



Ireland's Future

Todhchaí na hÉireann



Shaping a **New**
and **United Ireland**

RUNNING ORDER

Fáilte

Chairperson Senator Frances Black

Political Party Discussion I

Michelle O'Neill MLA (Sinn Féin), Jim O'Callaghan TD (Fianna Fáil), Neale Richmond TD (Fine Gael), Ivana Bacik TD (Labour Party), Colum Eastwood MP (SDLP). Chaired by Amanda Ferguson.

Young and Cultural Unionist

Andrew Clarke and Peter Adair

In Conversation

Colm Meaney with Matt Cooper

Performance

Maighréad Ní Mhaonaigh

A message from the Diaspora

James Maloney MP (Canada), Rep Brendan Boyle (USA), The Honorable Martin J. Walsh (USA), Paul Lynch MP (Australia)

In Conversation

Rev Karen Sethuraman and Ben Collins with Martina Devlin

Remarks

Senator Mark Daly

Civic Society Discussion

Danny McCoy (IBEC), Orla O'Connor (NWC), Kevin Callinan (ICTU), Ailbhe Smyth, Tim Cullinan (IFA), Paula Melvin (CNG). Chaired by Ingrid Miley

Address

Leo Varadkar TD

Performance

Denise Chaila and Dónal Lunny

Political Party Discussion II

Senator Vincent P. Martin (Green Party), Senator Eileen Flynn, Peadar Tóibín TD (Aontú), Caoimhe Garland (Workers Party), Bríd Smith TD (PBP), Cian O'Callaghan TD (Soc Dems). Chaired by Senator Frances Black

Address

Mary Lou McDonald TD

Keynote Address

Jimmy Nesbitt

IRELAND'S FUTURE

SATURDAY 1ST OCTOBER 1PM | 3 ARENA DUBLIN



NEALE RICHMOND TD



JIM O'CALLAGHAN TD



MARY LOU MCDONALD TD



COLUM EASTWOOD MP



BEN COLLINS



DANNY MCCOY



ORLA O'CONNOR



SENATOR FRANCES BLACK



DENISE CHAILA



JAMES MALONEY MP



MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA



COLM MEANEY



DÓNAL LUNNY



KEVIN CALLINAN



MATT COOPER



AILBHE SMYTH



JIMMY NESBITT



MARTINA DEVLIN



TIM CULLINAN



AMANDA FERGUSON



PAULA MELVIN



BRÍD SMITH TD



LEO VARADKAR TD



PEADAR TÓIBÍN TD



IVANA BACIK TD



SENATOR EILEEN FLYNN



SENATOR VINCENT P. MARTIN



CIAN O'CALLAGHAN TD



REP. BRENDAN BOYLE



THE HONORABLE MARTIN J. WALSH



CAOIMHE GARLAND



INGRID MILEY



REV. KAREN SETHURAMAN

PREPARING FOR A UNITED IRELAND
TOGETHER WE CAN

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



Thank you for attending our 'Together We Can' event in the 3Arena today. We appreciate your support for this island-wide conversation about constitutional change. We hope that you enjoy your day.

The aim of this publication is to provide you with further information about our work. As you will note, we have held a series of public meetings across Ireland, at Westminster and in New York and Philadelphia. At each of these impressive gatherings we experienced directly the appetite for this discussion. People wanted to participate and know more. This underlined to us, yet again, why we place such a focus on an all-island Citizens' Assembly as a way to build enhanced civic dialogue into the process.

We also include here our substantive policy papers, and related material, that demonstrate our enduring commitment to serious engagement. We are grateful to all contributors for providing their expert insights. We applaud and acknowledge all those who are reflecting on ways forward and we are heartened to see the scale of the ongoing work.

This is another special day in the journey towards constitutional change in Ireland. Our firm view is that people on this island must be offered the choice outlined in the Good Friday Agreement. Preparation remains essential to ensure everyone knows the consequences of their decision. We are convinced that we can do better and that we must realise the full potential of this island and its people. This is the right time to plan for a new and united Ireland.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances Black".

Frances Black
Chair, Ireland's Future

TEACHTAIREACHT ÓNÁR GCATHAOIRLEACH



Go raibh maith agat as freastal ar ár n-imeacht 'Together We Can' sa 3Arena inniu. Táimid buíoch as do thacaíocht don chomhrá seo ar fud an oileáin faoin athrú bunreachtúil. Tá súil againn go mbainfidh tú taitneamh as do lá.

Is é aidhm an fhoilseacháin seo tuilleadh eolais a thabhairt duit faoinár gcuid oibre. Mar a thabharfaidh tú faoi deara, reáchtáil muid sraith cruinnithe poiblí ar fud na hÉireann, i Westminster agus i Nua-Eabhrac agus Philadelphia. Ag gach ceann de na cruinnithe éachtacha, mhothaigh muid féin an cíocras don chomhrá seo. Bhí daoine ag iarraidh a bheith rannpháirteach agus níos mó a fhoghlaim. Threisigh seo dúinn, arís eile, an fáth a leagaimid béim chomh mór sin ar Thionól Saoránach uile-oileáin mar bhealach chun idirphlé sibhialta feabhsaithe a thógáil isteach sa phróiseas.

Cuirimid san áireamh anseo freisin ár bpáipéir bheartais shubstainteacha, agus ábhar gaolmhar, a léiríonn ár dtiomantas buan do rannpháirtíocht shuntasach. Táimid buíoch de na rannpháirtithe go léir as a gcuid sain-léargas a chur ar fáil. Molaimid agus tugaimid aitheantas dóibh siúd go léir atá ag machnamh ar bhealaí chun cinn agus is ábhar misnigh dúinn scála na hoibre leanúnaí a fheiceáil.

Is lá speisialta eile é seo san aistear i dtreo an athraithe bhunreachtúil in Éirinn. Is é ár dtuairim láidir go gcaithfear an rogha atá leagtha amach i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta a thairiscint do dhaoine ar an oileán seo. Tá ullmhúchán fós riachtanach chun a chinntiú go bhfuil gach duine ar an eolas faoi na hiarmhairtí a bhaineann lena gcinneadh. Táimid lánchinnte gur féidir linn feabhas a chur ar chúrsaí agus nach mór dúinn acmhainneacht iomlán an oileáin agus a mhuintir a fhíorú. Is é seo an t-am ceart chun pleanáil le haghaidh Éire nua agus aontaithe.

Is mise, le meas,

Frances Black
Cathaoirleach, Todhchaí na hÉireann



Ireland's Future was established to advocate for, and promote, debate and discussion about Ireland's future, including the possibility and viability of new constitutional arrangements on the Island.

BACKGROUND

Ireland's Future was established to advocate for, and promote, debate and discussion about Ireland's future, including the possibility and viability of new constitutional arrangements on the Island.

We are guided by the values of the Good Friday Agreement and dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights, equality and fostering mutual respect between all views and traditions that share this island.

Brexit has dramatically changed the social and political dynamic on this island. The prospect of a new constitutional arrangement on the island of Ireland is growing.

We believe that new constitutional arrangements have the potential to mitigate the most negative impacts of Brexit and address the aforementioned promotion and protection of human rights, equality and the fostering of mutual respect.

We are not a political party and are not affiliated to any political party. We welcome participation from people from all political persuasions interested in furthering the goals of Ireland's Future.

Ireland's Future also notes that any move to new constitutional arrangements requires serious thought, consideration and planning. We believe that the requisite planning for these potential changes must be broad, inclusive, detailed and comprehensive.

Constitutional change must be on the basis of the consent of citizens of the island of Ireland, as informed by the Good Friday Agreement.

MISSION

Ireland's Future aspires to Irish reunification. It aims to facilitate a discussion towards that end, in line with principles and processes as set out in the Good Friday Agreement.

Ireland's Future recognises and supports the need for widespread and inclusive debate involving all sections of civic, political and democratic opinion on the form of any new future constitutional arrangements.

Ireland's Future is committed to the achievement of constitutional change which is rights-based and protects and promotes the civil and religious liberties of all traditions and identities in Ireland, and in a spirit of mutual respect and parity of esteem.

VALUES

The Values underpinning Ireland's Future's advocacy and promotion will be:

Guided by the values of the Good Friday Agreement including recognition that constitutional change must be on the basis of the consent of citizens of the island of Ireland,

Dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights and equality

Committed to fostering mutual respect between all views and traditions that share this island.

OBJECTIVES

- The Ireland's Future programme will seek to promote the following objectives:
- To intensively engage with the Irish government on the establishment of an all-Island Citizens Assembly as a forum to enable discussion on future constitutional change
- To engage in widespread discussion with all sections of civic and political opinion
- To promote the need for referendums in both parts of the island under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement as the means by which to effect constitutional change
- To encourage and popularise discussion on all salient issues relevant to Irish reunification including economic modelling, and, human, cultural, and political rights/protections relevant to any prospective new constitutional arrangements on the island of Ireland.
- To campaign, and organise a programme of appropriate events, meetings, symposia, publicity and research, to aid all the above
- To draw upon international experience relevant to the development of a process of constitutional change in Ireland.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



I would like to start by thanking all those who contributed to this document, Dr Katy Liston, Professor Joseph Maguire, Mike Tomlinson, Sean Fearon, Professor Colin Harvey, Professor Seamus McGuinness, Conor Patterson, Seána Talbot and others. Ireland's Future is grateful to you for the contribution you have made.

I also want to pay special tribute to Professor Jim Dornan who became a great friend to Ireland's Future before he sadly died in March 2021. I personally miss his guidance, advice and friendship and Ireland's Future misses his wisdom and direction.

This work of Ireland's Future is not intended to replace the work that Government is required to do in advance of the referendum on Irish unity and no single document will replace the urgent necessity for an all island citizens' assembly or convention. This is something that should be convened immediately and could take a similar form to the all island civic dialogue on Brexit that was held from December 2018 until February 2019 at various locations across the island.

In the absence of initiatives like an all island citizens' assembly, Ireland's Future has attempted to undertake some of the required planning and preparation. From May 2020 until September 2022, Ireland's Future hosted twenty four meetings and events both in person and online. Over one hundred well known figures from across broad Irish society and the international community participated on the panels of these meetings and online discussions. Over one hundred thousand people watched or attended these events.

Nonetheless there is no substitute for a Government-led process of planning and preparing.

It is important to acknowledge that individuals within Government parties have been working closely with Ireland's Future over recent years and I want to thank both Fianna Fáil's Jim O'Callaghan TD and Fine Gael's Neale Richmond TD for their contribution and presence here at the 3Arena today.

Tánaiste, soon to be Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD is also with us, along with leader of the official opposition and President of Sinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD. From the north, the First Minister-Designate Michelle O'Neill MLA is participating, as is the leader of the SDLP Colum Eastwood MP.

Labour Party leader Ivana Bacik TD is also a guest today along with speakers from a host of other political parties.

A range of leaders from across broad Irish civic society will also speak.

Today is both unprecedented and historic.

Ireland's Future has brought together people, organisations and parties with differing views, opinions and visions for our future but the one thing everyone has in common is that they believe in the Good Friday Agreement and they support the right of people here, on this island, to decide our own constitutional future.

Today in the 3Arena there are ten different political parties, some with opposing views on how we should govern the country. How the country is governed, and which parties govern it, is a matter for the electorate and is decided at general elections.

The constitutional future of the island is a different issue and what matters is that every political party gets behind the requirement for democracy to take place and for people here to be given the opportunity to decide if we want to go forward as one country, united and together.

From Ireland's Future's perspective we believe a choice must be given to the people of the north. Do they want to;

- remain part of the United Kingdom
- stay outside of the European Union
- live on a divided island with a divided people
- be governed by a government in London, that we don't vote for
- remain the poorest part of an increasingly poor United Kingdom, with a failing economy and an under-funded National Health Service at breaking point
- leave a legacy of the same failures and divisions in society for future generations to deal with

Or do we want to be part of;

- a new, exciting, united Ireland
- the north back in the European Union
- the people of this island fully united and independent for the first time ever
- ending a century of division
- be governed by a government that we can at least vote in or vote out
- playing our role in becoming one of the best small countries and economies in the world, with an opportunity for an outstanding all island National Health Service
- leaving a legacy for future generations that we can proud of

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the participants today and every person who has attended. I hope you enjoy the proceedings and I encourage you to continue to play your part in what is the issue of our time.

Let's take the step forward to a better future for our children and our grand-children. It will require hard work and bravery but anything worth having is not easy to attain.

Let's do the heavy lifting now for the benefit of future generations.

Let's plan and prepare.

Together we can.



Gerry Carlile
CEO, Ireland's Future

PUBLIC MEETINGS SERIES





IRELAND'S FUTURE CORK

CLAYTON HOTEL, LAPP'S QUAY, CORK



SENATOR FRANCES BLACK



OWODUNNI OLA MUSTAPHA



TADGH HICKEY



REV KAREN SETHURAMAN



JAMES O'CONNOR TD



LAURA HARMON

SATURDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER 2021 **STARTS 1PM**

SENATOR
FRANCES BLACK

OWODUNNI
OLA MUSTAPHA

TADGH
HICKEY

REV KAREN
SETHURAMAN

JAMES
O'CONNOR TD

LAURA
HARMON

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IRELAND'S FUTURE GALWAY

GALMONT HOTEL, LOUGH ATALIA ROAD, GALWAY



MÁIRÍN NÍ GHADHRA



MAIRÉAD FARRELL TD



IMAM IBRAHIM MICHAEL NOONAN



CAUVERY MADHAVAN



PROFESSOR PÓL Ó DOCHARTAIGH

THURSDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2021 **STARTS 7PM**

MÁIRÍN NÍ GHADHRA **CHAIRPERSON**

MAIRÉAD
FARRELL TD

IMAM IBRAHIM
MICHAEL NOONAN

CAUVERY
MADHAVAN

PROFESSOR PÓL
Ó DOCHARTAIGH

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IRELAND'S FUTURE DUBLIN

THE MANSION HOUSE, DAWSON STREET, DUBLIN



AUDREY CARVILLE



JIM O'CALLAGHAN TD



NEALE RICHMOND TD



MARY LOU MCDONALD TD



PROFESSOR JOHN DOYLE



SHAYKH DR UMAR AL-QADRI

SATURDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 2021 **STARTS 1PM**

AUDREY CARVILLE
CHAIRPERSON

JIM
O'CALLAGHAN TD

NEALE
RICHMOND TD

MARY LOU
MCDONALD TD

PROFESSOR
JOHN DOYLE

SHAYKH DR
UMAR AL-QADRI

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IRELAND'S FUTURE BELFAST

CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL, SHAWS BRIDGE, BELFAST



SENATOR FRANCES BLACK



DAVID MCWILLIAMS



REVEREND KAREN SETHURAMAN

FRIDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2021 **12PM**

SENATOR
FRANCES BLACK

DAVID
MCWILLIAMS

REVEREND KAREN
SETHURAMAN

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IRELAND'S FUTURE ARMAGH

ARMAGH CITY HOTEL, 2 FRIARY ROAD, ARMAGH



AMANDA FERGUSON



TREVOR LUNN MLA



MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA



NIALL MURPHY



EMMA DE SOUZA



PATSY MCGLONE MLA

WEDNESDAY 1ST DECEMBER 2021 **STARTS 7PM**

AMANDA FERGUSON **CHAIR**

TREVOR LUNN MLA

MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA

NIALL MURPHY

EMMA DE SOUZA

PATSY MCGLONE MLA

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IRELAND'S FUTURE DERRY

ST COLUMB'S HALL, ORCHARD STREET, DERRY



SUSAN MCKAY



DECLAN KEARNEY MLA



PATRICIA MACBRIDE



PROFESSOR COLIN HARVEY



COLUM EASTWOOD MP



AOIFE GRACE MOORE

SATURDAY 22ND JANUARY 2022 **STARTS 1PM**

SUSAN MCKAY **CHAIR**

DECLAN KEARNEY MLA

PATRICIA MACBRIDE

PROFESSOR COLIN HARVEY

COLUM EASTWOOD MP

AOIFE GRACE MOORE

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IRELAND'S FUTURE LIMERICK

CLAYTON HOTEL, STEAMBOAT QUAY, LIMERICK



THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2022 **STARTS 7PM**

VINCENT
BROWNE **CHAIR**
CLLR URUMU
ADEJIMI

MAURICE
QUINLIVAN TD
SANDRINE
NDAIRO

DR RUÁN
O'DONNELL
CATHAL
CROWE TD

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IRELAND'S FUTURE PHILADELPHIA

COMMODORE JOHN BARRY ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER (IRISH CENTER)
FIRESIDE ROOM 6815 EMLEN STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA, 19119



SATURDAY 12 MARCH 2022 **STARTS 5PM**

SENATOR FRANCES BLACK
CHAIRPERSON

CONGRESSMAN
BRENDAN BOYLE

MARIA
WALSH MEP

NIALL
MURPHY

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IRELAND'S FUTURE NEW YORK

ROSIE O'GRADY'S, MANHATTAN CLUB
800 7TH AVENUE AT 52ND STREET NEW YORK, NY 10019



HON. FRANCINE A. SCHOTT JSC (RET)



