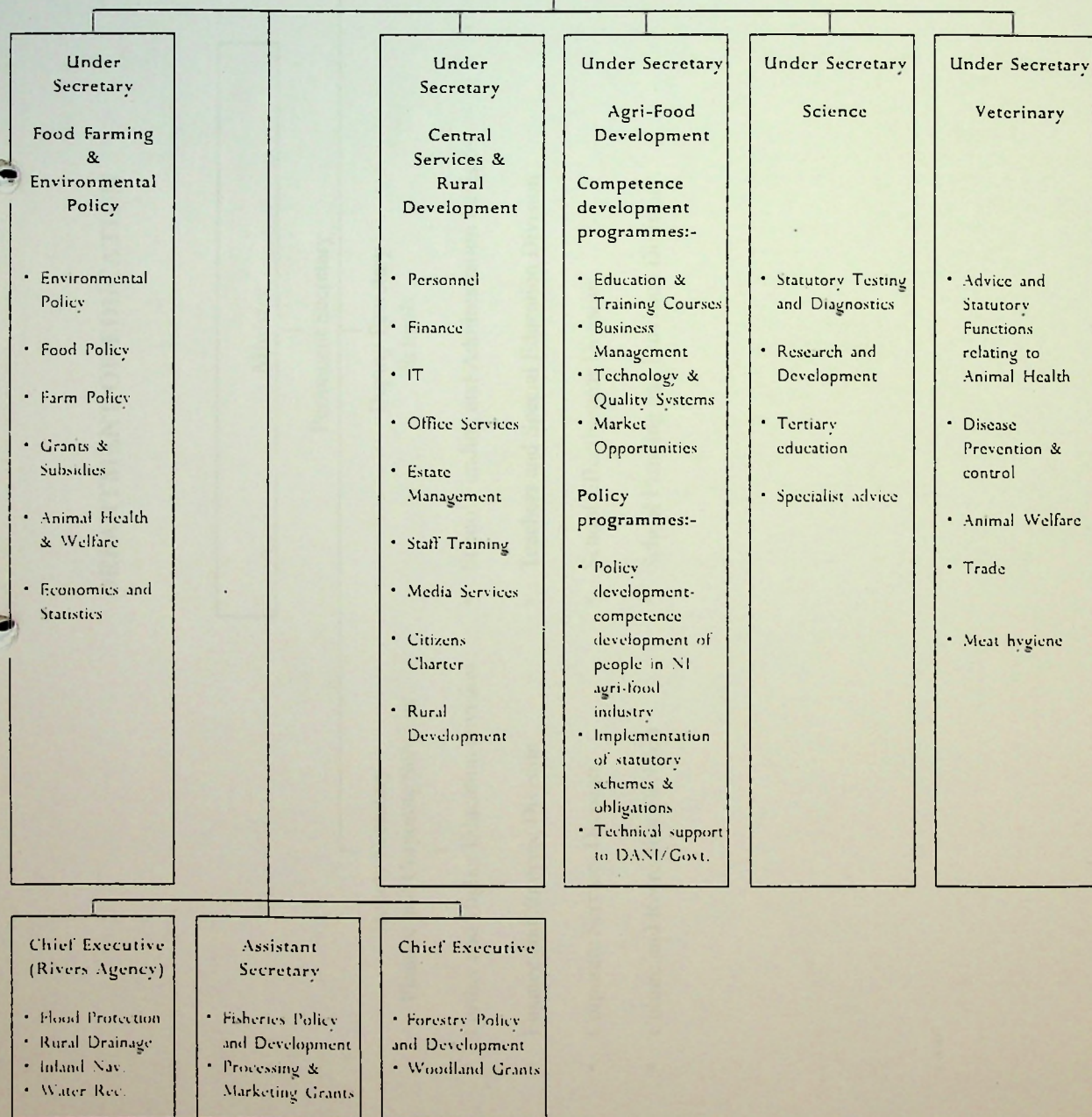
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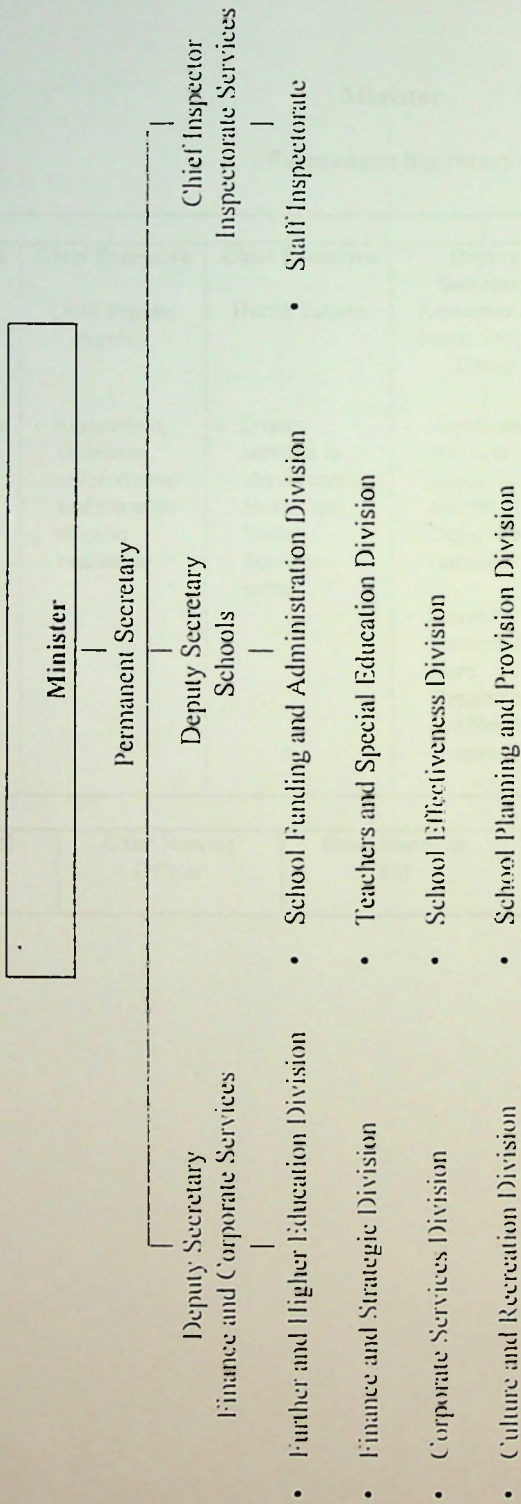
## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - STRUCTURE

