

Judicial Communications Office

STATEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE

25 February 2011

The Lord Chief Justice today accepted the recommendation of the Tribunal convened by him under section 8 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 that Charles Redpath, a Master of the High Court, should not be removed from judicial office.

On 22 October 2010, Master Redpath was stopped by a police officer and found to be over the prescribed alcohol limit for driving. On 19 January 2011, he pleaded guilty and was convicted of the offence of driving with excess alcohol. He was fined £120 and disqualified from driving for 12 months. At the request of the Lord Chief Justice, Master Redpath has not sat since the offence was committed.

Following the conviction, the Lord Chief Justice convened a Tribunal to consider whether Master Redpath should be removed from judicial office on the ground of misbehaviour. The Tribunal sat on 11 February 2011. Prior to the hearing, the Tribunal was provided with testimonials on behalf of Master Redpath. It also received evidence at the hearing.

The Tribunal held that the conviction for driving with excess alcohol constituted misbehaviour. It considered, however, the circumstances of the individual case and the submitted evidence and concluded that it should not make a recommendation that Master Redpath be removed from office.

The Lord Chief Justice said that he regards the conviction of any serving member of the judiciary to be a very serious matter:

“I expect members of the judiciary to maintain high standards of behaviour at all times. This is essential if the judiciary are to retain the confidence of the community. Master Redpath has made a grave error of judgment which he recognises. The Tribunal, however, has heard all the evidence in this case and presented me with its findings. I accept its recommendation”.

The Lord Chief Justice will now consider the imposition of a disciplinary sanction short of removal from office.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 (as amended by the Northern Ireland Act 2009) prescribes the procedure that must be followed before a holder of a listed judicial office can be removed from office. Removal may only be on the ground of misbehaviour or inability to perform the functions of the office. Section 7 of the 2002 Act states that removal can only be on the recommendation of a tribunal convened by the Lord Chief Justice, after consulting the NI Judicial Appointments Ombudsman, or the Ombudsman after consulting the Lord Chief Justice.
2. Section 8 states that the tribunal must consist of a Lord Justice of Appeal or a judge of the High Court, a person who holds judicial office within section 3(6)(a) to (e) of the 2002 Act (ie a judicial member of the NI Judicial Appointments Commission) and a lay member of the Judicial Appointments Commission selected by the Judicial Appointments Ombudsman.
3. The tribunal's procedure is determined by the Lord Chief Justice.
4. The Lord Chief Justice's Protocol on Discipline is published on the NI Courts and Tribunals Service website (www.courtsni.gov.uk).

ENDS

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