



FRIDAY
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 15:24:10

Public to pay McDougall court bill

The controversial appointment of a Victims Commissioner by Secretary of State Peter Hain

will cost the taxpayer around 250,000 pounds, it has been estimated.

In the High Court Lord Justice Girvan ordered the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) to pay the legal costs incurred by west Belfast woman Brenda Downes who won a judicial review over the appointment of Bertha McDougall.

The NIO has to foot its own bill as well as the costs incurred by Mrs McDougall.

The judge said he was making no order in regard to her costs as they were being met by the NIO.

The huge bill may rise even further as Mr Hain has declared that he intends to appeal against the finding that the appointment was unlawful.

Lord Justice Girvan made an oblique reference to the appeal when he remarked: "So that brings the matter to an end so far as this court is concerned."

Last Monday the judge decided not to quash Mrs McDougall's appointment to allow her to publish her annual report.

It is still unclear if the report of her one-year term of office will be

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published in her own name or as the Interim Victims Commissioner.

Mrs Downes, whose husband was killed by an RUC plastic bullet, successfully claimed that Mrs McDougall, whose policeman husband was murdered by the INLA, did not command cross-community support and that her appointment was a sop to the DUP.

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