Minister for Agriculture and Environment

Permanent Secretary



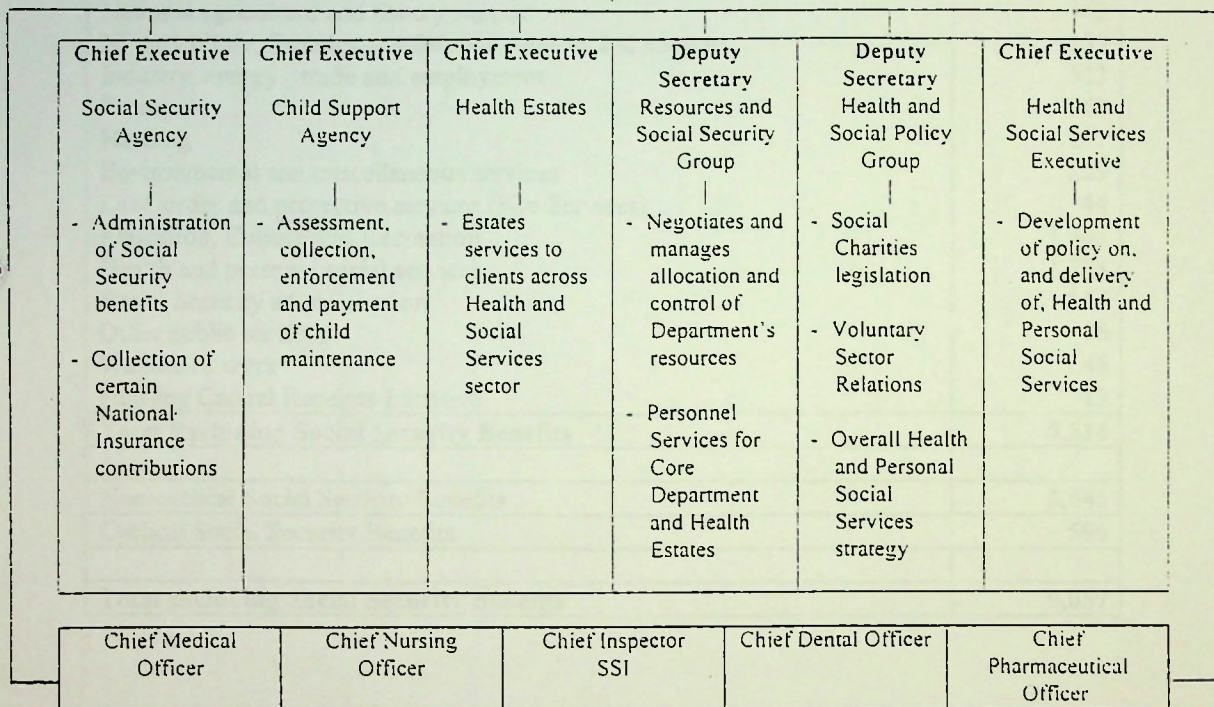
# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Minister

Permanent Secretary



## NI PUBLIC EXPENDITURE PLANS 1998-99

	£ million
<b>Northern Ireland Office</b>	
Administration, law, order and protective services	928
<b>NI Departments</b>	
National agriculture and fishery support	162
NI agriculture, fisheries and forestry services and support	139
Industry, energy, trade and employment	513
Transport	167
Housing	217
Environmental and miscellaneous services	229
Law, order and protective services (Fire Services)	44
Education, Culture and Recreation	1,403
Health and personal social services	1,733
Social Security administration	156
Other public services	66
Welfare to work	46
Housing Capital Receipts Initiative	13
<b>Total Excluding Social Security Benefits</b>	<b>5,816</b>
Non-cyclical Social Security Benefits	2,645
Cyclical Social Security Benefits	596
<b>Total Including Social Security Benefits</b>	<b>9,057</b>

DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURES FROM 1921-1982

1. In 1921 there were 7 Northern Ireland Departments. By the time Direct Rule was introduced in 1972 these had grown to 9:

Prime Minister's Office

Finance

Commerce

Agriculture

Home Affairs

Education

Health & Social Services

Development (eg local government, housing, planning)

Community Relations (created in 1969).