SENATOR FRANCES BLACK



NIALL MURPHY



MAIREAD FARRELL TD



SUSAN MCKAY

MONDAY 14 MARCH 2022 **STARTS 1PM**

HON. FRANCINE A. SCHOTT JSC (RET)
CHAIRPERSON

SENATOR
FRANCES BLACK

NIALL
MURPHY

MAIREAD
FARRELL TD

SUSAN
MCKAY

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IRELAND'S FUTURE DUNDALK

CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL, INNER RELIEF ROAD, DUNDALK



MARTINA DEVLIN



FERGUS O'DOWD TD



SENATOR ANNIE HOEY



PROFESSOR SEAMUS MCGUINNESS



TINU ACHIOYA



RUAIRÍ Ó MURCHÚ TD

THURSDAY 24 MARCH 2022 **STARTS 7PM**

MARTINA DEVLIN
CHAIRPERSON

FERGUS
O'DOWD TD

SENATOR
ANNIE HOEY

PROFESSOR SEAMUS
MCGUINNESS

TINU
ACHIOYA

RUAIRÍ
Ó MURCHÚ TD

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IRELAND'S FUTURE WATERFORD

THE TOWER HOTEL, WATERFORD



OLA MAJEKODUNMI



DAVID CULLINANE TD



DR. JENNIFER KAVANAGH



NIALL GAFFNEY



ANDREW CLARKE



JOHN MCSWEENEY

THURSDAY 28 APRIL 2022 STARTS 7PM

OLA MAJEKODUNMI
CHAIRPERSON

DAVID CULLINANE TD
SINN FÉIN

DR JENNIFER KAVANAGH
WATERFORD IT

NIALL GAFFNEY
ÓGRA FIANNA FÁIL

ANDREW CLARKE
TANISTRY

JOHN MCSWEENEY
WATERFORD CHAMBER

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IRELAND'S FUTURE LONDON

GRAND COMMITTEE ROOM, WESTMINSTER, LONDON



ANDREA CATHERWOOD



NEALE RICHMOND TD



CLAIRE HANNA MP



STEPHEN FARRY MP



JOHN FINUCANE MP



IAN BLACKFORD MP

WEDNESDAY 18 MAY 2022 STARTS 7PM

OPENING REMARKS - LORD DUBS

ANDREA CATHERWOOD
CHAIRPERSON

NEALE RICHMOND TD
FINE GAEL

CLAIRE HANNA MP
SDLP

STEPHEN FARRY MP
ALLIANCE

JOHN FINUCANE MP
SINN FÉIN

IAN BLACKFORD MP
SNP

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KILKENNY

ORMONDE HOTEL, ORMONDE STREET, KILKENNY



EIMEAR NÍ BHRAONÁIN



AODHÁN Ó RÍORDÁIN



KATHLEEN FUNCHION



JOHN MCGUINNESS



ABOOD AL JUMAILI



NICKEY BRENNAN

THURSDAY 26 MAY 2022 STARTS 7PM

EIMEAR NÍ BHRAONÁIN
CHAIRPERSON

AODHÁN Ó RÍORDÁIN
LABOUR PARTY TD

KATHLEEN FUNCHION
SINN FÉIN TD

JOHN MCGUINNESS
FIANNA FÁIL TD

ABOOD AL JUMAILI
GAA DIVERSITY AMBASSADOR

NICKEY BRENNAN
35TH PRESIDENT OF GAA

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IRELAND'S FUTURE DUBLIN

LANSDOWNE HOTEL, PEMBROKE ROAD, DUBLIN



PROFESSOR JOHN DOYLE



BERNARD DUNNE



SENATOR FRANCES BLACK



MARTINA DEVLIN



MICHAEL CARRUTH



PADDY CULLIVAN

FRIDAY 27 MAY 2022 STARTS 12PM

PROFESSOR JOHN DOYLE
RESEARCH PROFESSOR

BERNARD DUNNE
WBA WORLD CHAMPION

SEN. FRANCES BLACK
CHAIRPERSON

MARTINA DEVLIN
AUTHOR & JOURNALIST

MICHAEL CARRUTH
OLYMPIC GOLD MEDAL WINNER

PADDY CULLIVAN
ENTERTAINER WWW.PADDYCULLIVAN.COM

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IRELAND'S FUTURE SLIGO

GLASSHOUSE HOTEL, SWAN POINT, SLIGO



ANDRÉE MURPHY



CHRIS MACMANUS MEP



PROFESSOR COLIN HARVEY



NIKE OGUN



FRANK FEIGHAN TD



MARC MACSHARRY TD

THURSDAY 16 JUNE 2022 STARTS 7PM

ANDRÉE MURPHY
CHAIRPERSON

PROF. COLIN HARVEY
QUB PROFESSOR

FRANK FEIGHAN TD
FINE GAEL TD

CHRIS MACMANUS MEP
SINN FÉIN MEP

NIKE OGUN
DIVERSITY SLIGO

MARC MACSHARRY TD
FIANNA FáIL TD

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IRELAND'S FUTURE LETTERKENNY

RADISSON BLU HOTEL, PADDY HARTE ROAD, LETTERKENNY



BARRY WHYTE



PEARSE DOHERTY TD



THOMAS PRINGLE TD



THOIBA AHMED



SENATOR EILEEN FLYNN



MAIRÉAD NÍ MHAONAIGH

THURSDAY 1 SEPTEMBER STARTS 7PM

BARRY WHYTE
CHAIRPERSON

THOMAS PRINGLE
INDEPENDENT TD

SENATOR EILEEN FLYNN
INDEPENDENT SENATOR

PEARSE DOHERTY
SINN FÉIN TD

THOIBA AHMED
DONEGAL INTERCULTURAL PLATFORM

MAIRÉAD NÍ MHAONAIGH
DONEGAL MUSICIAN

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IRELAND'S FUTURE HEALTH



SENATOR FRANCES BLACK



PROFESSOR GABRIEL SCALLY



DR ILLONA DUFFY



PROFESSOR JIM DORNAN

WE ARE LIVE ON THURSDAY 7 MAY AT 7PM

CHAIRPERSON SENATOR FRANCES BLACK
CONTRIBUTORS PROFESSOR GABRIEL SCALLY,
DR ILLONA DUFFY AND PROFESSOR JIM DORNAN

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IRELAND'S FUTURE ECONOMY



GERRY CARLILE



DAVID MCWILLIAMS



PATRICIA MCKEOWN



PAUL GOSLING

WE ARE LIVE ON THURSDAY 28 MAY AT 7PM

GERRY CARLILE
CHAIRPERSON

DAVID MCWILLIAMS
ECONOMIST, BROADCASTER AND AUTHOR

PATRICIA MCKEOWN
UNISON REGIONAL SECRETARY

PAUL GOSLING
AUTHOR OF 'A NEW IRELAND'

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IRELAND'S FUTURE BREXIT



MARTINA DEVLIN



TONY CONNELLY



BRIAN FEENEY



OWEN REIDY

WE ARE LIVE ON THURSDAY 25 JUNE AT 7:30PM

MARTINA DEVLIN
CHAIRPERSON

TONY CONNELLY
JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR

BRIAN FEENEY
WRITER AND AUTHOR

OWEN REIDY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL ICTU

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IRELAND'S FUTURE YOUTH



DENISE CHAILA



CHAIR: NEIL MCMANUS



HEATHER WILSON



LAURA HARMON



CONALL Ó CORRA



SENATOR EILEEN FLYNN

WE ARE LIVE ON THURSDAY 8 OCTOBER 7:30PM

DENISE CHAILA
RAPPER AND WRITER

NEIL MCMANUS
ANTRIM HURLER AND
COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

HEATHER WILSON
COMMUNITY AND
POLITICAL ACTIVIST

LAURA HARMON
EQUAL RIGHTS CAMPAIGNER

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IRELAND'S FUTURE DIASPORA



MARTINA DEVLIN



REP. RICHARD NEAL

WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2020 7:30PM

Martina Devlin discusses Ireland's Future with Congressman Richard Neal, Chairperson of the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee

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IRELAND'S FUTURE A WARM HOUSE FOR ALL



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DENZIL MCDANIEL

THURSDAY 11 FEBRUARY 7PM

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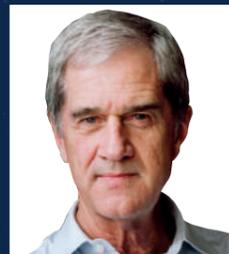
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PATRICIA KING



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JOHN SAMUELSEN

TUESDAY 1 JUNE 7:30PM

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MIKE SHINGANGE
COSATU (SOUTH AFRICA)

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**THE CONVERSATION
ON IRELAND'S FUTURE**
A PRINCIPLED FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE



Ireland's Future was established to advocate for, and promote, debate and discussion about Ireland's future, including the possibility and viability of new constitutional arrangements on the Island.



THE CONVERSATION ON IRELAND'S FUTURE

A PRINCIPLED FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

Ireland's Future was established to advocate for, and promote, debate and discussion about Ireland's future, including the possibility and viability of new constitutional arrangements on the Island.

We are guided by the values of the Good Friday Agreement and dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights, equality and fostering mutual respect between all views and traditions that share this island.

Brexit has dramatically changed the social and political dynamic on this island. The prospect of a new constitutional arrangement on the island of Ireland is growing.

We believe that new constitutional arrangements have the potential to mitigate the most negative impacts of Brexit and address the aforementioned promotion and protection of human rights, equality and the fostering of mutual respect.

We are not a political party and are not affiliated to any political party. We welcome participation from people from all political persuasions interested in furthering the goals of Ireland's Future.

Ireland's Future also notes that any move to new constitutional arrangements requires serious thought, consideration and planning. We believe that the requisite planning for these potential changes must be broad, inclusive, detailed and comprehensive.

Constitutional change must be on the basis of the consent of citizens of the island of Ireland, as informed by the Good Friday Agreement.

INTRODUCTION

A CIVIC ORGANISATION FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Ireland's Future is pleased to see the intensification of interest in the conversation about achieving a united Ireland. The steady growth of serious engagement across these islands, and internationally, is welcome and to be encouraged. The coercive removal of N. Ireland from the EU has renewed the focus on constitutional change, as more people now openly consider the option of a united Ireland. The inept and disrespectful handling of N. Ireland by the current British Government has further propelled this project centre stage.

Ireland's Future is a civil society organisation seeking to build support for proper planning on the constitutional future. We have organised several successful public conversations, including an event at the Waterfront Hall in January 2019, widely viewed as the most significant gathering of 'civic nationalism' in a generation. We have engaged with the Irish Government and other political parties, and gathered support from leading figures across the island. We are particularly concerned about the ongoing impact of Brexit, and the resultant need to prepare the ground for a united Ireland.

In the next phase of our work we will continue to lead this debate. We want a united Ireland that is genuinely new, globally ambitious, and successful. This requires careful and extensive efforts to construct a coalition for change that will deliver a positive outcome. With this in mind, we suggest three principles to inform the present discussion. We also include a recent briefing note produced by the Constitutional Conversations Group on unity referendums.

PRINCIPLE 1

'NORMALISE' THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVERSATION

The Good Friday Agreement anticipates the possibility of constitutional change, and includes a right of self-determination that belongs to the people of Ireland. The Agreement sets out how this right will be exercised. This is the constitutional core of what was agreed, and is now mainstreamed in law, policy and practice; there is nothing controversial about it.

We call on participants in the public debate, and in public life, to stop using the lazy language of 'division', and recognise that this is an Agreement right, with the envisaged referendums the way of realising it. There is no contradiction between making the Agreement work, in all its parts, and planning for the referendums that will determine the future of Ireland. Those who continue to label this process 'divisive' and 'dangerous' are simply encouraging the spread of fear and anxiety.

We urge all committed to the values of the Agreement to help to 'normalise' the debate. This means, for example, that the new Shared Island Unit must not run away from the government-resourced work required to prepare for a united Ireland.

PRINCIPLE 2

PLAN AND PREPARE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

We place emphasis on advance planning and the need for an evidence-based and informed debate. That is why we have suggested an all-island Citizens' Assembly to underline the centrality of civic leadership in preparing the ground for change. This is only one part of what is required. We believe that when these referendums are triggered people should have as clear an idea as possible about the consequences. What follows will then be primarily about implementing the successful outcome. We are particularly concerned about the idea of an elite-level negotiation - either before or after the referendums - that hands a communal veto to one political community in the north, and excludes effective civic engagement. We see inclusive all-island civic dialogue as central to making sustainable progress and as one way of exploring difficult questions in a transparent manner.

We acknowledge and welcome additional proposals and suggestions that would ensure that Ireland is well prepared for change, including, for example, the establishment of a Joint Oireachtas Committee.

Our principal objective is to ensure that the hard questions about what a new Ireland will look like can be addressed honestly when these referendum campaigns commence.

PRINCIPLE 3

THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT PROVIDES THE FRAMEWORK

The Agreement provides a principled framework for an agreed pathway to a united Ireland. In particular, it endorses the right of self-determination of the Irish people and its exercise through processes of concurrent consent. We believe that an approach that is faithful to the spirit and letter of the Agreement is vital, and in our view, this means determining concurrent consent through referendums held, north and south, at the same time. In our view, this is what it means for the people of the island of Ireland to exercise their right of self-determination, and give voice to their consent concurrently. It follows the approach adopted to endorsement of the Agreement itself.

The outcome will be determined by a 'simple' majority in each jurisdiction. The Agreement's provision for concurrent consent is already a sufficient limit on the right of self-determination, without the addition of further procedural hurdles. It prescribes the types of guarantees that should ensure confidence across all communities. We are increasingly concerned about the ongoing attempts to insert special rules or impose a communal veto on the process and the implementation of the outcome. This would constitute a serious breach of the Agreement and highlights the need to pay close attention to matters of process. There is a real risk that opponents of change may seek to impose novel procedural requirements that accord primacy to the concerns of one community only. That would be unacceptable.

The values and institutions of the Agreement will frame a conversation about a new Ireland, as a floor and not a ceiling for our collective ambitions. This will include discussion of amendment or replacement of Bunreacht na hÉireann. While we accept and acknowledge the huge challenges of the transition to new constitutional arrangements, we are supportive of those who want this transition to be transformative. We seek a new and better Ireland

that will heal and transcend the appalling legacies of partition.

The values of the Agreement, if implemented effectively, will assist in ensuring mutual respect is a lived reality in a united Ireland. Advance planning that makes the consequences clear will also help. We note in particular the obligation of 'rigorous impartiality', and the notion of 'equivalence' contained in the Agreement. If applied consistently and fairly, combined with other values from the Agreement, these should ensure that there is no diminution of protection, and that a united Ireland discharges its responsibilities towards British citizens and British identity. With notable exceptions, insufficient attention has been paid to this existing protective framework. This should also be read in the context of a united Ireland that we hope will have strong constitutional and legislative guarantees, will continue to be an EU member state and have a range of international legal obligations. In particular, we underline the significance of building robust human rights and equality guarantees into this conversation at an early stage. We want to ensure that the human rights of everyone in Ireland are protected.

A BRIEFING NOTE ON UNITY REFERENDUMS

This briefing note is produced by the Constitutional Conversations Group. It is intended to assist those who are interested in the mechanics of Irish unity. The aim is not to be prescriptive but we hope this note may be of benefit to those participating in any pre-referendum consultations or discussions about aspects of the process.

It reflects the thinking of the Group on some of the procedural questions raised by the unity referendums. The Group is aware that there are a range of possible views, but this note advances an interpretation that we believe is as faithful as possible to the letter and spirit of the self-determination provisions of the Good Friday Agreement.

1. HOW WILL A REUNITED IRELAND BE ACHIEVED?

The Agreement provides that Irish reunification is a matter for the people of the island of Ireland. The right of self-determination has been given effect in the Irish Constitution and the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Reunification can be achieved through positive votes in concurrent referendums in both jurisdictions on the island. Each referendum will be subject to the distinctive traditions, rules and processes in each state.

The votes should follow political and civic planning and preparation. Those eligible to vote in these referendums, and everyone affected by the outcome, must be clear about the constitutional, political, economic, social and cultural consequences in advance.

2. WHO DECIDES IF A VOTE ON IRISH UNITY IS TO TAKE PLACE IN N. IRELAND?

The power to call a referendum on Irish unity is conferred on the Secretary of State (SoS) for Northern Ireland in section 1 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This power includes a discretion to hold a poll at any time. The duty to do so comes into effect when it appears likely to the SoS that a majority of those voting would express a wish for Irish reunification.

3. WHO DECIDES IF A VOTE OCCURS IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND?

Irish reunification remains a constitutional goal of the Irish State, and is described as the firm will of the 'Irish Nation'. However, it requires a positive vote by the electorate in the Republic. The decision to propose a referendum on unity lies with the Oireachtas, although the political reality is that it will have to be sponsored by the Irish Government.

