

# News Release

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## Work taking place to respond to parole inquiry recommendations

The Department of Home Affairs has welcomed the report of the public inquiry into the Isle of Man's parole system published today, Monday 3 July 2017.

Work has already taken place to address the majority of the recommendations made by former advocate Geoff Karran MBE TH who chaired the independent inquiry. The Department has also drawn up a comprehensive action plan to respond to the outstanding issues.

The Council of Ministers inquiry was established by Tynwald in July 2015, at the request of the Department, to consider the circumstances surrounding the release from prison of Donovan Kitching three weeks before he caused the death by dangerous driving of Ms Gwen Valentine in 2014.

As well as investigating the specific details of Kitching's release, the inquiry took a broader look at the practices and procedures of the Prison and Probation Service and the Parole Committee.

Home Affairs Minister Bill Malarkey MHK said: 'On behalf of the Department I wish to express sincere condolences to Ms Valentine's family. When such a tragedy occurs it is important to examine the circumstances and to take appropriate action to protect the public. The Department has fully cooperated with the inquiry and opened itself up to scrutiny with the intention of improving its procedures and maintaining public confidence in the parole system. We have taken on board the recommendations arising from the

public inquiry. We are making positive changes in many areas and will publish annual updates on our progress.'

Parole is an important aspect of the criminal justice system and provides prisoners with an incentive for rehabilitation through the prospect of early release. It plays a key role in maintaining discipline and safety in prison.

Parole also helps prisoners to make a supervised transition back into the community, with the aim of reducing the risk of reoffending and the associated social and economic impact of crime.

Applications for parole are dealt with by the Parole Committee, which considers a dossier of information and carries out an assessment of risk before making a recommendation on whether a prisoner can be safely released on licence to the probation service.

The release on parole of an offender is subject to strict controls and supervision in the community. This is carefully managed by a multi-disciplinary team of probation and police officers and other professionals as required.

However, the report identifies issues of concern regarding the Isle of Man's parole system, including the role of victims, the effectiveness of the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), licensing conditions, powers of recall and the level of support provided to the Parole Committee.

While he is critical of certain processes, Mr Karran says in his report he can understand how the Parole Committee arrived at its recommendation in respect of Donovan Kitching and that based on the information provided, Juan Watterson MHK, the DHA Minister at the time, made the correct decision to grant parole.

The report also endorses the Department's view that early release from prison on parole is a privilege that must be earned. It says that while there is scope for further improvement, the Isle of Man's approach is 'superior' to that of the United Kingdom where prisoners are granted automatic release after serving 50% of their sentence.

In response to the report, the Department states that significant progress has been achieved towards addressing most of the 26 main recommendations.

An independent review of MAPPA has taken place and legislation is being brought forward to put the arrangements on a legal footing and to compel the different agencies to work together.

The Department has invested in a world-leading range of programmes to tackle offending behaviour and reduce risk, while procedures have been strengthened to deal with the recall of offenders who breach their parole conditions.

Work is also continuing with the aim of giving victims of crime a bigger voice in the justice system, including the parole process. This includes the development of a victim's code of practice and victim's liaison service.

Bob McColm, Head of the Prison and Probation Service, said: 'The public inquiry was instigated by the Department in response to the terrible loss suffered by the Valentine family. The focus has been on moving forward and taking the opportunity to adopt a better system of parole. Improvements have already been introduced and when the final elements are put in place, offenders in the Isle of Man will be more robustly managed than ever before.'

## Ends

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Links: [www.gov.im/dha/](http://www.gov.im/dha/)

### For further information contact:

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### Notes for editors:

Since October 2011, the Parole Committee has considered 83 cases with the following outcomes:

Parole applications	Refused	Deferred	Approved	Recalled	Successfully completed
83	16	8	59	13	46
100%	19.3%	9.6%	71%	22%	78%