2. To accommodate the needs of the power sharing Executive in 1974, these 9 Departments increased to 13:

Chief Executive's Office

Finance

Commerce

Agriculture

Health & Social Services

Manpower Services

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Environment

Housing, Local Government and Planning

Education

Community Relations

Law Reform

Information

Planning & Co-ordination

3. Not all these Departments were represented in the Executive itself. Manpower Services, Community Relations and Planning and Co-ordination were headed by non-voting members of the Executive. The Chief Whip was also a non-voting member. With the addition of the Deputy Chief Executive, the Executive itself therefore consisted of 11 members.
4. A number of Departments were amalgamated with the end of the Executive, or soon after. The only extra Department to be created since 1974 was the Department of the Civil Service, which lasted from 1976 to 1982.

**NON-DEPARTMENTAL PUBLIC BODIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

1. It is assumed that, in considering issues related to Departmental structures etc, the Assembly will wish to look at the range of Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) in Northern Ireland. As a separate exercise, a background paper on the current status of quangos (roles, functions, size, membership, accountability etc) is being prepared.
2. In November 1997 Government published a Consultation Paper "Opening Up Quangos", seeking out proposals to make quangos more open, accountable and effective. The document was issued throughout the UK, and in Northern Ireland was circulated under cover of a memorandum by the Secretary of State, placing the issues in the paper in the Northern Ireland context.
3. The Secretary of State has not yet made public the Northern Ireland response to the Consultative Paper but has indicated her intention to make a substantive statement in due course, recognising the role which the Assembly will play in taking forward consideration of the issues covered in the paper.

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4. In Northern Ireland there are some 145 NDPBs accounting for 3,000 public appointments. Some 77 of these bodies are classified as either Executive NDPBs or Health and Personal Social Services Bodies, and account for approximately 965 public appointments. These bodies are listed below, categorised by their lead Department:

### **Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland**

Agriculture Research Institute of Northern Ireland  
Agriculture Wages Board for Northern Ireland  
Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland  
Foyle Fisheries Commission  
Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland  
Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority  
Pig Production Development Committee

### **Department of Economic Development**

Construction Industry Training Board  
Enterprise Ulster  
Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland  
Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland  
General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland  
Labour Relations Agency  
Local Enterprise Development Unit  
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Protection against Unlawful Industrial Action  
Northern Ireland Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members  
Northern Ireland Tourist Board  
Ulster Sheltered Employment Ltd



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### **Department of Education for Northern Ireland**

Arts Council of Northern Ireland  
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools  
Education & Library Boards  
    Belfast Education & Library Board  
    North Eastern Education & Library Board  
    South Eastern Education & Library Board  
    Southern Education & Library Board  
    Western Education & Library Board  
Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and  
Assessment  
Northern Ireland Museums Council  
Sports Council for Northern Ireland  
Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards  
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum  
Ulster Museum  
Youth Council for Northern Ireland

### **Department of the Environment**

Fire Authority for Northern Ireland  
Laganside Corporation  
Local Government Staff Commission  
Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation  
Committee  
Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company

### **Department of Health & Social Services**

Health & Social Services Boards  
    Eastern  
    Northern  
    Southern  
    Western

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### **Health & Social Services Councils**