4. SHOULD SEPARATE REFERENDUMS OCCUR?

No. The Agreement, properly interpreted, envisages concurrent referendums on reunification to mirror the votes which occurred on the 22nd May 1998 across the island of Ireland. In our view, this requires simultaneous votes.

Should a referendum be proposed in either jurisdiction, by the Irish Government or by the SoS, there will be a presumption that steps will be taken to provide for a concurrent vote in the neighbouring jurisdiction. Neither state can legitimately impose Irish reunification on the other. Equally, neither state can legitimately frustrate or delay Irish reunification.

The most faithful interpretation of the Agreement is that the referendums should be held at the same time.

5. RIGHT TO VOTE IN N. IRELAND

The phrase used in the Agreement is the 'people of Northern Ireland'. The franchise in N. Ireland for the reunification referendum is not yet determined. Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that the Secretary of State specify the persons entitled to vote. Options for the franchise include: (i) Westminster list, which is limited to British, Irish and qualifying commonwealth citizens who are resident or registered as overseas voters and are over the age of 18; (ii) the Assembly, European Parliament and local elections list, which also includes citizens of the European Union; or (iii) specially constructed franchise, as occurred with the Scottish independence referendum permitting, for example, voting by those over the age of 16.

Given the implications of potential constitutional change on everyone in N. Ireland, a case can be made for an inclusive franchise that acknowledges, for example, the impact on young people and future generations. There is considerable merit in the approach adopted for the independence referendum in Scotland.

6. RIGHT TO VOTE IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

The right to vote in any reunification referendum in the Republic of Ireland is determined by combined reading of articles 12 and 46 of the Constitution, together with the Referendum Acts. The franchise will be restricted to Irish citizens resident in the territory of the State and registered as referendum electors. No expansion of the electorate is possible without a separate and preceding constitutional amendment.

7. CONSEQUENCES OF A VOTE FOR REUNIFICATION IN N. IRELAND

The status of N. Ireland as part of the UK will change. A positive vote in favour of reunification in N. Ireland is a demonstration of Irish self-determination which, in accordance with article 1(iv) of the British-Irish Agreement, imposes a duty on the UK Government to introduce and support legislation in its Parliament to give effect to that wish. It is assumed that section 1 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 will be repealed.

Unless and until amended or superseded, the Agreement (bilateral British-Irish Agreement) will remain in place, including the existing institutions, and those obligations intended to apply in the event of a transfer of sovereignty.

As noted above, it should be clear in advance of the referendums what model and arrangements people are opting for if they select the change option. In the event of votes for reunification it will then be a matter of implementing the proposals that have been democratically endorsed.

8. CONSEQUENCES OF A VOTE FOR REUNIFICATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

The status of N. Ireland will change, and the whole territory of the island of Ireland will be part of the EU. The Irish Constitution will be amended or replaced in accordance with the proposal approved by the electorate. At a minimum, it is presumed that this will

require amendment to articles 2 and 3 as currently configured. But it is also possible that discussions will lead to proposals for a new constitution. Advance civic and political discussion is needed on the depth, scale and extent of the constitutional reforms that will follow votes for reunification.

While it is possible that reunification could be achieved in a way that minimises constitutional and political disruption, there is also an opportunity to consider more ambitious arrangements that reflect a commitment to a modern, pluralist 'New Ireland'.

Those advocating reunification will need to have a settled view on the precise implications of votes for change and how transformative this will be.

9. WHAT BECOMES OF BRITISH CITIZENSHIP IN A UNITED IRELAND?

In the Agreement both the Irish and British governments promised the continuation of citizenship regardless of the status of N. Ireland. British citizenship is governed by UK nationality legislation and that would continue to the case. It would continue in perpetuity for those currently entitled to that status. It would be available for future generations in accordance with British legislation.

Proposals for reunification should provide agreed guarantees for British citizens to ensure that British identity is respected based on the values of the Agreement.

10. WHAT BECOMES OF THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT INSTITUTIONS IN N. IRELAND IN A UNITED IRELAND?

The Agreement does not contemplate the abolition of the Assembly or the Executive following reunification. These institutions remain operable in a united Ireland and would, presumably, continue unless and until alternative institutions are approved. This would also be the case for other Agreement structures, which may prove particularly valuable in maintaining East-West and British-Irish connections.

11. WHAT BECOMES OF THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY PROTECTIONS?

The Agreement requires that 'the power of the sovereign government with jurisdiction there shall be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions and shall be founded on the principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities'.

The obligation of 'rigorous impartiality' will transfer to the Irish Government in the event of reunification. The commitments to parity of esteem, equality of treatment and rights will have implications for reunification proposals.

The Irish Government is under an obligation to provide at least an equivalent level of rights protection, and has already made changes to reflect this aspect of the Agreement.

It is notable, for example, that the Agreement anticipated a Bill of Rights for N. Ireland and led to further effect being given to the European Convention on Human Rights, and the creation of the NI Human Rights Commission. Any Bill of Rights adopted for N. Ireland will have implications for the guarantees required in the event of reunification.

Work will be needed to ensure that there is at minimum equivalence, and that reunification results in no diminution of protection. As noted above, this will also create an opportunity to discuss the adoption of a more expansive range of rights and equality guarantees.

12. WHAT LEVEL OF SUPPORT IS NECESSARY IN EACH JURISDICTION?

Article 47.1 provides that a simple majority of votes cast is sufficient to amend the Irish Constitution. The Agreement recognises the equal legitimacy of both the unionist and nationalist position, and the principle of consent rests constitutional status on a majority of the people of N. Ireland. Therefore, any threshold beyond a simple majority of those voting in N. Ireland can be rejected as contrary to the Agreement, undemocratic, and an attempt to frustrate the self-determination provisions.

13. DOES THERE NEED TO BE MORE THAN CONCURRENT REFERENDUMS?

No. The Agreement is clear that the process by which Irish reunification will be achieved is concurrent consent. The novel imposition of, for example, further confirmatory referendums in either jurisdiction would amount to a significant and unjustified deviation from what was agreed in the Agreement and approved in 1998. The right to Irish self-determination is already significantly qualified by the requirement of concurrent votes in each jurisdiction.

If reunification is achieved through the existing Irish Constitution, the proposal to be put to the electorate will have to be crafted in such a way as to achieve Irish unity whilst not conflicting with any other provisions of the Constitution. If a new constitution is proposed, to replace the 1937 Constitution, then this could be endorsed through a referendum.

Multiple referendums beyond the two anticipated in the Agreement carry risks of inconsistent outcomes

and additional instability. This is particularly the case in N. Ireland where a confirmatory vote will be viewed by many as another attempt to place procedural hurdles in the way of constitutional change. Proposals should be fully worked through in advance of the concurrent referendums.

14. WHAT WOULD BECOME OF THE IRELAND – NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL CONTAINED WITHIN THE EU-UK WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT?

The reunification of Ireland in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement has already been considered by the European Council in April 2017. The 1990 precedent of German reunification would be followed. The entire territory of a united Ireland would form part of the EU, without the need for Treaty change. The Protocol would no longer be necessary and will be superseded by the return of N. Ireland to the EU. Both states may, however, wish to continue the Common Travel Area arrangements, and it is assumed the EU would remain willing to permit this, within existing and prescribed limits.

**ADVANCING THE
CONVERSATION**
THE WAY FORWARD



It seeks to explain the values and guarantees that will frame the process and underlines why the Good Friday Agreement is so significant.

ADVANCING THE CONVERSATION

THE WAY FORWARD

As the conversation on constitutional change intensifies and the trajectory towards referendums on the island continues, Ireland's Future releases its second discussion document titled Advancing the Conversation – The Way Forward.

This section of the document asks are we preparing and planning for what lies ahead and who should be involved in the preparatory work required in advance of the change our island will experience?

It seeks to explain the values and guarantees that will frame the process and underlines why the Good Friday Agreement is so significant.

The document details the necessity and urgency of doing the work now, in advance of the referendums taking place and also outlines why we need a timeframe.

Ireland's Future also urges political parties that support the concept of a new Ireland to work together across the island. We believe that it is essential, in the national interest for political parties that support a new constitutional future to set aside electoral rivalries for the purpose of planning change. This is a time like no other.

Both governments will have a central role in the managed transition to reunification and are under an obligation to implement the outcome of the referendums. Ireland's Future, in this document also encourages discussion on these matters in the Oireachtas, the Westminster Parliament and the northern Assembly.

This section also highlights the concerns of Ireland's Future about the continuing failure of the Irish government to play an explicit and leading part in the task of nation building. We urge the government to work on all fronts to ensure the process of change is smooth.

In this section Ireland's Future states that constitutional change is feasible and achievable, that our island is on a pathway towards referendums and that a United Ireland will be the outcome. In advance of the referendums it is the view of Ireland's Future that the government should establish a Citizens' Assembly to assist in informing the debate.

1. WILL YOU BE PREPARED AND READY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE?

This discussion paper is a contribution to reflections on constitutional change in Ireland. Ireland's Future has stressed throughout that there is a need for informed and evidence-based discussion. In taking forward this work we remain convinced that an all-island Citizens' Assembly should be established as a matter of urgency.

The aim here is to enable further civic discussion and we highlight ways that these collective efforts can be advanced. Our objective is to ask every organisation and institution to reflect on a simple question: Will you be prepared and ready for the process of constitutional change that will likely unfold on this island in the next decade?

2. WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THIS PREPARATORY WORK?

The conversations about constitutional change are now becoming more focused. We welcome the intensification of interest, and the growing number of projects and initiatives is remarkable. While these are framed in distinctive ways, they will assist in generating the preparatory work and evidence base we have called for. We therefore encourage universities, funding bodies, civil society, political parties, and others, to support relevant policy and research agendas, and ensure effective co-ordination and dialogue. No institution or organisation anywhere on this island should be left unprepared for the potential transition ahead.

3. WHY DOES BREXIT MATTER SO MUCH?

The majority of people in the North voted to remain. The removal of this region from the EU against the express wishes of its people has significant and lasting implications. It has inspired a renewed focus on self-determination and consent. Irish reunification is an automatic route to EU return, and we are determined to deliver on the full potential of

this island. We want a better and more prosperous future for everyone. The impact of Brexit on the constitutional conversation has been dramatic, and it alters the nature of ongoing economic, social and political debates.

4. WHY IS THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT SO SIGNIFICANT?

We have already set out the parameters of our preferred approach. In particular, we stress again the centrality of a faithful interpretation of the letter and spirit of the right of self-determination in the Good Friday Agreement. As we have indicated, this has implications for the referendum process and what follows any vote for reunification.

We remain dismayed by repeated attempts to undermine core aspects of the Agreement. The process will involve concurrent consent, and is not subject to a communal veto. There are sustained and ongoing efforts to offer unionism a veto over progress, either before or after the referendums. Undermining the integrity of what was endorsed by the people of Ireland - North and South - in 1998 is unwise and ill-advised. The requirement for concurrent consent tied to simple majority in each jurisdiction is sufficient. It is unacceptable and irresponsible to create unfounded expectations about what is involved, and to threaten the integrity of what has been agreed. Those perpetuating such approaches are creating problems in the here and now, by eroding confidence in the Agreement, and storing up risks for the future.

5. WHY SHOULD YOU DO THE WORK IN ADVANCE?

Our view is that the proposals should be as clear as possible in advance of the concurrent referendums, with subsequent implementation of stated commitments. We reject attempts to smuggle a unionist veto into the process or to give unionism multiple opportunities to block change.

This focus on frontloading places considerable emphasis on civic and political engagement prior to

referendums taking place. It is difficult to see how a credible and meaningful 'in principle' referendum campaign could be held in the North, for example, in the absence of transparent plans that can be endorsed and then delivered. We are appalled by the approach adopted in Britain to Brexit and believe that the people of Ireland deserve clarity and certainty about the future before being asked to vote.

Our primary recommendation remains for the establishment of an all-island Citizens' Assembly to explore all aspects of the transition to reunification. We are convinced that structured civic dialogue is vital. We call once again on the Irish Government to advance this work immediately.

6. DO YOU NEED A TIME FRAME?

The insertion of a range of time frames has given the discussion renewed momentum, in a context where many still prefer prevarication and delay. We make no apology for bringing a sense of urgency to the table. No serious planning process can take place without an 'in principle' timetable. We believe that our determined emphasis on timing has helped to propel this debate forward in a constructive way.

7. WILL THE POLITICAL PARTIES WORK TOGETHER?

We welcome the emerging evidence of convergence among pro-unity political parties. We note that there is general agreement that Brexit has transformed the debate, and that the next decade will be key. We believe that it is essential, in the national interest, for political parties that support unity to set aside electoral rivalries for the purpose of planning for change. While divisions are well rehearsed, it would be inexcusable for electoral competition to stand in the way of this process of national reconciliation. We will continue to support, assist and enable efforts to bring parties together and, where possible, to adopt common approaches. We urge the parties to create a mechanism for ongoing dialogue that respects political differences but acknowledges the need to advance common platforms.

8. WILL BOTH GOVERNMENTS WORK TOGETHER?

Both governments will have a central role in the managed transition to reunification, and are under an obligation to implement the outcome of the referendums. There is no need, however, for the governments to wait, in terms of addressing basic questions of process, in particular. The Irish and British Governments should already be in discussion through the established forums of bilateral cooperation, including the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. While we note that the Secretary of State has a significant role, there is nothing to prevent both governments engaging in the management of a process that will have consequences for the island of Ireland. As projects proliferate, and as more enter the conversation, there will be questions around co-ordination and ensuring that dialogue is facilitated. The Shared Island Unit could, for example, have a useful role in enabling such discussions to take place.

9. WHAT ROLE CAN LEGISLATURES PLAY?

We are also surprised that there has been so little detailed consideration of these matters in the Oireachtas, the Westminster Parliament and the northern Assembly. We note the significant work of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, but this remains an isolated example in a context where we believe these democratic institutions, and their members, should be playing a much more proactive role. Extending this further, should, for example, the Scottish Parliament consider the implications of Irish reunification for Scotland, with Senedd Cymru doing similar work in Wales? The European Parliament could, for example, undertake useful research on the implications of reunification for the European Union. We raise this because this debate should not simply be for governments, but also for legislatures, and there is useful work that could be done.

10. WHY IS THE IRISH GOVERNMENT NOT DOING MORE?

Our principal focus will remain on encouraging, enabling and supporting civic, political and other initiatives that will inform the debate. We will also continue to provide constructive input. In this discussion paper our aim is to set out our views, note a range of options and highlight where others might contribute. We are, however, particularly concerned about the continuing failure of the Irish Government to play an explicit and leading part in this work. Only so much can be done by civil society, and by institutions such as universities. Government-led and resourced preparatory work will be needed to ensure there is clarity on the implications and the nature of the offer. Therefore we agree that at the appropriate time, and following civic dialogue, a White Paper should be produced.

11. IS OUR PREFERRED CONSTITUTIONAL OUTCOME ACHIEVABLE?

It is apparent that people are no longer prepared to wait for questions about the constitutional future to be addressed by both governments. Civil society is taking the initiative. We note that key considerations around, for example, the referendum process are being examined and that other work is progressing. We hope that these efforts will be productive and useful and that pressure to introduce novel hurdles, and additional procedural devices to thwart constitutional change, will be resisted.

We know that opponents of constitutional change have an interest in placing obstacles in the way, and in delegitimising individuals and organisations that are explicit about their constitutional preferences. No one on this island should be fearful of participating, whether in making the case for a United Ireland or for the maintenance of the Union with Britain. We do not doubt the work involved, but Irish reunification is a feasible and achievable project of transition involving states with the domestic capacity and international support to deliver a successful outcome.

12. WHAT WILL IRELAND'S FUTURE BE DOING?

Ireland's Future will encourage planning and preparation, enable conversations, and contribute constructively to the debate, as it becomes more detailed and focused. We believe this island is on a pathway towards referendums and that a United Ireland will be the outcome. This is our objective and the principal focus of our efforts.

We think that an all-island Citizens' Assembly will assist in informing the debate, but as noted here, this is only one element of the work that can be undertaken now. We commend those who have already engaged in a project that will transform this island for the better for everyone and we urge others to join in.

13. WHAT IS THE CRITERIA FOR A REFERENDUM TO BE CALLED

Ireland's Future encourages everyone with an interest in the future of our island to engage in this conversation. The discussion on constitutional change has accelerated rapidly.

Whilst our primary focus is engaging with stakeholders on our own island, it is not lost on us that the decision to call a referendum in the north rests with the government in London.

We encourage the British government to outline the criteria, that in their view, would be required for a referendum to be called. We encourage the European Union and political influence in the United States of America to work with Britain in the process of informing Irish people what the criteria for a referendum is.

Refusing to outline the criteria is no longer a tenable position for the British government to take.

Ireland's Future and others will continue the work of planning and preparing for change. We cannot overstate the importance of the Irish government immersing itself in the process of nation building and change.

