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## Local & National

# Delay for Nelson hearings

Tuesday, July 24, 2007

By Chris Thornton

The start of hearings in the Rosemary Nelson Inquiry have been pushed back again - to almost two years after the initial target date.

The panel investigating the 1999 murder of the Lurgan solicitor indicated yesterday that they will not begin hearing evidence until next year.

The delay comes as a Police Ombudsman report on the murder is nearing completion.

When the inquiry was set up in late 2004, full hearings were originally expected to begin in the Spring of 2006.

But in December 2005, the inquiry said the volume of work meant that hearings would not begin until January 2007. Last October they announced another deferral, to September 2007.

Yesterday they said they intend to begin "as early as possible" in 2008.

The inquiry is investigating the circumstances surrounding Mrs Nelson's murder. The mother of three, who had a prominent Lurgan republican among her clients, died when a booby-trap bomb exploded under her car as she drove from her home.

Loyalists were blamed for the attack, but Mrs Nelson had repeatedly reported that police officers had threatened her through her clients.

The Rosemary Nelson Inquiry is chaired by Sir Michael Morland, a retired High Court judge from England.

The hearings scheduled for October 16 and 17 are being held to deal with "case management", the inquiry said yesterday.

Those hearings "will consider a number of procedural and timetable issues, and will set a date for the opening of the full hearings," a statement said.

"The purpose of holding a case management hearing is to ensure that proceedings can be taken forward as rapidly and efficiently as possible.

"The panel wish to make clear that the inquiry has proceeded and will continue to proceed as rapidly as it can, given the issues raised, the volume and nature of the evidence, the need to be fair at all times to the participants, and the panel's responsibility to avoid placing the lives or well-being of individuals under threat."

After an opening hearing was held in April 2005, the inquiry decided to employ their own detectives to review the original police investigation.

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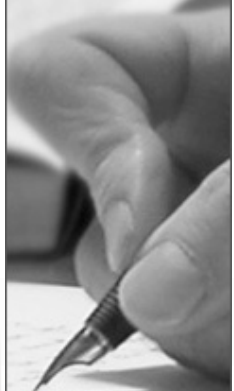
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