Eastern

Northern

Southern

Western

### **Health & Social Services Trusts (19 bodies)**

Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland

National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service Agency

Northern Ireland Central Services Agency

Northern Ireland Council for Post Graduate Medical and Dental Education

Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency

Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency

Northern Ireland Regional Medical Physics Agency

### **Northern Ireland Office**

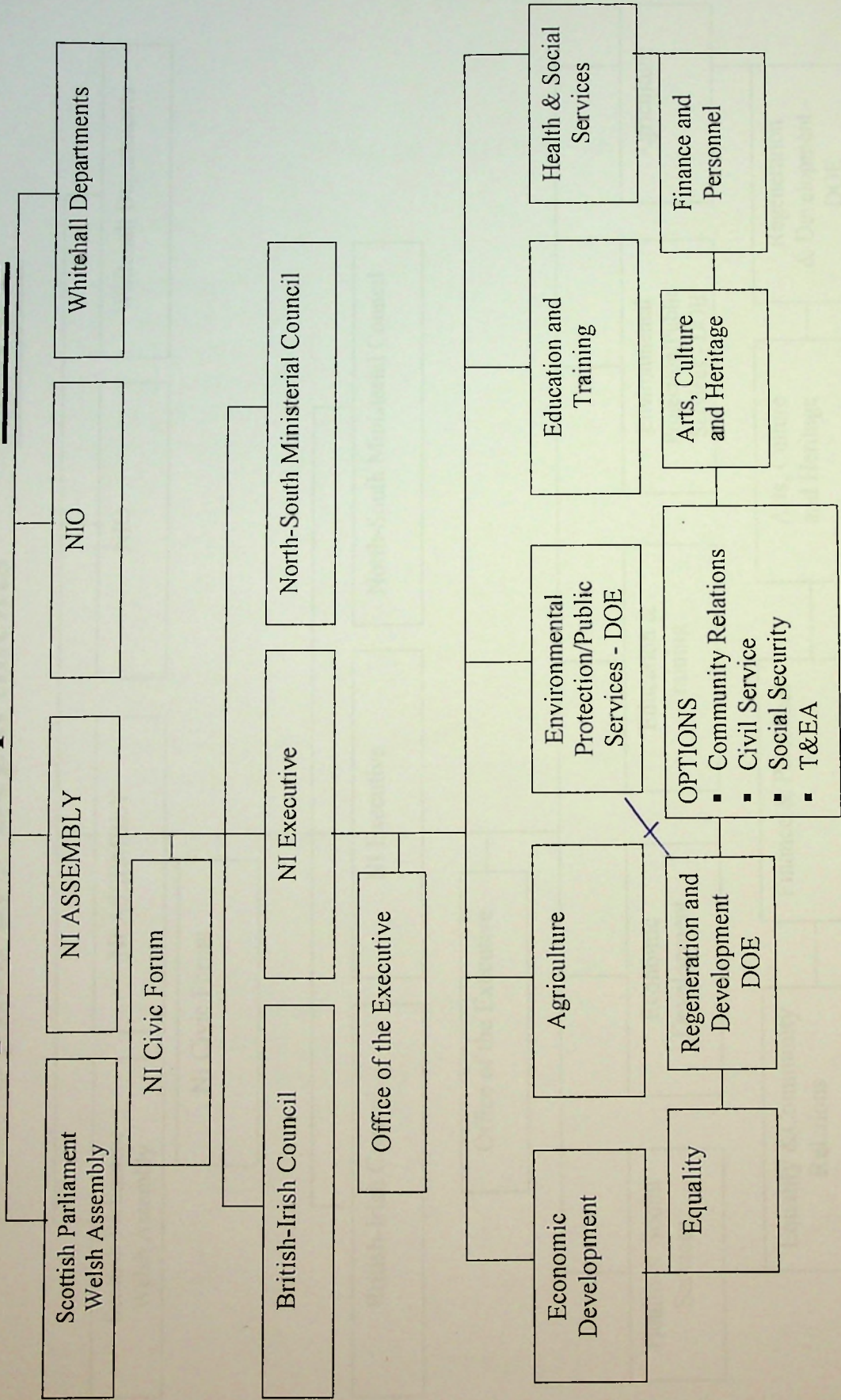
Police Authority for Northern Ireland

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Rathgael and Whiteabbey Training Schools Management Board

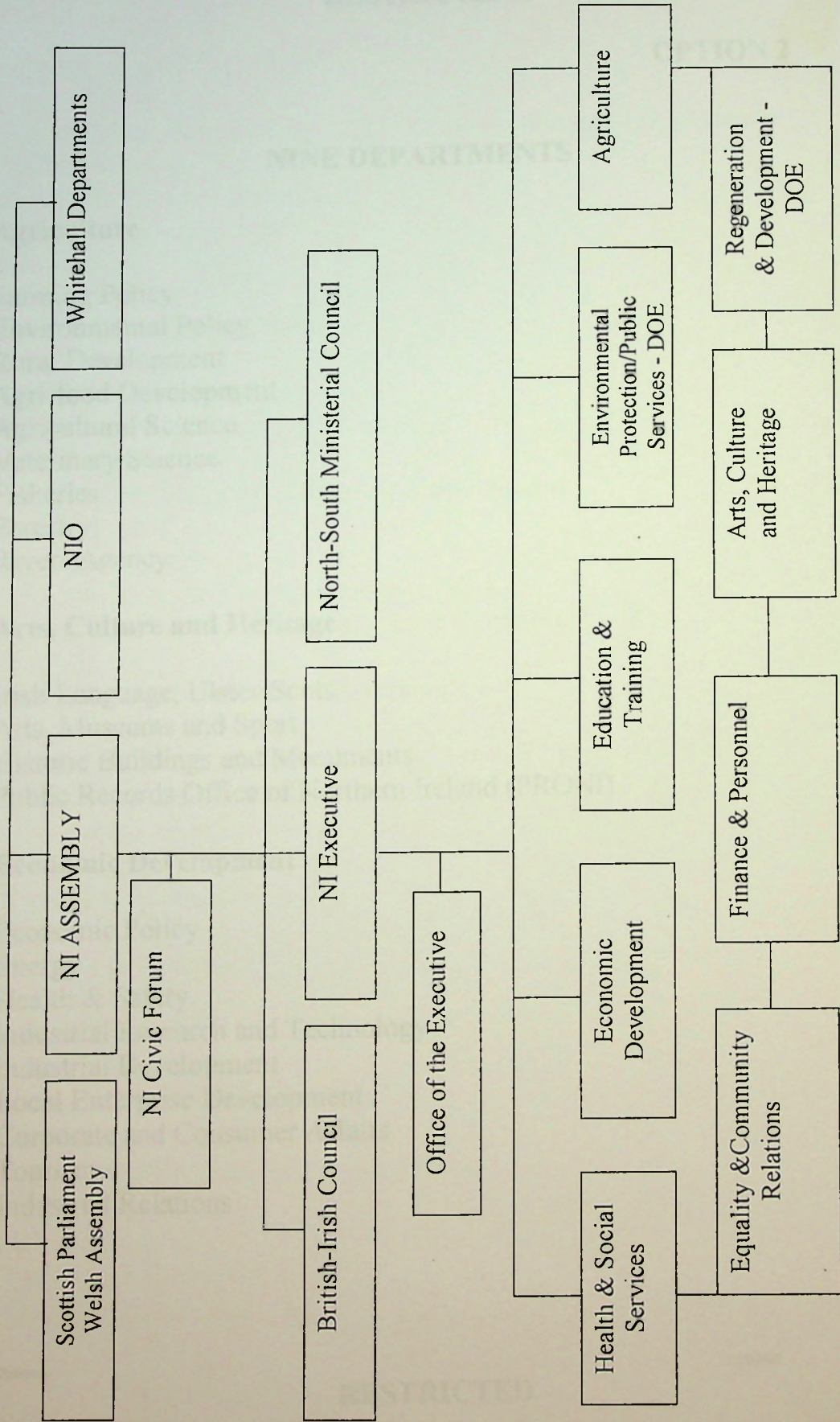
The Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland

