**REVIEW OF DECISIONS CONSULTATION**

 **ADDENDUM TO THE FINAL REPORT APRIL 2019**.

The final Report of the Consultation on the Department’s Review of Decisions process for Area-based Schemes was published on 26 January 2018.

This addendum provides details of a change to the new process, published in the Consultation report.

On 12 October 2018, as the result of a High Court order, the Department has decided to offer applicants who do not accept the Department’s review decision with an option to have their case assessed by an External Independent Panel.

If the applicant does not accept the decision reached during the Department’s review they can request that an External Independent Panel assess the case file. The Department, as decision maker, will consider the Panel’s views in making the final determination.

The applicant will be charged a fee of £200 for an Independent Panel Assessment. The timeframe to submit a request for a panel assessment will be 60 days from the date of issue of the decision of the Case Officer Review. This is in line with other UK jurisdictions. The charge set is not a full cost recovery and will be subject to review within 18 months.

As part of the request for a panel assessment, no new evidence will be accepted unless exceptional circumstances or force majeure is established. The applicant will receive a refund of the £200 fee only if the Department accepts that its original decision should be changed, either fully or partially.

The amended process will be available to applicants who have received a decision from the 13th of May 2019. In addition the opportunity to undergo an Independent Panel Assessment will be extended to those applicants who have already had decisions issued under the review process implemented from the 1st of April 2018, so that they are not disadvantaged.   The Department will be contacting those concerned individually, in due course, to advise them of this change.