**Cllr Jeffrey Dudgeon meets with US Special Envoy on LGBTI Human Rights, Randy Berry**

Councillor Jeffrey Dudgeon has met with the US Special Envoy for LGBTI Human Rights, Randy Berry in the State Department in Washington DC.

Cllr. Dudgeon took the opportunity to discuss current LGBT issues in Northern Ireland while Mr Berry outlined his particular work throughout the world with its strong emphasis on addressing violence against gay people. Jeff Dudgeon explained how there was a continuing and significant dispute in the devolved Assembly at Stormont on the question of equal marriage and the use of a petition of concern to veto change despite a majority of MLAs now favouring its introduction.

He told of how his work with the Justice Minister and other Unionist politicians ensured the recent Westminster legislation on gay pardons and disregards in relation to previous homosexual convictions had come to include Northern Ireland. Indeed the passing of the necessary legislative consent motion - without a formal vote in the Assembly - was a first in Northern Ireland, indicating an understanding outlook within all but one party, the TUV.

Jeffrey Dudgeon said about the meeting "It was a great opportunity to be in Washington and to meet with Randy Berry, and his assistant Jesse Bernstein after going to the White House. I hope that working with other State Department colleagues they can be of assistance in resolving difficult issues that are a blockage to political progress."

At the close of the discussions, Cllr Dudgeon invited the US Special Envoy to Belfast and emphasised how useful American support could be in addressing problems facing the LGBT community in Northern Ireland including the use of violence, something experienced here over many years.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randy_W._Berry>