# Option 1: 10 Departments Annex E



# Option 2: 9 Departments

## Annex F



**NINE DEPARTMENTS**

**Agriculture**

Farming Policy  
Environmental Policy  
Rural Development  
Agri-food Development  
Agricultural Science  
Veterinary Science  
Fisheries  
Forestry  
Rivers Agency

**Arts, Culture and Heritage**

Irish Language, Ulster-Scots  
Arts, Museums and Sport  
Historic Buildings and Monuments  
Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

**Economic Development**

Economic Policy  
Energy  
Health & Safety  
Industrial Research and Technology  
Industrial Development  
Local Enterprise Development  
Corporate and Consumer Affairs  
Tourism  
Industrial Relations

## **RESTRICTED**

### **Education and Training**

Schools (including funding, teachers, inspection and administration)  
Youth Services  
Further & Higher Education  
Training & Employment  
Libraries

### **Environment/Public Services**

Environmental Protection  
Rate Collection  
Land Registers  
Construction Service & Office Accommodation  
Fire Service  
Ordnance Survey  
Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA)  
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland (DVLNI)

### **Equality and Community Relations**

Equality Issues  
Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU)  
New Targeting Social Need  
Promoting Social Inclusion  
Victims of Violence

### **Finance & Personnel**

Central Finance  
Central Personnel  
Business Development Service  
Central IT  
Government Purchasing Agency  
Legal Services  
Law Reform  
Statistics & Research  
Valuation & Lands

