

These notes refer to the Northern Ireland Assembly Elections Act 2003 (c.3) which received Royal Assent on 20 March 2003

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ACT 2003

EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

3. The purpose of the Act was to postpone the date of the poll for the election of the next Northern Ireland Assembly election from 1st May 2003 to 29th May 2003. The Act also postponed the date for dissolution of the current Assembly from 21st March 2003 to 28th April 2003.
4. The Act followed intensive negotiations at Hillsborough on 3rd and 4th March 2003 between the UK and Irish Governments and Northern Ireland political parties. These negotiations were aimed at restoring power to the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, which are currently suspended under the terms of the provisions of the Northern Ireland Act 2000, and the full implementation of the Belfast Agreement. The Government's judgment at the end of negotiations was that there was now a shared understanding of how the process could be moved forward, but some issues of difficulty remained to be dealt with; and that all parties needed time to reflect. The Government hopes that a brief postponement of the Assembly election will provide an opportunity for the way forward to be found in advance of elections.