Ireland is in a period of immense change. There is an opportunity for both the British and Irish governments to oversee and manage that change. It is the responsible thing to embrace the change that our island is going through. That change, in our view, will lead to referendums and a new constitutional dispensation in Ireland.

Ireland's Future will intensify its programme of work in the coming period and we urge others to do the same.



**RIGHTS, CITIZENSHIP
AND IDENTITY**
ENSURING EQUAL RIGHTS



The debate on the constitutional future of Ireland is intensifying. It is heartening to observe the number of new initiatives and the contributions that have been produced thus far.

An tAontas Eorpach
European Union

ÉIRE
IRELAND



RIGHTS, CITIZENSHIP AND IDENTITY

ENSURING EQUAL RIGHTS

The debate on the constitutional future of Ireland is intensifying. It is heartening to observe the number of new initiatives and the contributions that have been produced thus far. This is necessary work, and there are collective ongoing efforts examining a wide range of questions that must be addressed before concurrent referendums take place on the island of Ireland. Ireland's Future welcomes the gathering momentum and continues to encourage widespread deliberation on all options and perspectives. In the coming months, Ireland's Future will publish new discussion documents examining the areas of Health and Education in a United Ireland.

From the outset, it is important to acknowledge the value of every culture and identity, old and new, that shares the island of Ireland. This section complements our previous three publications and represents a contribution to ensure that every identity and culture is safeguarded, protected and cherished in a new and united Ireland.

One of the matters requiring attention is how rights, identity and citizenship are located in these debates, and how they will shape the process and future arrangements. There is understandable concern about the implications of constitutional change in these areas. The Good Friday Agreement, and subsequent agreements, led to the creation of institutions on this island, and across these islands, reflecting the totality of relationships. But the values and obligations contained in the Agreement, and what they mean for a united Ireland, are often neglected. There are significant guarantees that speak to the present and the future of the island. Any discussion of planning and preparation for a united Ireland that claims to be 'Agreement compliant' must ensure that proper account is taken of the obligations and requirements that are already there. In particular, we believe that the Agreement offers a foundational pillar that can usefully guide reflection and dialogue, understood also in the context of relevant international and domestic legal obligations.

The aim of this briefing paper is to raise questions and provide answers. There is no attempt here to offer a comprehensive analysis of all existing legal guarantees and obligations and the consequences. Instead, the focus is on drawing out key legal and policy themes, clarifying challenges that will need to be resolved and therefore assisting those undertaking preparatory work. Our objective is to assist civic and political dialogue.

Our approach is deliberate. Ireland's Future is committed to supporting wide and deep civic and political engagement around constitutional change. That is why we have called for the creation of an all-island Citizens' Assembly, and why we are cautious about pre-empting those vital civic and political conversations. Our intention is to set out how we believe these discussions must be framed.

However, we recognise the need to be clear on the parameters and available options, if the values and principles that inform the peace process are to be respected. This must be a creative and imaginative debate about a new and united Ireland, but it must also acknowledge that there are vital guarantees that should be respected. Underpinning our approach is not merely the desire to ensure 'no diminution' in available protections, but to achieve a new and united Ireland that is a substantively better place for everyone who shares the island in the future. That will simply not happen if matters of human rights, equality, identity and citizenship are neglected in the preparatory phase. This paper is a contribution to that discussion.

There are three central messages: first, more attention needs to be paid to those obligations, principles and values that will frame all aspects of this process and what they require; second, Ireland's Future joins with many others in seeking a new and united Ireland that is ambitious and world-leading in its commitment to human

rights and equality. We are convinced that this is one way to help build a collective movement for constitutional change in Ireland; and third, Ireland's Future will work with others to ensure that promises made, and the assurances that are there, are respected and upheld before, during and after the managed transition in Ireland. We urge those concerned about the protection and promotion of human rights on this island to join the debate and to engage in this vital planning phase.

1. WHAT IS THE CONTEXT FOR CONSIDERING RIGHTS, CITIZENSHIP AND IDENTITY?

Ireland's Future advocates for constitutional change because everyone on this island will benefit from new arrangements. We remain determined to ensure that the constitutional conversation is rights-based, with a focus on building a society that has tangibly learned the lessons of history. There is no desire to repeat the mistakes of the past, and one way this outcome can be achieved is to place the promotion and protection of human rights at the core of the discussions.

The first thing to note is that there are agreements governing how the North is expected to operate now, within the context of a wider set of institutional relationships across these islands. This is a post-conflict society with an overarching peace/political agreement that will frame future constitutional conversations. Ireland's Future, along with others, agrees that the values, principles and obligations of the Agreement must structure the debate. This is not the time to begin unpicking or rewriting what has been promised and agreed. What is apparent is that those who crafted the Agreement provided for, and anticipated, the prospect of constitutional change. Many of the core themes were evident throughout the peace process. The status of the Agreement, as both a multi-party political agreement and binding international treaty, takes on additional significance in this context. This is about political dialogue and respect for the rule of law, including international law. Both governments are bound by their existing obligations and must deliver processes and outcomes that are sustainable and compliant with established guarantees.

There is an extensive body of international standards that address human rights. Ireland and the UK are bound, as a matter of international law, by international human rights law commitments, and other relevant obligations that apply in the context of an agreed transfer of territory/sovereignty. Both states are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. There

will be a firm expectation - in line with international practice - of continuity of human rights protections in the event of constitutional change. Ireland's international obligations will become applicable to the territory of 'Northern Ireland', which will also return fully to the EU.

There are standards that apply to everyone within the jurisdiction of the state, and instruments that speak to particular thematic areas. For example, both states have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965. At the European regional level (Council of Europe), both are, for example, parties to the European Convention on Human Rights 1950 and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 1995. Recall also that Ireland remains a member of the EU (with the obligations that follow) and the UK is in a new post-Brexit relationship with the EU based on binding international agreements.

The international human rights regime is not merely confined to legal standards. There are also international institutions tasked with monitoring compliance and supervising how the rules are implemented domestically. The UK has historically been less keen than Ireland on, for example, subjecting itself to the individual complaints mechanisms within the UN human rights system. Perhaps the best-known example of international supervision is the work of the European Court of Human Rights. There are many other examples, but the basic point is that there is an international framework of protection that will apply during the process and in the event of constitutional change in Ireland. Both states will have to account for how they are upholding these standards before and after any transition and guarantee that no gaps emerge in the process of transfer of sovereignty (this should include, for example, an audit of ratification of relevant instruments and a rigorous human rights assessment of comparative performance and compliance). International input into, and oversight

of, this aspect of the process may be valuable, in addition to any bilateral accountability mechanisms put in place. The British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will offer a forum for discussion and for monitoring progress. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission could be given a leading role, for example, in assessing the adequacy of the implementation of relevant commitments, with concrete legal remedies agreed and available if problems do arise for individuals.

When reflecting on adequate preparation for constitutional change, there is an international context and a need to ensure that whatever emerges is fully informed by existing obligations. This presents an opportunity for considering how a new and united Ireland will do better on human rights protection and promotion in the future, particularly with respect to domestic implementation and enforcement. Much will depend on the form that reunification takes, but there is considerable merit in incorporating the rights discussed in this paper at the constitutional level in a united Ireland.

There is an added complication that may seem legalistic but is of crucial significance in practical terms. Ireland and the UK are 'dualist states' for international law purposes, and have distinctive constitutional arrangements that will govern how the referendum processes and any transition are handled. 'Dualism' means that direct reliance on those international standards will depend on whether they have been incorporated or given effect in domestic law. There are exceptions, but both states have tended to avoid direct incorporation of these international instruments. That is why, for example, the Human Rights Act 1998 is so important in the UK; it gives further effect to aspects of the ECHR in domestic law (as, for example, the European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003 does at the sub-constitutional level in Ireland). And as is well known the Agreement requires incorporation of the ECHR in Northern Ireland. This remains significant because other important elements of the Agreement have not been accorded this domestic status, thus raising practical concerns about implementation and enforcement. A number of current debates on citizenship and identity pivot

around this absence of domestic incorporation and the limits of legal enforcement.

Ireland has a codified constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann) – that has been amended by referendum on many occasions – and contains rights provisions. There is ongoing discussion about further reform of the Irish constitution, including in the area of socio-economic rights. The UK does not have a single codified constitution; instead, its arrangements are based on a set of fundamental principles, the most significant of which, for practical purposes, remains the legislative supremacy of the Westminster Parliament. One implication is, for example, as a strict matter of domestic constitutional law, Parliament could in principle opt to depart from promises made by any British government in negotiations with any Irish government (even in circumstances where that would place the state in breach of its international legal obligations). It also continues to limit the practical utility of international obligations that have not been given domestic legal effect. This general constitutional legal position makes negotiating with a British government challenging, because it cannot legally guarantee in domestic law that a future Parliament will take the same view. As noted below, this may become especially concerning for British citizens in Northern Ireland who will be relying on the British state to uphold Agreement obligations into the future. Political reality can often make such speculation seem irrelevant, but recent experience suggests it is a matter to be mindful of as the debate on constitutional change builds. It strongly suggests that any future British-Irish Agreement dealing with the transfer of sovereignty must give more focused thought to practical legal enforcement than is evident in the current Agreement and in the way that it has been interpreted and applied in the UK.

The work of the Irish state in taking forward preparations will also be constrained and shaped by the current Irish constitution and other legal obligations. For example, without further amendment the voting arrangements North and South for the 'concurrent referendums' provided for in the Agreement will differ. The right of self-determination belongs to 'the people', but how will

that term be defined for the purposes of these referendums? How will people regard a differential approach to voting rights in the context of simultaneous referendums? Should reform to the rules on voting rights be changed prior to the referendums, including voting age?

There is also a live debate as to the meaning of reunification itself. Should it involve substantial amendment of the existing Irish constitution, or will it lead to the adoption of a new constitution? For the purposes of this paper the focus is not so much on what form this takes, but what the substantive guarantees are and how they are practically implemented. It is, however, essential that core protections in the areas under consideration here are located at the constitutional level.

A final context to remember is comparative experience. Many states around the world have managed transitions, and there is much international experience. Examples include the reunification of Germany, the process of transition in South Africa, and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. There are also clear lessons to be learned from the experience of the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and, for example, the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong. While it would be unwise to doubt the real challenges involved, there is a habit in Ireland of overplaying the difficulties, in what appears to be an attempt to avoid doing the required planning. This will, in itself, make the chances of a problematic transition more, not less, likely. When considering questions of rights, identity and citizenship it will be of value to draw on relevant comparisons. For example, South Africa adopted a new constitution that includes a Bill of Rights. What lessons can be learned here from the experience of South Africa? Those advocating change will want to pay attention to comparative experiences that may be of particular relevance and value in influencing what takes place in Ireland. It will be essential that lessons are learned from mistakes made elsewhere as well as examples of best international practice.

When thinking about context, it is vital that international obligations and comparative experience are respected and taken fully into

account in discussions about a new and united Ireland. Part of this is because both states are, of course, bound by their international legal obligations, but also because any process of constitutional change will be better if it is guided by a contextually sensitive awareness of these international commitments and by the lessons learned from elsewhere. This applies both to the process preceding the 'concurrent referendums' and what emerges afterwards. For example, if there is a new constitution for a united Ireland, will it contain a modern Bill of Rights? If so, what will the content be, and will the drafting process respect the values the document itself should aspire to? Who will draft it? Would this happen before or after referendums? If the focus is on advance planning just how much detail will be available?

2. WHY IS THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT SO SIGNIFICANT?

The right of self-determination/principle of consent is included in the Agreement. The process that will lead to a new and united Ireland thus derives from a multi-party agreement and a binding bilateral British-Irish treaty. What was agreed was endorsed overwhelmingly on the island of Ireland. There is recognition in the legal orders of both states (Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Bunreacht na hÉireann), but there has not been complete domestic incorporation or implementation. In reality everything that happens with respect to this process will be assessed with reference to Agreement compliance, and a plausible connection will need to be made for any propositions advanced. While it is hoped that the planning stage will see intergovernmental agreement, in particular, there remains the challenge of what happens when there is disagreement over what the Agreement requires and how this is resolved. This will arise sharply in circumstances where domestic legal effect is absent. In reality these questions will be resolved in existing political and legal arenas unless an additional form of international oversight is put in place. It would be wise to attend to matters of dispute resolution at an early stage.

One of the mainstream features of the Agreement is the attempt to address matters of rights, identity and citizenship in a credible way. The provisions deal with the current arrangements but also address the future as well. Protections around rights and identity are therefore already present, and were prefigured in many of the landmark documents of the peace process.

There are varying views on whether all aspects of the Agreement should be mapped onto the future arrangements. Some suggest that virtually everything will (and should) form part of a united Ireland, others are less sure, particularly as this process of constitutional change will be framed by a further British-Irish Agreement, or agreements, that will likely amend the existing Agreement. It is notable in this context that the British-Irish Agreement 1998 replaced the Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985.¹ Domestic legislation will be required to give effect to what has been agreed, and lessons can be learned from past experience in Ireland. What is clear, however, is that there are relevant guarantees that are explicitly forward facing, should be respected (whatever is agreed and endorsed institutionally) and these merit further examination.

3. WHAT ARE THE RELEVANT AGREEMENT GUARANTEES?

First, there is an overarching commitment in the Agreement to the 'protection and vindication of the human rights of all' and human rights flow throughout the document. That is unsurprising, as it was assumed that any agreement that stood a chance of success would have to address matters of rights and equality.

The 'rigorous impartiality' obligation (see below) includes 'full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights' and is plainly future facing. However, experience in the North has shown that in the absence of domestic implementation these principles often lack critical bite when needed most, and the record of the British government is a poor one.

Human rights are hardwired into the safeguards around the Assembly, the British government agreed to incorporate the ECHR 'into Northern Ireland law', new Commissions were established North and South (including a Joint Committee to foster cooperation and consider a Charter of Rights for the island), and the Irish government agreed to 'take steps to further strengthen the protection of human rights in its jurisdiction' to 'ensure at least an equivalent level of protection ... as will pertain in Northern Ireland'. The Agreement also resulted in a Bill of Rights process that led to the submission of advice by the NI Human Rights Commission to the British government in December 2008.² It was never enacted, and debate continues. But it highlights a theme that has emerged since the Agreement was endorsed: the human rights and equality potential has never been fully realised in the here and now. There is good reason to pay close attention to this experience and to learn the lessons for any future constitutional change process. Human rights reforms should not be left so open ended.

Second, the focus on parity of esteem and equality of treatment is significant. The Agreement already addresses concerns raised about British identity/citizenship; a fact often neglected in the current discussions. If you base the constitutional status of a jurisdiction on the 'principle of consent' it is unsurprising that the founding document would contemplate what might happen if this changes. There are elements of the Agreement that are unequivocally future oriented with respect to identity/citizenship. It is worth highlighting them here. The 'rigorous impartiality' obligation merits quotation in full. Both governments:

Affirm that whatever choice is freely exercised by a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, the power of the sovereign government with jurisdiction there shall be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions and shall be founded on the principles of full

respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities[.]³

This provision applies now to the British government (although it has never been explicitly incorporated into domestic law), and in the event of reunification will apply to the Irish government. How will this guarantee be respected in domestic law, policy and practice in a united Ireland? Is it sufficiently precise to be expressly legislated for? And, if so, at what level?

The obligation is founded on principles that include 'full respect' for parity of esteem and equality treatment and must be respected in any future arrangements. That discussion is likely to be informed by the interpretation and approach by the British government now (it is striking how much of this aspect of the Agreement that has never been domestically incorporated), but that need not necessarily be the approach adopted by a future Irish government. Past experience in the North demonstrates that these obligations are often practically meaningless if not given domestic legal effect.

An intriguing question that must be answered therefore is: what will parity of esteem and 'just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspirations of both communities' require of a united Ireland? In reaching for an answer, will the present approach of the British government function as a guide? As should be clear from our arguments and our overall approach, Ireland's Future believes that the Agreement should frame this conversation. We also believe that the proposals should be informed by wide and deep civic engagement and dialogue. How a united Ireland should discharge these obligations is a matter of ongoing debate, but we

believe that should be shaped by what has been already promised, as well as what is most likely to make the transition to a united Ireland successful. This should be approached in a spirit of inclusion, generosity and imagination, but as made clear in this paper there are existing guarantees that speak directly to these questions.

The birth right commitment in the Agreement seems relatively clear but remains a source of contestation. Both governments:

Recognise the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland.⁴

Both states have therefore undertaken a binding international commitment to the 'people of Northern Ireland' with respect to identity/citizenship in perpetuity.⁵ Obviously, the Irish government cannot grant British citizenship, so this is a matter that will fall to the Westminster Parliament and future British governments to uphold (that those born in the territory of a united Ireland will retain a right to British citizenship). In a united Ireland this will raise questions about what 'Northern Ireland' means, and the practical implications of the obligation. For these express purposes it suggests that the entity will remain jurisdictionally present in some form, but this will depend on the model of reunification selected, and it may take on historical significance for bureaucratic purposes if that is the decision reached.