## **RESTRICTED**

International Fund for Ireland  
European Affairs

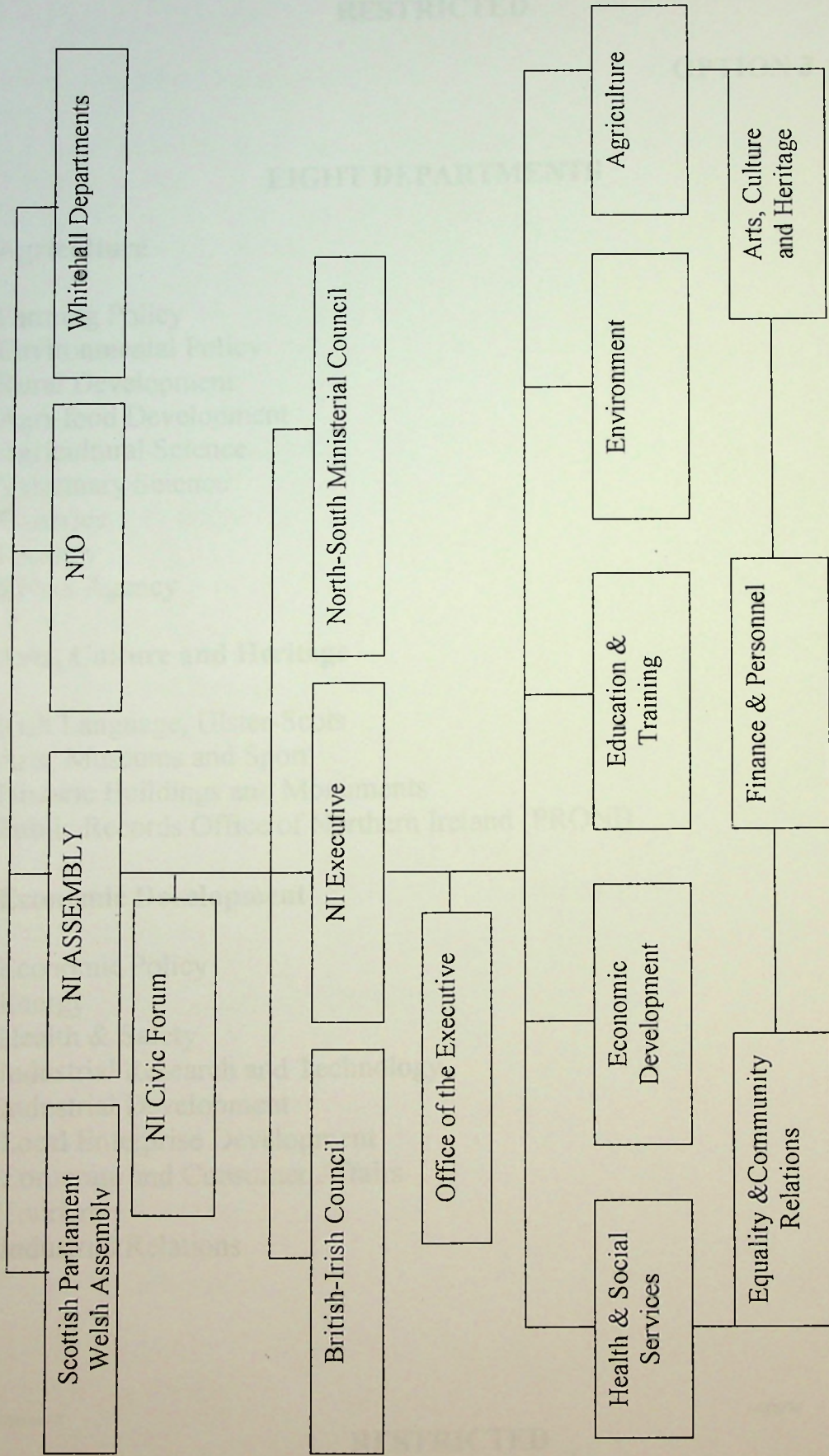
### **Health & Social Services**

Food Safety Policy  
Medical Services  
Nursing & Midwifery  
Health & Personal Social Services  
Public Health  
Dental Services  
Pharmaceutical Advice and Services  
Social Security  
Child Support  
Health Estates  
Health and Social Policy  
Voluntary Activity  
Child and Community Care  
Mental Health  
Social Legislation

### **Regeneration & Development**

Planning  
Regional/Urban Development  
Local Government  
EU District Partnerships  
Water  
Housing  
Roads  
Transport

# Option 3: 8 Departments Annex G





**EIGHT DEPARTMENTS**

**Agriculture**

Farming Policy  
Environmental Policy  
Rural Development  
Agri-food Development  
Agricultural Science  
Veterinary Science  
Fisheries  
Forestry  
Rivers Agency

**Arts, Culture and Heritage**

Irish Language, Ulster-Scots  
Arts, Museums and Sport  
Historic Buildings and Monuments  
Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

**Economic Development**

Economic Policy  
Energy  
Health & Safety  
Industrial Research and Technology  
Industrial Development  
Local Enterprise Development  
Corporate and Consumer Affairs  
Tourism  
Industrial Relations

## **RESTRICTED**

### **Education and Training**

Schools (including funding, teachers, inspection and administration)  
Youth Services  
Further & Higher Education  
Training & Employment  
Libraries

### **Environment**

Planning  
Regional/Urban Development  
Local Government  
EU District Partnerships  
Water  
Housing  
Roads  
Transport  
Environmental Protection  
Rate Collection  
Land Registers  
Construction Service  
Fire Service  
Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA)  
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland (DVLNI)  
Ordnance Survey

### **Equality and Community Relations**

Equality Issues  
Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU)  
New Targeting Social Need  
Promoting Social Inclusion  
Victims of Violence