There are also challenging questions - caused by Brexit - for the protection of those who wish to identify as 'British only' (and therefore not as Irish/EU citizens) in a united Ireland. This links to the

¹ Article 3 (1): 'This Agreement shall replace the Agreement between the British and Irish Governments done at Hillsborough on 15th November 1985 which shall cease to have effect on entry into force of this Agreement.'

² For further information: <https://nihrc.org/publication/category/bill-of-rights>. See also, Colin Harvey & Anne Smith, 'Designing Bills of Rights in Contested Contexts: Reflections on the Northern Ireland Experience' (2020) 44 *Fordham International Law Journal* 357.

³ Article 1(v).

⁴ Article 1(vi).

⁵ The term 'people of Northern Ireland' is explicitly defined in the British-Irish Agreement for these purposes: 'The British and Irish Governments declare that it is their joint understanding that the term 'the people of Northern Ireland' in paragraph (vi) of Article 1 of this Agreement means, for the purposes of giving effect to this provision, all persons born in Northern Ireland and having, at the time of their birth, at least one parent who is a British citizen, an Irish citizen or is otherwise entitled to reside in Northern Ireland without any restriction on their period of residence.'

earlier discussion about the problematic approach of the British government to this obligation and its interpretation and application now. It suggests that in any process of constitutional change both states should leave no room for doubt around such fundamental questions of identity/citizenship and the intended domestic legal effect of these promises should be clarified.

What this highlights is that there are complex questions of citizenship and nationality to be discussed and resolved in advance of the referendums to ensure that people have clarity and certainty on the consequences. It is also essential, for example, that no one is rendered stateless as a result of the approach adopted, and that a human rights-based approach ensures that the impact on everyone features strongly in the constitutional conversation.

Third, it has already been noted that, for example, Ireland is party to a wide range of international human rights obligations, in addition to those deriving from domestic law and EU membership. These will become applicable to the territory of 'Northern Ireland' as well. The Agreement also includes the concept of 'equivalence', which means that 'at least an equivalent level of protection of human rights' must be available in Ireland, so reunification is anticipated, and international commitments acknowledged. In this context, it is worth noting that neither the Bill of Rights nor the Charter of Rights for the island have ever been enacted, despite advice having been submitted on both. For the purpose of historical context only, it is perhaps noteworthy that in the Joint Framework Documents 1995 (that preceded the 1998 Agreement) the following is stated about the Charter/Covenant: This Charter or Covenant might also contain a commitment to the principle of consent in the relationships between the two traditions in Ireland. It could incorporate also an enduring commitment on behalf of all the people of the island to guarantee and protect the rights, interests, ethos and dignity of the unionist community in any all-Ireland framework that might be developed with consent in the future.

to at least the same extent as provided for the nationalist community in the context of Northern Ireland under the structures and provisions of the new Agreement. (Emphasis added)

That suggests that the envisaged Charter/Covenant was intended to provide reassurance to unionists in the event of a united Ireland, and connects directly to the notion of 'equivalence'. It therefore remains unfortunate that this all-island Charter has never been adopted.

The absence of the Bill of Rights and Charter raises intriguing questions about the future. But one point seems obvious: there is a formidable strategic rationale for those worried about the constitutional future to re-engage with these debates and proposals in the here and now. Although the concept has an element of ambiguity, the equivalence model adopted will be informed by the standards of protection available in the North, and the corollary of this is that any gains made should in principle transfer into the new arrangements. There is also an incentive for those seeking reunification to advance this task in the present to demonstrate that change will bring substantial human rights and equality benefits.

At minimum there should therefore be no detrimental rights-based impact of Irish reunification both at the level of standards and also with respect to their practical implementation. It is hoped that the debate will stretch well beyond these parameters and be suitably ambitious. But at minimum no one should be worse off in rights terms as a result of reunification. Those committed to reunification must ensure that this is the case. But the desire for a new and united Ireland strongly suggests that any referendum campaign will move well beyond this minimalist baseline.

Whatever constitutional and administrative model is adopted there must be explicit legislative arrangements underpinning the substantive guarantees. These must ensure there are robust safeguards for all communities making the transition to a united Ireland. Standards themselves will not suffice; practical implementation and enforcement will be essential. The clear lesson of history is that

bilateral British-Irish agreements only gain real value if they are sufficiently precise and relevant protections are given meaningful domestic legal effect.

What is often missing from the present constitutional conversation is a recognition of just how constrained (in a good way) these discussions will be, particularly if there is to be respect for the Agreement and other relevant obligations. It remains vital, however, to insist and recall that these are merely a floor, the starting point, and proposals for a new and united Ireland can go much further. But it should be reassuring to those anxious about the possible implications of change to remember that there are robust guarantees in place on which to rely and build.

4. HOW DO THESE OBLIGATIONS IMPACT ON THE CONVERSATION ABOUT A UNITED IRELAND?

The frequent references to a new and united Ireland suggest that many are engaged in the debate because of a well-founded desire to achieve significant change across the island. As indicated, existing guarantees will set the parameters of the discussion in a positive sense. Why? Because they capture much of what many envisage a new Ireland to be. A place that upholds the values of the Agreement and that celebrates human rights and mutual respect. But what the record thus far shows, and what must be taken into account in any transition, is that implementation and enforcement can be problematic. Those who want a genuinely new Ireland must be vigilant throughout these processes to ensure promises are grounded in hard legal reality and are not left in the realm of the merely aspirational.

What precisely might this mean for a united Ireland? Here we recognise that there are different views on the most appropriate constitutional model. The debate can be classified as moving between a relative continuity position to much more transformative change. There are advocates of a variety of unitary options (from centralised to something like 'devo-max') and those who propose explicitly federal or confederal models. Ireland's

Future encourages dialogue on the merits of the various approaches, as well as a factually informed appraisal of what is possible. For example, 'Northern Ireland' is not a 'state', so any federal/confederal proposals would need to clarify what precisely is intended and what the relevant units would be. A starting point here is that whatever the mechanisms of unity, the substantive guarantees noted in this paper will need to be respected and they do not necessarily dictate one possible model for a united Ireland.

As noted, much about the practical functioning of a united Ireland will depend on what happens institutionally. If the Agreement is carried forward largely unamended in institutional form, then the power-sharing arrangements would continue alongside other relevant reforms (either through constitutional amendment or replacement). This 'continuity' model would mean that a united Ireland would not depart radically from what exists now, with power-sharing retained in the North and Irish law, policy and practice reformed to accommodate the new arrangements. In such a context, for example, the NI Human Rights Commission might continue to function in a united Ireland.

If this approach is not adopted, and a more constitutionally transformative agenda unfolds, then the question will arise: do the guarantees in the existing Agreement or any subsequent agreement require reform to political institutions, for example, or can parity of esteem and equal treatment be fully respected in other ways? Does the existing Irish electoral system already guarantee a sufficient element of proportionality? If a unitary model is selected does respect for these values require the reconfiguration of the Irish governmental system? The answer to the above questions will determine how this constitutional conversation proceeds. It is not apparent that power-sharing within a unitary state model would be necessarily required on the basis of existing principles and practice in Ireland, and there is a plausible argument that these values could be respected in other ways. But is that a desirable outcome? The proposals that emerge from civil and political dialogue across the island will need to provide plausible answers to these questions.

But as argued throughout this paper, they must at all stages be shaped by a human rights-based approach.

Ireland's Future has noted the potential value of a time frame as an aid to encouraging the required preparation. Our view remains that there should be proper planning and that this will be a responsibly managed transition that takes place over a period of time. That will depend, to some extent, on how much advance work is undertaken. However, from the perspective of rights, identity and citizenship the more appropriate focus (whatever the time frame) is on what is substantively guaranteed at the constitutional and sub-constitutional levels, and what the likely outcomes are for individuals and communities. Any constitutional model eventually adopted for a united Ireland could, for example, accommodate a new Bill of Rights that builds on existing guarantees across the island. A new and united Ireland might provide the perfect moment for a new beginning for human rights and equality on our shared island.

5. WHAT SORT OF UNITED IRELAND DO YOU WANT?

The purpose of this contribution is to encourage a more extensive debate around the parameters of the conversation about a united Ireland. This paper addresses only some of the relevant questions. The Agreement uses the language of a 'sovereign united Ireland' and that will inform the referendum processes and the question or questions asked. However, it is striking just how many people view this as an opportunity for dialogue on a new Ireland. The term signals an appetite for something different on the island. It is language that can be helpful in bringing diverse new voices to the conversation, particularly those who view the debate as part of a larger transformative agenda for change. It can also re-emphasise the desire not to repeat past mistakes. Equally, a new and united Ireland will provide the opportunity to make the aspirational language of a 'shared island' real. A divided Ireland is not a truly 'shared island'.

If it is to be a new and united Ireland, then many believe the discussion must be shaped from the start by human rights and equality commitments and that protections on identity and citizenships must be legally watertight. The aim here is to highlight the reality that dialogue and debate should be informed by principles, values and standards that are already there in addition to whatever innovations people may seek as part of any transition.

To those who ask what the guarantees for the future are, we suggest paying close attention to the Agreement and to relevant international obligations in particular, and even closer attention to domestic implementation and enforcement. The referendum campaign in the North is likely to involve detailed exploration of what constitutional change will entail, in precise terms. The fact that guarantees are in place will reassure but will be insufficient if not accompanied by relevant substantive and procedural details. That means those campaigning for Irish reunification must have a clear view on the answers, even if part of the response involves a further process that might lead, for example, to the adoption of a new constitution. Ireland's Future believes that an all-island Citizens' Assembly is a step that should be taken now and one that reflects the reality that the right of self-determination belongs not to any political party or the Irish government but to the people of the island.

6. WHY DOES THIS ALL MATTER?

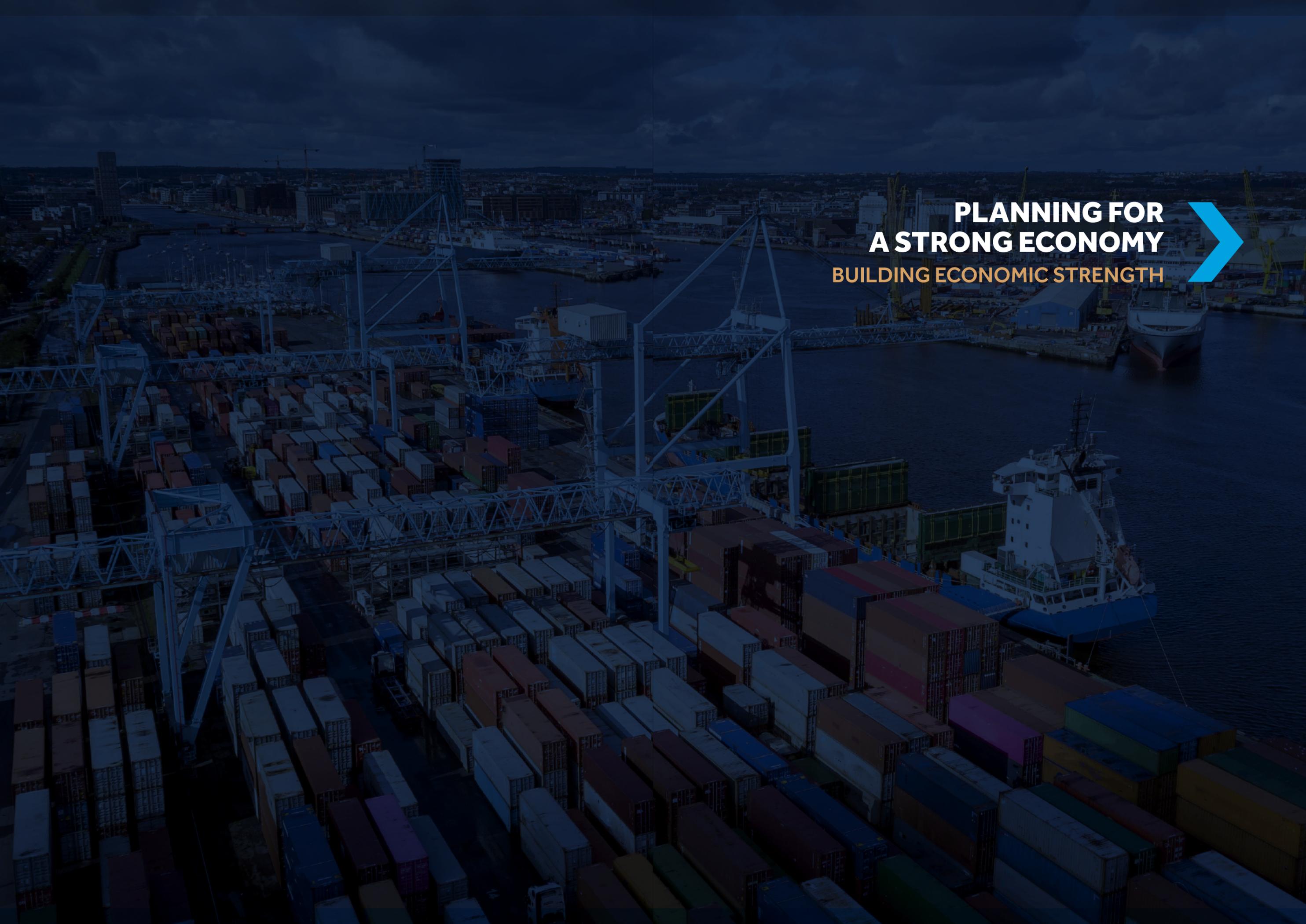
Ireland's Future notes that the next phase of the debate on Irish reunification has commenced. The first phase involved successfully moving this discussion from the relative margins to the mainstream of Irish public life. Few can doubt that this is now the case.

The phase that follows will be more challenging. There is a particular onus on those who believe in constitutional change to make a detailed, evidence-based and persuasive case. In doing this an awareness of what has already been promised is essential and also helpful. Too many current discussions about the future of Ireland neglect the

obligations and commitments that will shape and inform the process. When reunification takes place Ireland will remain bound by guarantees that derive, for example, from EU membership, existing legal provisions and international standards.

That is not to suggest that the conversation on a new and united Ireland will lack imagination and creativity. It is simply to note that there will be significant and welcome constraints on what is possible, and extensive guidance on what is likely to prove successful. The suggestion is that this will make the result better and more sustainable. The new Ireland that emerges is more likely to be successful if these standards are taken seriously at all stages.

We end by reaffirming our collective commitment to the right of the people of our island to self-determination and call for the urgent and immediate establishment of an all-island Citizens' Assembly to carry this work forward.



**PLANNING FOR
A STRONG ECONOMY**
BUILDING ECONOMIC STRENGTH



It is clear to us that partition has had a crippling effect on the North's economy and despite immense local political will to improve the economic fortunes of the region, prospects for growth will remain poor.



PLANNING FOR A STRONG ECONOMY

BUILDING ECONOMIC STRENGTH

In this section we set out our vision in Ireland's Future of the economic benefits of Irish unification. It is clear to us that partition has had a crippling effect on the North's economy and despite immense local political will to improve the economic fortunes of the region, prospects for growth will remain poor.

The current governance and funding constraints almost ensure that the North will continue to fall behind the South, and other economies into the future. We believe that there is huge untapped potential for the North's economy to grow and that its productivity potential can only be achieved within a united Ireland framework. Nevertheless, we shouldn't underestimate the scale and nature of the challenges ahead and we recognise that substantial investment is required in key areas such as health, education, infrastructure and industrial policy.

These investments are necessary in order to begin to undo the damage of partition and maximise the benefits of unification for citizens in all parts of Ireland. In this document we outline why we believe that partition has failed and will continue to fail the economic interests of citizens in the North. We set out the economic benefits of Irish unification and address some of the fallacies that have become part of the conversation regarding the costs of unification in recent years.

Finally, we outline the detailed planning that must be undertaken in order to provide a clear vision for a new and united Ireland for those who will vote in referendums north and south. It is the responsibility of the Government in Dublin to begin to provide this detail in order to meet its commitments to allow for the possibility of future constitutional change, as set out under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement.

Failure to do so is a failure to lead.

1. HOW HAS PARTITION LED TO ECONOMIC FAILURE IN THE NORTH?

It is without doubt that the partition of Ireland has been an economic failure for the citizens of the North. The economic impact of partition was recently succinctly summarised by leading economic commentator David McWilliams who stated that *"before partition the North was twice as rich as the South, it is now twice as poor"*¹.

At the time of partition, the economy in the South was poor and based largely on agricultural activities, while the North's was much more industrialised, wealthy and focused around a well-developed manufacturing base in industries such as shipbuilding and linen.

Between 1921 and 1969 the North's economy was under the authority of a unionist regime whose primary focus was to maintain power along sectarian lines by ensuring that large swathes of the population had limited access to employment, education and housing opportunities.

Given this, it is not surprising that in the decades following partition, the economic trajectory of the North was one of continuous relative decline. Writing in 1981 the eminent Cambridge economist Bob Rowthorn asserted that *"thus from the very beginning Northern Ireland was a sectarian state, based on the notion of Protestant supremacy and geared primarily towards the satisfaction of Protestant needs. This fact has profoundly influenced the development of the province, and continues to do so after nearly a decade of direct rule from Britain"*². The failure of the post-partition economic model is demonstrated by the fact that at the time of partition the North's economy generated a financial surplus to the UK treasury³. However by 1938 the region required a subsidisation from Westminster, and by

the time of the fall of the Stormont government and the imposition of direct rule in 1972, had become one of the poorest performers compared to other regions in these islands. For instance, in 1971 per capita GDP in the North had fallen to 78% of the UK average and was below that of any of the 11 regions of Great Britain and was 11% lower than the next worst performing region⁴ (Table 1).

The North's economy had remained at, or close to, the bottom of the regional income ladder in the period up to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (Table 1), becoming increasingly dependent on British Government subsidies. Whilst legacy effects of the troubles will undoubtedly contribute to the North's poor relative current performance, it is clear that low growth and the need for associated subsidisation evolved during the first half century of partition.

2. HOW WAS THE NORTH'S ECONOMY CAST ADRIFT BY CONSECUTIVE LONDON ADMINISTRATIONS?

The peace process, and the emergence of devolved government have, unfortunately, not seen the levels of investment necessary to reverse the low growth trajectory that has stemmed from decades of economic mismanagement, compounded by the subsequent economic impact of the troubles. There was evidence that regional policy, whereby successive UK administrations attempted to boost the growth rates of deprived regions, formed part of government policy throughout the 1970s and 1980s. However, despite this, regional policy spending appears only to have been effective in preventing poorer regions, such as the North, from falling further behind high growth areas, such as London and the South East (McGuinness & Sheehan, 1998). Data from 1990 onwards confirms that UK Governments largely abandoned any attempts to

support poorer regions through regional policy and, as a direct consequence, the gap in income levels between the North and wealthy areas of GB began to widen considerably again over time. For instance,

between 2000 and 2014 the gap between per capita GDP in N Ireland and the three wealthiest regions of GB increased by 44%.

Table 1: Regional GDP Per Capita 1971 to 1996 (£ Sterling)

	1971	1981	1991	1996
North England	811	3488	7541	9354
Yorkshire & Humberside	814	3381	7764	9585
East Midlands	803	3555	8273	10096
East Anglia	845	3541	8533	10689
South East England	1018	4271	9908	12641
South West England	779	3420	8074	10143
West Midlands	912	3329	7861	10015
North West England	871	3460	7607	9631
Wales	767	3070	7324	8899
Scotland	831	3542	8269	10614
N Ireland	688	2882	6930	8700

Source: ONS, £ consistent with ONS Bluebook 1997

3. WHY DOES NORTHERN IRELAND'S ECONOMY NOT WORK?

In recent decades, devolved ministers from the main political parties in the North have all done their utmost to deliver services and implement policies that best meet the needs of the local population. However, devolved ministries in the North lack any fiscal autonomy and must operate within the confines of the block grant from Westminster.

This financial constraint means that there is no effective prospect of adequate policy provision under continued partition. Funding levels for the North's main devolved departments are determined by the Barnett formula, which links additional funding on devolved services (such as education, health,

housing, transport etc) in any year to reflect the changes in spending in English regions.

However such a model of funding entirely ignores the large gaps in key services provision that already exist for the historical reasons discussed above, between N Ireland and England. For instance, in 2015 an average of 6.3% of young people across the nine English regions had no qualifications, compared to 10.4% in N Ireland⁵. With respect to health, in 2018 there were 94,222 people in N Ireland waiting more than 52 weeks for their first consultant-led outpatient appointment, the comparable waiting list in England was 3,464 (Griffin, 2019). The outpatient consultant waiting list in the North was 26 times that of England, despite England's population being over 30 times that of the North's.

1 Discussion at Feile an Phobail, August 6 2020.

2 Rowthorn, R.E. (1981). 'Northern Ireland: an economy in crisis', Cambridge Journal of Economics, 5: 1: 1: 1-31.

3 This was termed the "imperial contribution".

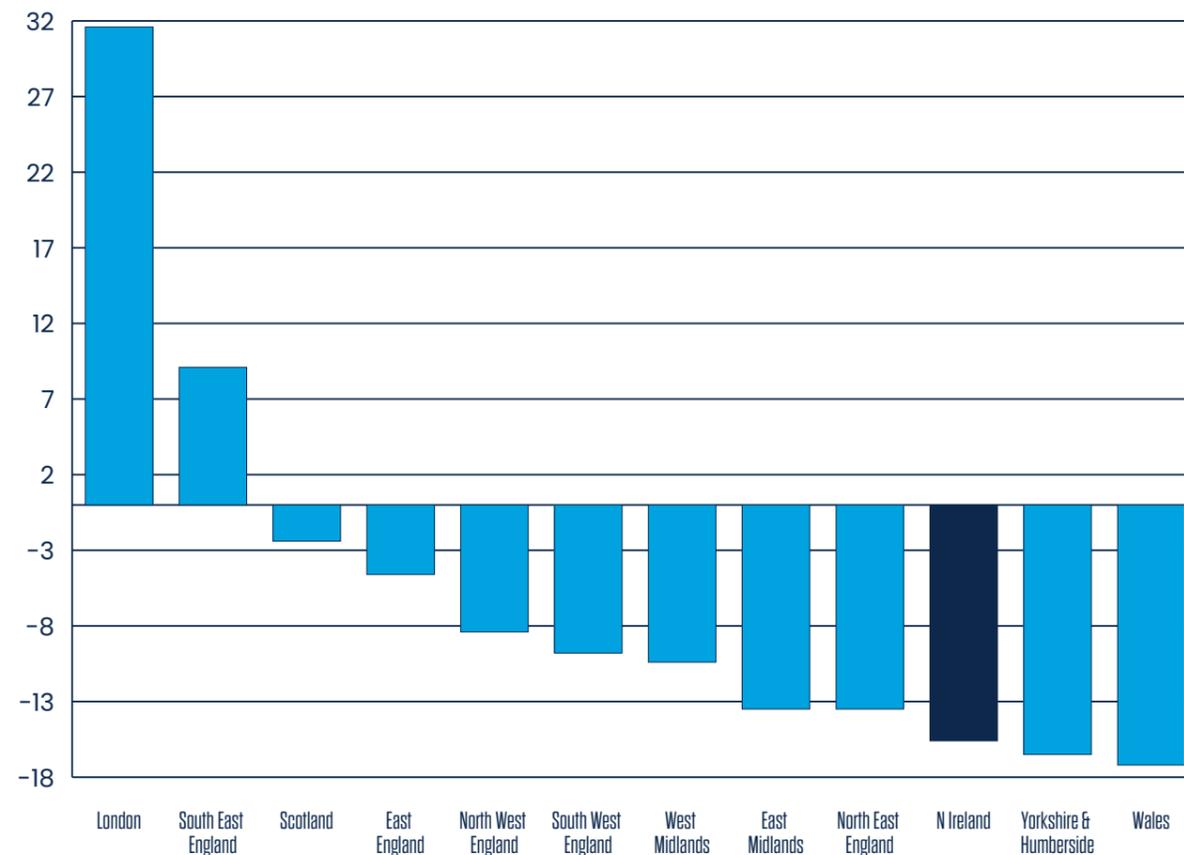
4 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/adhocs/005458historicalregionalgdp1968to1970and1971to1996>

5 Calculation based on Table 9 of McGuinness & Bergin, (2020).

The current funding mechanism ensures the large gaps in key services that currently exist with respect to the North will only continue to widen over time, as spending increases reflect the needs of high-performing English regions and completely ignore the challenges facing service delivery in N Ireland. Spending on key services, such as education, health and transport, are all important factors that will

determine productivity levels, while continued under-investment will ensure that the low growth trajectory of the North's economy will persist. For instance, in 2018 regional output per hour, which is a measure of productivity, in the North was 15.6% below the UK average and well below that of the vast majority of GB regions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Regional Output per Hour Relative to the UK Average 2018, (%)



Source: ONS

Investments in key services in the North must be based on the specific needs and challenges of the region and be sufficient to undo the problems and legacies of the past. This will never be achieved under partition, and a funding model that completely ignores local needs. Under the status quo, the relative standards of local services in key areas such as education and health are unlikely to see any substantial improvements in performance levels.

The wellbeing and prospects of current, and future, citizens of the North will continue to decline under partition. Irish unification offers an opportunity to break free from the economic constraints of partition and take advantage of an environment whereby much needed increases in investment can take place. Unification will enable much more effective policy-making under which spending decisions will be based on the needs of people living in the North. Under unification policy-makers will no longer be constrained by having to operate within a spending model designed to meet the requirements of privileged English regions that have been long prioritised by successive British governments.

4. HOW DOES BREXIT IMPACT THE ECONOMY OF THE NORTH?

While the Northern Ireland protocol will protect businesses from the worst impacts of Brexit by allowing them to trade freely with the EU, there will still be costs borne by firms in the region that will hinder performance. The ability to export high value-added services is a key factor in the success of the economy in the Republic.

Exports account for 54% of total business turnover in the Republic compared to 18% in the North; services account for 52% of exports in the Republic compared to 18% in the North⁶. Trade in services remains outside of the protocol, meaning that, as a direct result of Brexit, the North will be much less

able to take advantage of high value-added export markets and it will also be a much less attractive location for service-based multinationals seeking access to EU markets.

Corporation tax in the North will be double that of the Republic in the next few years, representing another major barrier to investment. Brexit also removes the free movement of travel that allowed businesses to hire workers from other EU countries. Firms in the North will now have to implement a points-based immigration system⁷, which will substantially reduce the pool of skilled labour available to employers which will drive up hiring costs and lower productivity further.

Sectors such as hospitality, retail and agriculture that rely heavily on skilled EU workers will be particularly affected by this aspect of Brexit. Furthermore, farmers in the North have been in receipt of subsidies in the region of £280m per annum under the Common Agricultural Policy. It is estimated that EU subsidies account for over 85% of total farm incomes in the North⁸. After Brexit, farmers no longer have access to CAP funding and while the British Government has undertaken to replace the EU funding stream until the end of 2022, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the situation thereafter⁹.

The EU has already stated the North can re-enter the EU following any successful unity referendum, meaning that Irish reunification is the most straightforward way to undo the massive ongoing economic damage to the North's economy as a direct consequence of Brexit.

5. HOW CAN IRISH UNIFICATION UNLEASH POTENTIAL AND LEAD TO A MORE PROSPEROUS ECONOMIC FUTURE FOR CITIZENS OF THE NORTH?

6 <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/12496/the-political-economy-of-a-northern-ireland-border-poll>
 7 <https://www.investni.com/media-centre/features/preparing-eu-exit-trading-services>
 8 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldcom/169/16908.htm>
 9 <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/brexit-cap-funding-payments-questions-answers>

Unification will allow the North to escape the low productivity trap that partition has created. Productivity levels in the North are well below potential, due to both historical reasons and current funding constraints that prevent effective policy-making.

A successful reunification process will require substantial restructuring in key areas (such as infrastructure, education, business development and health) in order to unleash the North's vast productivity and growth potential, and reverse the trends of the past. Irish unification, and the international goodwill which will undoubtedly flow from both the European Union and the United States of America, offers the opportunity for the region to secure the funds necessary to make much-needed investments. For instance, following German reunification in 1989, the then EEC implemented a "Community Aid Programme" that committed €6bn¹⁰ in today's terms in the first three years alone following reunification¹¹.

It is conceivable that additional funding could be channelled through the expansion of existing EU programmes such as PEACE IV¹². It is highly likely that substantial assistance from the USA will be forthcoming, to help facilitate a successful transition to Irish reunification. The departing British Government would also come under pressure to meet its responsibilities in this respect. A by-product of successful unification would be that the North's economy could potentially move from a position of requiring subvention supports from Westminster, as a consequence of its low productivity, to being a net contributor to the Irish exchequer.

Hubner (2015) measuring the impacts of reunification, using a computational general equilibrium macroeconomic modelling framework, estimated that unification would increase the

North's long-run GDP per capita by between 4% and 7.5%, long-run per capita. GDP levels in the Republic are also estimated to rise from between 0.7% and 1.2% as a result of ending partition¹³. In a 2018 updated analysis, Hubner et al estimated that the all-Ireland economy could grow by approximately €36bn in the first eight years following unification¹⁴.

Additional key benefits arising from unification would be guaranteed human rights, worker and environmental protections provided through EU membership, all of which are perceived to be under significant threat in the North as a consequence of Brexit and the current UK Government's "race to the bottom" in standards. Reforms arising from unification have the potential to create more efficient and cost-effective public service delivery systems. Unification would end the costly duplication of services on both sides of the border in key areas such as health, education and infrastructural planning. Any planned reforms that involve the reorganisation of key services would naturally seek to retain the best aspects of practise and provisions from legacy systems, thereby maximising the benefits to all Irish citizens.

6. LIVING STANDARDS, EDUCATION AND LIFE EXPECTANCY, NORTH V SOUTH?

Recent research on living standards, opportunities and life quality highlighted how important gaps have emerged between the North and the South in key areas. Disposable household levels in the North were found to be 12% lower than the South, after accounting for price differences between the regions.

In addition, rates of poverty were also substantially higher in the North, with the South's tax and welfare

system much more effective at protecting the interests of low-income households.

Levels of educational attainment were also lower in the North across all elements of the lifecycle and, in addition, the rate of early school-leaving in the North was almost twice that of the South. These differences in living standards and opportunities are understood to have cumulative impacts that will, ultimately, result in lower life expectancy levels.

Life expectancy at birth in the North in 2017 was 1.6 years lower than that in the Republic in 2017. These

differences in living standards and opportunities were also found to impact the life expectancies of older people today; for instance, a 65 year old living in the North in 2017 could expect to live six months less than a 65-year-old living in the South in that year (Table 2).

Unification offers an opportunity to close these gaps in living standards, opportunities and life expectancy and will provide more prosperous outcomes for current and future generations of all citizens.

Table 2: Living standards and Quality of Life Indicators¹⁵

	Year	RoI	NI
Household disposable income (US \$, PPP adjusted)*	2017	\$34.0	\$29.4
Poverty rate after taxes and transfers (60% poverty line)	2019	12.8%	19%
Enrolment rates for 15-19 year olds*	2018	92.6%	73.6%
Enrolment rates for 20-29 year olds*	2018	29.0%	15.2%
Rate of Early School Leaving*	2018	5.0%	9.4%
Life Expectancy at Birth	2017	82.2	80.6
Life Expectancy at 65	2017	20.2	19.6

7. WHAT WILL BE THE BENEFITS OF IRISH UNIFICATION FOR THE SOUTH?

There are strong grounds to believe that the Southern economy has already benefited substantially from the establishment of a sustainable peace process in the North, as well as the increasing integration of business supply chains across the

island as barriers to free movement of goods and people were removed.

Academic studies have found a causal link between foreign direct investment (FDI) and the establishment of peace agreements (Joshi & Quin, 2018). As can be seen from figure 2, inflows of FDI to the South accelerated rapidly following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

10 This is calculated by applying a 1:1 exchange rate between the ECU and the Euro and then applying a inflation factor of 1.7483 (source: CSO) for the period 1990 to 2020.

11 <https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/1f5d29d1-bc79-44af-ae41-6fdb3f41608e/03167992-d38d-4f75-90f7-a8b69492bda3>.