### **Finance & Personnel**

Central Finance  
Central Personnel

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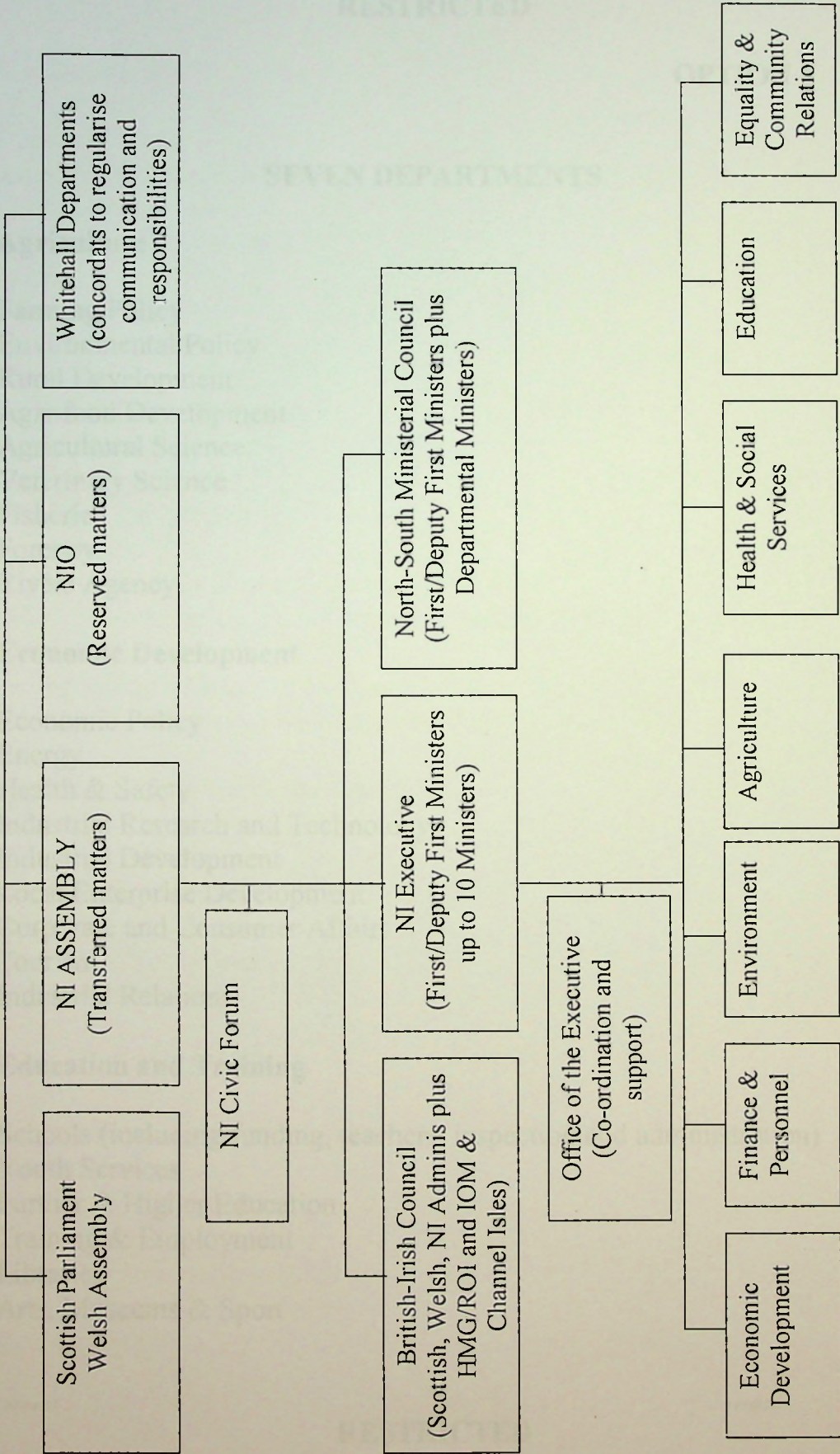
Business Development Service  
Central IT  
Government Purchasing Agency  
Legal Services  
Law Reform  
Statistics & Research  
Valuation & Lands  
International Fund for Ireland  
European Affairs

### Health & Social Services

Food Safety Policy  
Medical Services  
Nursing & Midwifery  
Health & Personal Social Services  
Public Health  
Dental Services  
Pharmaceutical Advice and Services  
Social Security  
Child Support  
Health Estates  
Health and Social Policy  
Voluntary Activity  
Child and Community Care  
Mental Health  
Social Legislation

# Option 4: 7 Departments

## Annex H



**SEVEN DEPARTMENTS**

**Agriculture**

Farming Policy  
Environmental Policy  
Rural Development  
Agri-food Development  
Agricultural Science  
Veterinary Science  
Fisheries  
Forestry  
Rivers Agency

**Economic Development**

Economic Policy  
Energy  
Health & Safety  
Industrial Research and Technology  
Industrial Development  
Local Enterprise Development  
Corporate and Consumer Affairs  
Tourism  
Industrial Relations

**Education and Training**

Schools (including funding, teachers, inspection and administration)  
Youth Services  
Further & Higher Education  
Training & Employment  
Libraries  
Arts, Museums & Sport

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## Environment

Planning  
Regional/Urban Development  
Local Government  
EU District Partnerships  
Water  
Housing  
Roads  
Transport  
Environmental Protection  
Rate Collection  
Land Registers  
Construction Service  
Fire Service  
Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA)  
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland (DVLNI)  
Ordnance Survey  
Public Records Office of Northern Ireland  
Historic Buildings and Monuments

## Equality and Community Relations

Equality Issues  
Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU)  
New Targeting Social Need  
Promoting Social Inclusion  
Victims of Violence

## Finance & Personnel

Central Finance  
Central Personnel  
Business Development Service  
Central IT  
Government Purchasing Agency  
Legal Services  
Law Reform