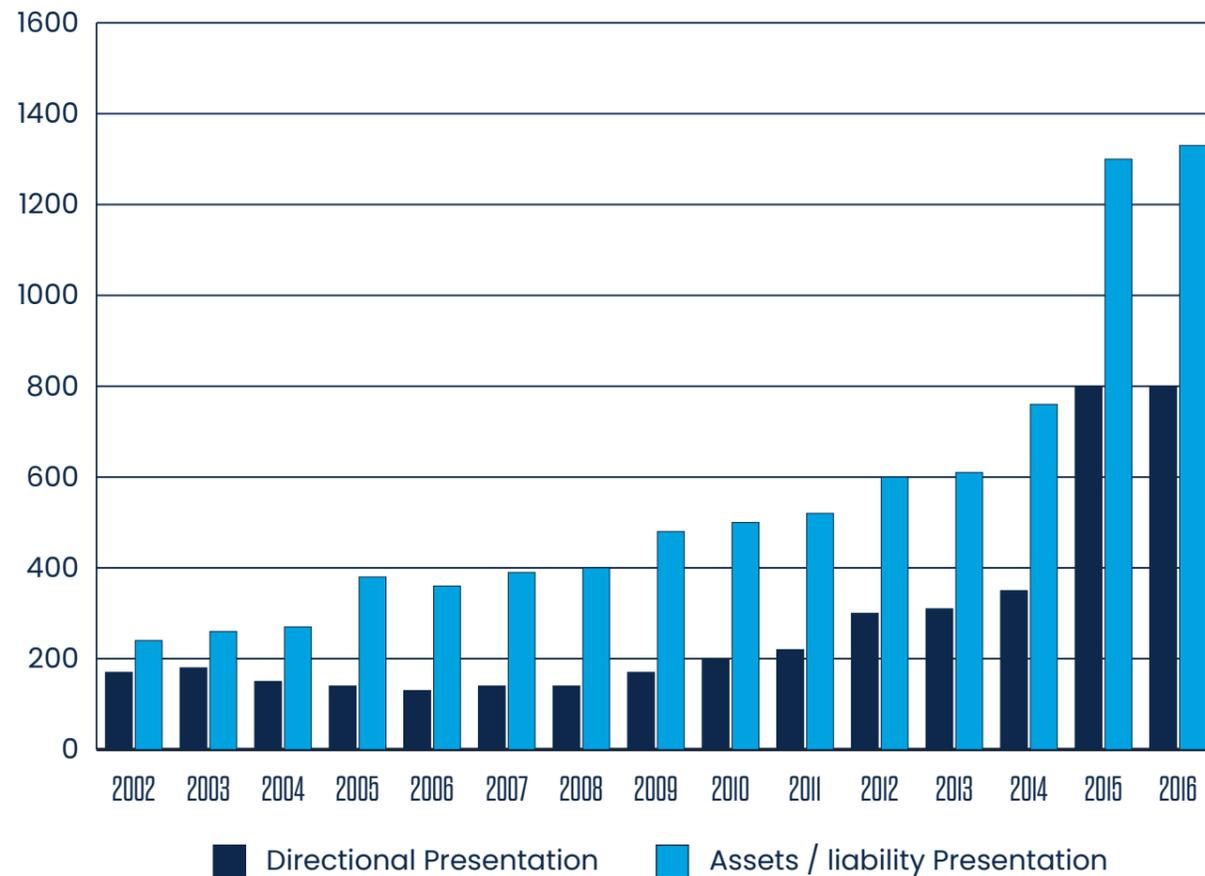
12 <https://www.seupb.eu/piv-overview>

13 https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/unification/hubner_2015-08.pdf

14 <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/hard-brexite-could-cost-island-of-ireland-42-5-billion-over-seven-years-1.3689807>

15 * data taken from Bergin & McGuinness (2020), poverty rate for RoI taken from <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/psilc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2019/povertyanddeprivation/>, poverty rates for NI taken from <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/ni-poverty-bulletin-201819.pdf> Life expectancy data taken from Eurostat.

Figure 2: FDI Inflows to Ireland 2002-2016 €bn



Source: CSO

It is no coincidence that the economy in the South was the fastest growing economy in the world after China for most of the decade following the Good Friday Agreement.

This reflected the impact that the promise of political stability and the dissolution of partition constraints had, not just on foreign direct investment flows and the unlocking of latent domestic investment potential but also in generating net in-migration for the first time since the Famine.

It is clear that a fully integrated, efficient and stable all-island economy would be a magnet for further investment and human creativity.

The modelling work undertaken by Hubner (2015) indicates that per capita incomes in the south could rise by as much as €3,804 during the first seven years of unification. Irish unification will provide a positive boost to the southern economy on a number of fronts including:

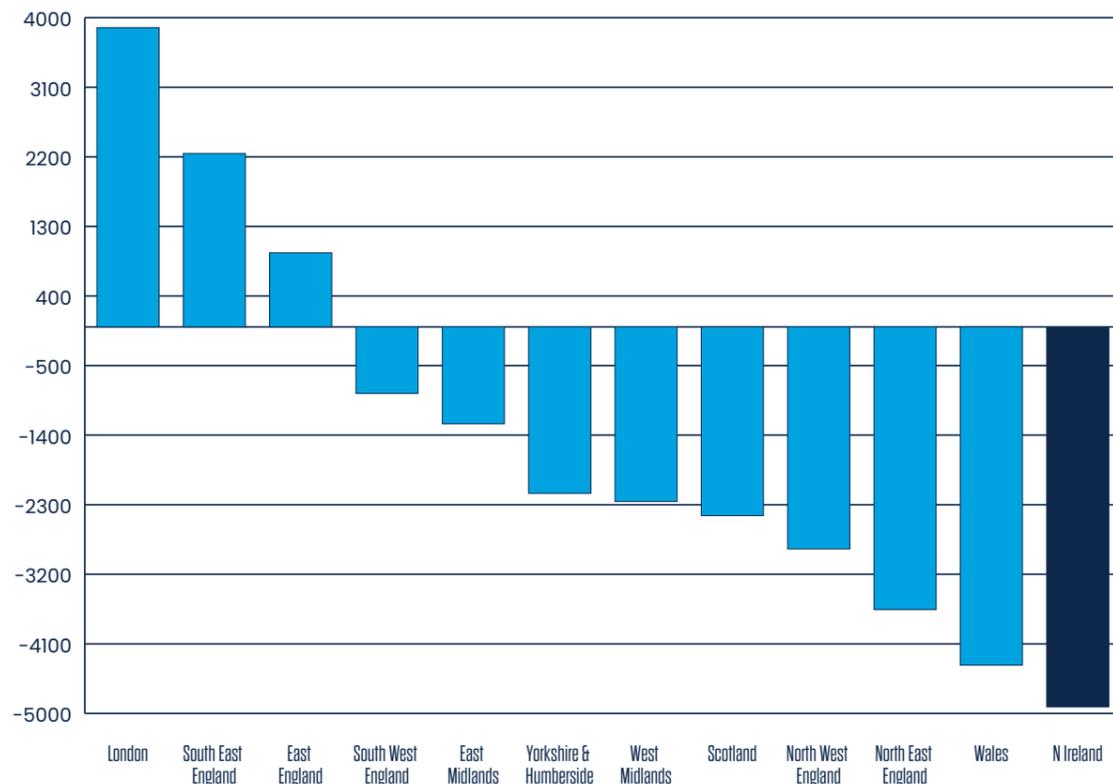
- The growth of cross border trade resulting from a more integrated all island economy and the removal of non-tariff barriers and the harmonisation of tax and regulatory systems.
- More ready access to streams of educated labour that will help alleviate inflationary bottlenecks arising from skill shortages in key sectors.
- Diminishing subvention requirements and rising productivity will lead to the North becoming a net contributor to the Irish exchequer.
- Access to additional key infrastructural assets such as airports, ports, universities, transport networks and broadband technologies.
- More effective and lower cost service deliveries in areas such as health, educations and key civil services functions resulting from the eradication of costly duplication and the improved exploitation of economies of scale.
- An integrated approach to infrastructural development that will again enhance the trading capacity both at a cross-border level and internationally.

8. SUBVENTION, PENSIONS AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCE IN A NEW IRELAND

There has been much debate on the potential costs of Irish unification, with most of that focus centred on estimated subvention, which refers to the gap between UK Government spending allocated to the North and the revenues raised in the region through taxes levied on businesses and individuals.

The most recent estimates put the level of subvention at €9.2bn for 2017/18. The need for subvention reflects the North's low productivity and, as can be seen from figure 3, the region had a higher rate of fiscal transfers per capita than any GB region in 2017 / 2018 which, again, demonstrates the need for a new approach to economic policy in the region.

Figure 3: Net Fiscal Balance Per Capita 2017 / 2018 (€)¹⁶



However, the true cost of subvention, as related to the constitutional question, is likely to be much lower than this, as many aspects of spending currently attributed to the North would not be relevant under unification.

Examples of these non-relevant costs include spending on the North's estimated share of

- (i) UK defence spending
- (ii) UK debt servicing costs
- (iii) UK international services.

Subtracting these "non-identifiable" spending items reduces the initial estimated subvention costs by 25%.

Furthermore, citizens in the North have built up old age benefit entitlements through national insurance contributions and these liabilities would also have to be honoured by the UK Government following unification. The most recent data available indicates that annual spending on old age pensions in the North stood at £3.2bn in 2016/17¹⁷. Therefore, after relevant deductions, depending on the outcomes of negotiations around debt and pensions etc, the subvention figure relevant for unification could be in the region of £3.6bn (€4.04bn¹⁸).

This is not an earthshattering amount of money in the context of Irish Government spending, for example, in the five-year period between 2014 and 2019 general expenditure increased by an average of €2.72bn in each year¹⁹.

A successful transition process would require substantial initial investments in all Ireland provision areas such as education and health, enhanced all Ireland infrastructure and a reformed all Ireland industrial strategy targeted at enhancing productivity levels in the North. A properly planned and financed transition period would ensure that the full benefits of unification were maximised. It is imperative that the scale of required investments for a successful transition to unity are costed as part of the planning process. Potential funding sources must also be identified, and international partners lobbied to secure the appropriate financial commitments, in advance of any vote on constitutional change.

While the issue of subvention tends to be overstated in debate, the investments necessary to begin to address the economic harm done to the North's economy by partition are often ignored.

A successful transition process will require substantial investments from the EU, and potentially other willing partners such as the USA, in order to begin addressing some of the North's structural problems. Arguably, there will also be a moral responsibility on the part of any departing UK Government to provide additional financial supports in ensuring a successful transition to a new constitutional and economic framework.

Nevertheless, debates around the likely size of the subvention figure are essentially a deflection as they will almost certainly overstate the cost, if any, of unification to the Irish Exchequer. They ignore both the growth potential of the North's economy and the productivity improvements that are achievable during any effective transition to unity. With proper preparation and planning, a unification process can be achieved with the potential to enhance economic

growth across the entire island - without the necessity of any additional government spending.

9. WHAT STEPS MUST BE TAKEN TO MAKE SURE THE REUNIFICATION PROCESS MAXIMISES THE BENEFITS FOR EVERYONE ON THE ISLAND?

Successful unification requires that voters be both properly informed and have confidence that the promises being made by proponents of unity are achievable.

The Scotland's Future document, prepared by the Scottish Government to inform voters of their vision for Scottish independence in the run-up to the 2014 referendum, provides a useful benchmark to the level of detail required²⁰. The Scotland's Future report is 640 pages long and lays out the policy positions for an independent Scotland in areas such as fiscal and monetary policy, education, housing, pensions, welfare, transport, business competition and social care; the document also lays out details of the transition period that would follow any vote in favour of independence.

The high level of preparation undertaken by the Scottish Government, in advance of the referendum, meant that its assertions could be properly challenged, fact checked and scrutinised. The Scottish approach also limited the capacity of those advocating the maintenance of the United Kingdom to make spurious assertions. In contrast, the Brexit referendum demonstrates very clearly the social, economic and political chaos that occurs in the aftermath of major referendums in which the facts have not been properly established and individuals are free to make demonstrably false claims.

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland_fiscal_deficit

¹⁷ McGuinness & Bergin (2020).

¹⁸ Applying a 2020 average exchange rate factor of 1.1239 <http://www.edwinfoley.ie/Revenue-euro-sterling-exchange-rate>

¹⁹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/gjea/governmentincomeandexpenditurejuly2020/>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-future/>

10. WHAT IS THE ROLE FOR THE IRISH GOVERNMENT IN PLANNING AND PREPARING?

It is clear that the momentum of the constitutional change debate will only gather pace and consequently there is an onus on the Irish Government to properly prepare for the likelihood of constitutional change. Any planning documentation should contain the following information:

- An accurate comparison of living standards and life quality in both regions.
- An overview of the relative strength and weaknesses of key areas of public sector provision in areas such as health, education, industrial development, social welfare, taxation and social policy.
- Strategic reports on each aspect of public sector provision highlighting how an all Ireland approach to delivery would be achieved that would retain the best aspects of systems North and South to the betterment of all Irish citizens.
- The development of an all Ireland macroeconomic structural model that can measure the impacts of post-unification policy reforms in areas impacting the North's productivity²¹ during various lengths of transition periods.
- Macroeconomic modelling will allow for a clear identification of the key areas that must be targeted during a transition to unity and the optimum duration of any transition period in order to maximise the benefits of unification.
- The scale of finance necessary to deliver the required structural reforms must be properly costed. Potential financing strategies, including the likely scale of international assistance, should also be assessed.

Compiling all of this information in a way that is robust, verified and communicable is an enormous task, requiring substantial resource investments and the establishment of appropriate review and quality assurance mechanisms. These are not tasks that can be undertaken and completed in the six months preceding any unity referendum. It is imperative that the process of information-gathering and planning commences without delay and given the level of resources required to do this, the planning process can only be conducted effectively at governmental level.

11. SUMMARY

- All existing credible evidence available at this stage points to the economic failures of partition and the significant potential economic benefits of Irish unification.
- In this document we have attempted to explain the root causes of the North's economic decline and highlight why Irish unification offers the only viable alternative for change.
- The economy undoubtedly will be a key issue of debate in any future border poll.
- It is crucial that we avoid the mistakes of the Brexit referendum and ensure that voters have reliable information and data on the potential benefits of unification compared to maintaining the status quo of partition.
- Proponents of partition are also encouraged to make the economic case for maintaining existing constitutional arrangements. It is crucial that all evidence is presented in a transparent way which will allow for scrutiny and analysis.
- Proper planning for unity will guarantee that voters will be equipped with the relevant information that will enable informed voting and also ensure that the benefits of unification are maximised.

- It is clear that Irish unification provides major opportunities that can reverse the damage imposed on the North's economy by partition and more recently Brexit.
- There is a need for the Irish Government to model the sequence and timing of future investments to ensure that the best policy options are taken.
- Failure to plan by the Irish Government for future constitutional change, as allowed for under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, is an unacceptable abdication of responsibility which will create instability around future referendums on the island.
- The time is right to plan and prepare for a strong economy in a dynamic new Ireland.

²¹ This process would model, for example, the productivity (and therefore the tax revenue) impacts of achieving improvements in factors such as FDI or exports during a defined transition period.

**AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A
WORLD CLASS, ALL ISLAND
NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE**
AN IRISH NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE



As the likelihood of a referendum on Irish unity grows, policy-makers in both jurisdictions should move beyond a mindset that sees the partition boundary as the “edge” and the communities there as living in a frontier zone.



AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A WORLD CLASS, ALL ISLAND NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

AN IRISH NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Health care is one of the most significant sectors for any country and is high on the list of priorities when Irish unity is discussed. Concerns from voters in the North often centre around the paid-for element of the HSE, while citizens in the South state they worry about the cost of integrating the two systems. However, there is now much greater clarity and evidence around these and other issues that might have previously caused concern.

The context of healthcare across the island is important. Citizens north and south face similar challenges, with people from the poorest communities on the island of Ireland likely to die up to seven years earlier than those in the most affluent areas. This gap is more pronounced in the North.

- In the South, average life expectancy for men in the most deprived areas is 5 years less than for men in the most affluent areas, while for women the gap is 4.5 years.
- In NI average life expectancy for men in deprived areas is 7.1 years less than for men in the most affluent areas, while for women the gap is 4.4 years.
- The gap in the number of years people can expect to live free of a disability between NI's least and most deprived areas is 14.5 years for men and 13.9 years for women, and the gap has widened in recent years.
- In the South, 43% of people aged 65+ in the lowest income group have a long-term health related limitation on activity, compared with 16% of those in the most affluent group.

While the statistics above are broad and far from exhaustive, and more work undoubtedly needs to be completed, it is already clear that citizens North and South would benefit from an integrated, island-wide health system, that is affordable, with services that can be funded and delivered so that they are free at the point of need.

In this section, we provide evidence-based information that directly addresses these key concerns, as well as highlighting the benefits and challenges in building an integrated all-island health system.

1. HOW IS HEALTHCARE CURRENTLY OPERATED ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND?

The island of Ireland geographically is small, just 486 km long and 275 km wide, and has a population of just under 7 million, which remains below population levels of the mid-nineteenth century.

Outside the Dublin and Belfast metropolitan areas, the island has one of the lowest population densities in Europe. Yet in this small territory there are two separate healthcare systems in operation with very little co-operation between them. One system, in the south, covers three quarters of the island, where approximately half the population hold a private insurance-based system. The other, in the north, is governed by protocols drawn up in a Britain which unlike Ireland, is highly urbanised and densely populated.

2. DO BOTH HEALTH SYSTEMS WORK WELL?

Both systems are sub-optimal. The National Health Service in Northern Ireland is in practice an under-funded regional health service. Devolution within the UK has led to very different per capita budgeting decisions, delivery structures and crucially health outcomes in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland has significantly longer waiting lists when compared to other regions within the UK National Health Service. Its morbidity and life expectancy metrics are also bottom of the NHS league table.

Health policy in the south has, since the 1990's focused on re-shaping healthcare infrastructure and improving health outcomes for citizens. There has been a cross-party commitment to bear down on the legacy of vested interests which had during the early decades of the new state's development held back the construction of a comprehensive publicly-funded free at the point of need system.