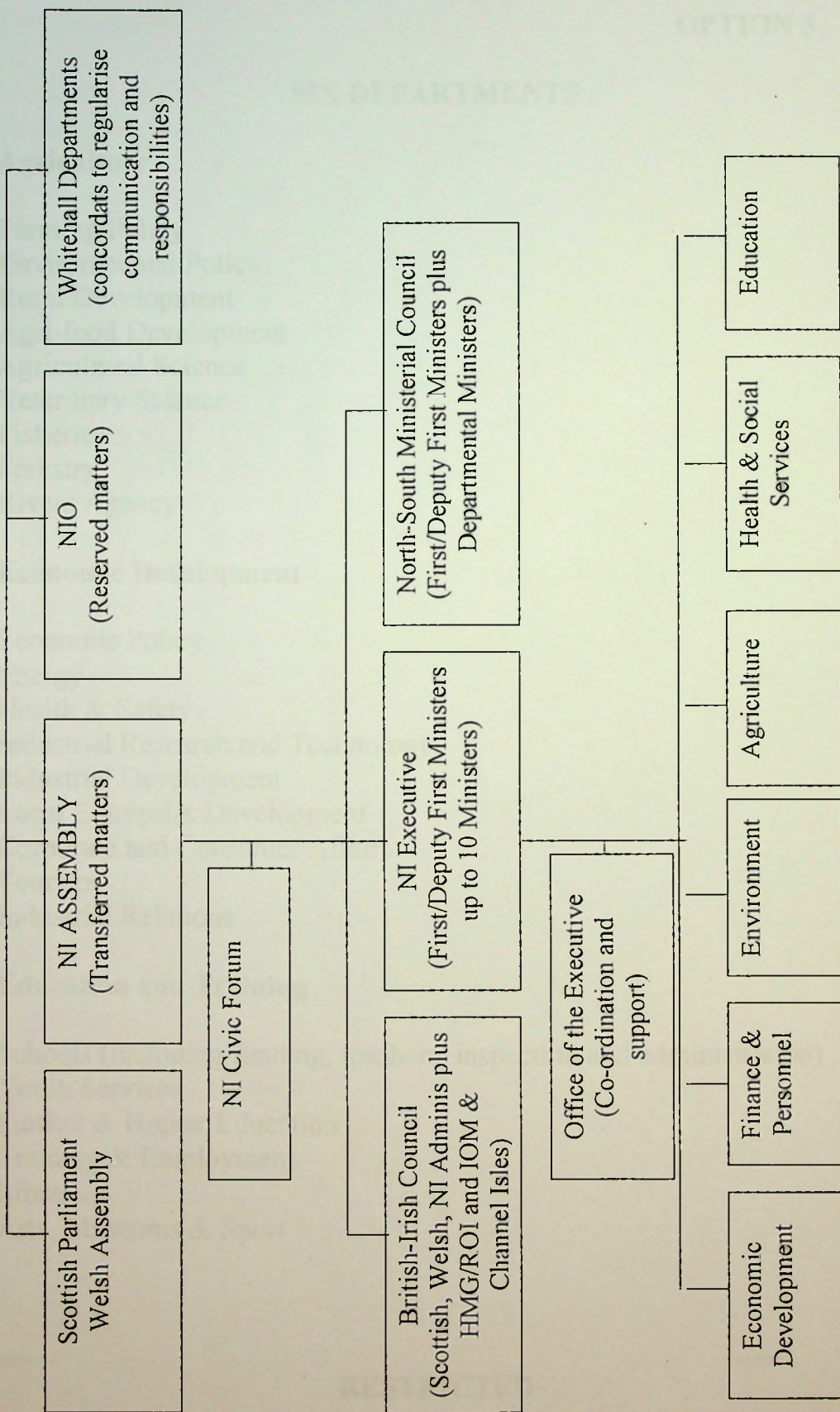
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Statistics & Research  
Valuation & Lands  
International Fund for Ireland  
European Affairs

### Health & Social Services

Food Safety Policy  
Medical Services  
Nursing & Midwifery  
Health & Personal Social Services  
Public Health  
Dental Services  
Pharmaceutical Advice and Services  
Social Security  
Child Support  
Health Estates  
Health and Social Policy  
Voluntary Activity  
Child and Community Care  
Mental Health  
Social Legislation

# Option 5: 6 Departments Annex I





**SIX DEPARTMENTS**

**Agriculture**

Farming Policy  
Environmental Policy  
Rural Development  
Agri-food Development  
Agricultural Science  
Veterinary Science  
Fisheries  
Forestry  
Rivers Agency

**Economic Development**

Economic Policy  
Energy  
Health & Safety  
Industrial Research and Technology  
Industrial Development  
Local Enterprise Development  
Corporate and Consumer Affairs  
Tourism  
Industrial Relations

**Education and Training**

Schools (including funding, teachers, inspection and administration)  
Youth Services  
Further & Higher Education  
Training & Employment  
Libraries  
Arts, Museums & Sport

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## Environment

Planning

Regional/Urban Development

Local Government

EU District Partnerships

Water

Housing

Roads

Transport

Environmental Protection

Rate Collection

Land Registers

Construction Service

Fire Service

Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA)

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland (DVLNI)

Ordnance Survey

Public Records Office of Northern Ireland

Historic Buildings and Monuments

## Finance & Personnel

Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU)

Central Finance

Central Personnel

Business Development Service

Central IT

Government Purchasing Agency

Legal Services

Law Reform

Statistics & Research

Valuation & Lands

International Fund for Ireland

European Affairs

**Health & Social Services**

Food Safety Policy  
Medical Services  
Nursing & Midwifery  
Health & Personal Social Services  
Public Health  
Dental Services  
Pharmaceutical Advice and Services  
Social Security  
Child Support  
Health Estates  
Health and Social Policy  
Voluntary Activity  
Child and Community Care  
Mental Health  
Social Legislation