3. HOW HAS PEACE AND POLITICAL PROGRESS ASSISTED THE SOUTHERN SYSTEM TO IMPROVE OVER RECENT DECADES?

The pace of catch-up by the south has been quite impressive given where it had to start from and the effect of partition in constraining its development. It had to contend with political instability and conflict in the north throughout the latter part of the 20th century, meaning that potential resources were invested in other areas and foreign investment was deterred.

It is not co-incidental that the south of Ireland enjoyed 10 years of the fastest rate of economic growth in the world, after China, following the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The promise of the dissolution of the physical border in Ireland as a barrier to collaboration and trade was enough to unbridle the south's atrophied growth potential, reversing more than a century of net emigration, attracting new investment and generating the increased tax revenues which enabled the government to invest in new infrastructure and system change. This all had a net benefit result on the health system in the south of Ireland.

4. WHEN DID CO-OPERATION IN HEALTHCARE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH BEGIN AND WHAT ARE THE COMMONALITIES?

In healthcare, threads of co-operation between the systems North and South began to be spun in the 2000s—yielding significant gains for local populations in the north-west with the development of cancer services in Altnagelvin, in Fermanagh with the construction of a new hospital in Enniskillen and across border areas with the EU-funded CAWT (Co-operative and Working Together) initiative.

The two systems, north and south, contrary to common belief have much in common and are based on the same underpinning values. There is considerable existing alignment in terms of the training of healthcare professionals, the move

towards evidence-based practice, the regulation of health care professionals, and care quality standards - much of this has been driven by EU-wide work in recent decades.

Some key legislative frameworks e.g. the Midwives Act Ireland 1918 predate partition and have ensured a broadly similar role in both jurisdictions.

The same can largely be said of training for health and social care professionals. Universities north and south offer programmes to train doctors, nurses, midwives, social workers and allied health professionals. Students from the south frequently choose to complete elective placements in the north (or GB) and vice versa.

Current challenges around how points are calculated under the Central Applications Office (CAO) system make it more difficult for northern students to gain places in degree programmes in the south however some pilot work is underway aiming to address this.

With regard to mutual recognition of qualifications, there is already significant movement of doctors, nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals (AHPs) across the island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. Much of the training for key health and social care professionals has been guided by EU frameworks so currently there is significant alignment.

It is clear however that the planning and preparing for an all island health service in the eventuality of a united Ireland is not taking place to any meaningful extent but since the turn of the century there have been some examples of cross-border, border area, or all-island health initiatives.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic exposed severe weaknesses in having two health systems on the island, it appears that cross border understanding and co-operation has increased significantly due to factors such as the pandemic, Brexit, and the work of the Irish Government's *Shared Island* initiative. This includes:

- Paediatric cardiac services
- North west cancer network

- Emergency services - border counties residents go to nearest hospital in an emergency
- Rescue helicopter
- Ambulance cooperation
- CAWT work on improving outcomes and reducing cross-border barriers to accessing care for citizens in border areas
- Specialist services & cross-referral. Advantages for families and service users from the north in not having to take a ferry/plane to GB
- Cross charging systems in place when emergency care is provided in the other jurisdiction

With regard to public health, policies in both jurisdictions are already well-aligned. For example in 2004, the south became the first jurisdiction in the world to ban smoking in all indoor workplaces, with the north following in 2007. It makes no sense to have a smoking ban in place in Dundalk but no such ban in Newry. These issues are quite often a matter of common sense.

Health experts are increasingly focused not just on the manifestations of ill health such as heart disease, cancer, mental ill health, nor even on the immediate causes such as smoking, obesity, addiction but on the deeper underlying causes such as poverty, social injustice, poor attachment, ACEs and trauma.

In recent years disease prevention, the promotion of wellbeing and increasing healthy lifespan has been a focus for both the Stormont Assembly and the Oireachtas, as it has been worldwide. This commonality of focus between both jurisdictions means that alignment in terms of priorities should not present major challenges.

5. HAVE POLITICAL DIFFERENCES PRESENTED ANY DIFFICULTIES IN SHARING HEALTHCARE ACROSS THE ISLAND?

As with other areas of shared working between the two states on the island, at times co-operation has been fraught with difficulty and political controversy. Accessing healthcare resources on either side of the border, even if it is only a short distance away, has been regarded in some instances as anathema, despite increasing difficulties in funding for NHS services located in Britain.

While the case for heart surgeries to be done in Dublin and a cancer network to be established in the north west, could not in the end be resisted, other areas of clinical collaboration continue to be eschewed despite the obvious benefits to citizens, north and south. Unionist political parties in particular have acted as barriers to cross border collaboration.

Brexit has also presented problems regarding the sharing of healthcare across the island. According to a circular¹ issued by the Department of Health in the North, EU citizens who were normally resident in the North or already registered with a GP and holding a HSC number as at 30 June 2021 will continue to access publicly-funded health care services in the North.

However other EU citizens, including those from the South, lost this right on 1 July 2021. This has far-reaching impacts, particularly for those living in border regions, and can only be fully addressed within an all-Ireland context.

6. WHAT HEALTH REFORM INITIATIVES HAVE RECENTLY BEEN IMPLEMENTED OR ARE CURRENTLY IN PLANNING FOR THE NORTH?

In the North the Crompton (2011), Donaldson (2014) and Bengoa (2016) reviews all focused on the six county, Northern Ireland landscape as a stand-alone

self-contained territory, largely ignoring the populations and resources in the contiguous hinterlands across the border.

And in constructing their analyses to rationalise the closure of acute hospitals outside of the Belfast/Portadown axis they have drawn on British-based metrics which are the product of very different landscapes of concentrated populations, transport networks and agglomeration economies. The result has been to peripheralise border communities, even those in population centres such as Newry with large hinterlands to the south.

This approach means that the service-reach of Daisy Hill Hospital in Newry is only measured against half its actual territorial hinterland i.e. those communities to its south have been ignored with the relocation of many of its acute services to Portadown rationalised on that basis.

This is a very practical example of how partition is failing citizens from an access to healthcare perspective in a border population centre such as Newry. In a new, united Ireland, this issue simply does not exist as resources would be pooled and citizens' needs would come before narrow political agendas that exist in a divided island.

7. WHAT HEALTH REFORM INITIATIVES HAVE RECENTLY BEEN IMPLEMENTED OR ARE CURRENTLY IN PLANNING FOR THE SOUTH?

In May 2017, the Oireachtas committee on the Future of Healthcare published the Sláintecare report², which has led to arguably the greatest overhaul of the HSE since its creation. Among the recommendations were commitments to:

- Resource and develop a universal child health and wellbeing service
- Remove inpatient charges for public hospital care

- Reduce prescription charges for medical card holders
- Remove the Emergency Department charge
- Ensure universal primary care
- Disentangle public and private health care financing in acute hospitals and remove the ability of private insurance to fund private care in public hospitals

The Sláintecare report commits to the provision of health cards for every citizen, guaranteeing access to primary care free of charge, as currently in place in the North.

Sláintecare has been on the political and health agendas for the past five years. Its primary objective is very noble and worthwhile, that is to abolish the state's two-tier health system, replacing instead with a universal healthcare model, much like the NHS is intended to be.

It is also intended to improve the experience of users and staff, reduce waiting lists, lower healthcare costs and achieve overall better healthcare outcomes.

This initiative is supported by every political party in the state.

A notable part of the initiative is to establish six autonomous, regional health areas across the state, each area with its own responsibilities in budgeting, planning and healthcare delivery. In the context of a new and united Ireland this could increase to seven or eight areas and a new all island configuration could be established meaning Donegal could be paired with Derry instead of Galway and Monaghan could be paired with Armagh instead of north Dublin.

The Sláintecare model is in fact, the perfect foundation on which to build a world class, outstanding health service for the people of Ireland. Its glaring downfall is the fact that it leaves out the northern six counties. It makes no sense whatsoever to leave out the north but is yet another example of how partition is failing the citizens of Ireland, particularly those in border areas.

While some funding has been delayed, the expectation remains that this will be in place by 2030. If achieved, this will remove arguably the biggest perceived concern about an all-Ireland health system.

8. DO THE AFOREMENTIONED HEALTH REFORM INITIATIVES TAKE A SHARED ISLAND APPROACH?

Over the last two decades in the face of healthcare challenges facing governments across the advanced industrialized world - ageing populations; atomization of families and communities; competition for skilled people from other sectors - increased demand for services; rising levels of obesity, heart disease and diabetes; citizen demands to enjoy better quality lives and the emergence of new expensive treatments, policy makers in the two jurisdictions have been engaged in a process of reviewing the working of the respective healthcare systems.

It is evident that a fundamental weakness of the aforementioned reviews North and South is that they have been separate exercises with no cross-referencing or consideration of the impacts of their proposals across the partition boundary in the other jurisdiction - nor has any serious consideration been given to the potential to solve problems by sharing expertise, buildings and equipment across the island.

This, in the face of a process of infrastructure re-configuration in the south which led in the early 2000s to the closure of acute facilities in Dundalk and Monaghan.

As the likelihood of a referendum on Irish unity grows, policy-makers in both jurisdictions should move beyond a mindset that sees the partition boundary as the "edge" and the communities there as living in a frontier zone.

Facilities in border towns in both jurisdictions have been hollowed out over time and resources, and the jobs and buildings that they have supported, instead have been concentrated in centres and areas that don't always reflect the needs of communities and citizens.

¹ HSS (MD) 45/2021 9 July 2021 <https://bit.ly/36qgRF2>

² <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/165/270718095030-1134389-Slaintecare-Report-May-2017.pdf>

The result today is that there are large areas either empty of or at risk of losing accessible provision, particularly of acute healthcare services in a partition "cordon sanitaire".

It is no accident that the larger towns and rural communities in border areas have some of the highest levels of poverty, unemployment and ill health on the island.

These settlements were badly damaged by partition. Even when it doesn't appear apparent, the evidence is now very stark that partition was and is their greatest burden.

Having no plan for an all island health service means these border communities will continue to suffer the same disadvantage and inequality.

9. WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM COVID 19 WITH REFERENCE TO TWO HEALTHCARE MODELS ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND?

If the pandemic has revealed anything it is that our healthcare systems north and south, lacked headroom to cope with a crisis. Health reviews obsessed about making cuts in employee numbers, closing wards and reducing beds under the auspices of efficiencies – and those who championed this were shocked in 2020 and 2021 when ambulances were queued on hospital forecourts.

What the pandemic also exposed is the lack of hospital capacity across the island and whilst this was the case across the globe, the reality is that resources, expertise, facilities, ideas and equipment should have been shared across Ireland from the outset to ensure as few people as possible got ill or died.

Policy-makers north and south should have met regularly, shared information, and in public, informed and reassured citizens that their needs were being attended to.

The policy of the north being grouped with regions in Britain was folly and almost ridiculous. Social distancing rules were different north and south, bars and restaurants could open at different times north

and south, vaccination programmes were different north and south.

To compare statistics and data for people in Derry with Leicester or Blackburn instead of Letterkenny, yet again illustrates in a very practical fashion, the bizarre continuation of having two healthcare systems on our small island.

Major lessons should be learned to ensure the same mistakes are not made again.

10. IN ADVANCE OF IRISH UNITY WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

A successful healthcare model in a shared, new and united Ireland lies in everyone across the island having equality of access to the best healthcare available. To achieve that we must identify the needs of our citizens and match those against the existing infrastructure of facilities and healthcare professionals on the island.

We must also identify the gaps and the resourcing shortfall and agree a plan to secure those resources – and ignore the partition boundary in the way that Covid-19, or in fact any disease human or animal ignores lines on maps drawn through towns, villages, along roads, and through the hearts of communities.

When it came to protecting farm animals from disease, an all-island phyto-sanitary framework was put in place, a policy so important that the EU Protocol was built around it. If this can be done for farm animals why not for people?

How can two different vaccination schedules, different rules on social distancing, the ring fencing of supplies of PPE and vaccines for the exclusive use of one population or the other, be defensible?

Surely until the whole island has human phyto-sanitary security no part of it has?

11. HOW MIGHT A HEALTH BUDGET BE SPENT IN A NEW AND UNITED IRELAND?

Both jurisdictions spend similar amounts per citizen on healthcare.³ The Heenan report (2021)⁴ highlights the similar level of spend: "While Northern Ireland's health spending per person has been slightly higher than in the south, currently the two are almost identical, with the south spending €4,204 per person in 2021 and Northern Ireland spending the equivalent of €4,182."

Therefore the finance question needs to be less about affordability and more focused on *how* money is spent.

There are currently significant differences in finance routes within the two healthcare systems. One of the key principles of healthcare as experienced by citizens in the North is that services are free at the point of use, whereas in the south citizens pay for GP visits, emergency department attendances and prescriptions.

The South is an outlier among EU countries in terms of charging for GP access, and this would need to be reviewed regardless of work towards a shared system.

Resolving this single issue is likely to remove a key barrier in terms of the perceptions of citizens in the North about the Southern system.

More widely, the North operates a straightforward taxation based model, whereas the Southern system is a mix of public and insurance funding.

The insurance companies active in the southern system include VHI which is wholly owned by the Irish Government and all health insurers in the south are regulated and monitored by the Central Bank of Ireland. Around 46% of people in the south have

some level of health insurance⁵. The average premium paid is around €1200.

In reality however, many citizens in the north also hold private health insurance, or pay for key consultations for themselves or their loved ones – often because waiting lists are so long. According to the private healthcare sector, 10% of all healthcare provided in the North is private.⁶

The South is also struggling with waiting lists and they operate a mixed system, with medical card holders receiving healthcare that is free at the point of use (similar to the NHS/HSC) while those on higher incomes pay for health insurance.

A third group, the 'twilight zone' citizens, are of particular concern. These individuals cannot afford private healthcare, and yet their incomes are higher than the current threshold for the medical card scheme.

The Sláintecare strategy aims to close this gap, aiming to ensure that medical card coverage is extended.

³ <https://www.thejournal.ie/all-island-healthcare-shared-island-5385981-Mar2021/>

⁴ <https://www.ria.ie/sites/default/files/heenarins.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.hia.ie/sites/default/files/Market%20Figures%20Dec%202020.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/news-analysis/mark-regan-theres-huge-health-inequality-between-northern-ireland-and-england-31454876.html>

SUMMARY

An all island approach to healthcare is a medical imperative.

For too long both the HSE and the NHS have operated sub-optimally on the island of Ireland. When the two systems work together they can work well. The example of the congenital heart disease network is a clear example and this was built on a Swedish model. What else can we learn from similar sized countries?

The patients and the medical professionals in Ireland have so much in common. It makes no sense to continue doing things separately. Every area of healthcare would be improved if there was an all island approach.

Waiting lists would undoubtedly shorten but the waiting list system itself, is a system that is designed to fail. A new Irish National Health Service provides an opportunity for significant root and branch reform, in a way that would be necessary given the current state of healthcare.

Professor Jim Dornan said,

"A starting point is that there should be memorandum of understanding to say that there is no border in health. It is as simple as that. Nothing should be introduced healthcare wise, north or south, in the next decade without asking the question, should we be looking north, should we be looking south, how can we have the best healthcare?"

"It won't cost more money. I have always looked at Ireland from a health point of view as a Goldilocks sized country. NI is too small volume wise for a lot of health matters. Whereas if you take the whole of Ireland together...imagine if you take the whole of Ireland together, going to the pharmaceuticals and getting the best deal – and that is just to start. The reality is doing this all island will actually save money.

"Every decision taken in healthcare should be prefaced with the question, if we make this all island will this benefit our people, will this provide a better quality of living, will this be a more efficient use of our resources?"

"Bill Clinton said 'it's the economy, stupid'. For us, 'it's health, stupid'. The common-sense approach would be a totally harmonised all island health service. There should be no borders in health".

SOCIAL SECURITY IN A NEW AND UNITED IRELAND



The UK's combination of relative decline over the past 15 years and high inequality for the past four decades is a dangerous combination. If sustained, they risk the UK entering a prolonged period of stagnation, posing serious risks to not just our economy but to our society and democracy too.



SOCIAL SECURITY IN A NEW AND UNITED IRELAND

MIKE TOMLINSON, EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL POLICY,
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

One of the many arguments facing those of us who see Irish unity as the way forward is that, "such constitutional change is the least of our worries". Why put effort into uniting Ireland when there is the climate crisis to deal with? Why prepare for unity when everyone is grappling with global inflation and a cost of living crisis triggered by Putin's war on Ukraine? This latest major disruption comes hot on the heels of two others: Brexit and the COVID pandemic, both of which rumble on.

The idea that there is little or no bandwidth for serious discussion of Ireland's constitutional future, at the present time, is much like other arguments for refusing the conversation. They are all forms of denial of the growing momentum for change on both sides of the border. To dismiss calls for a border poll as 'destabilising' the North, is to deny how the push for a hard Brexit has itself brought the constitutional question into focus. Likewise, the routine refrain that "the South can't afford the North", is denial (and ignorance) of the South's economic strengths and the growing all-island economy.¹

Because of this denial, the pro-union case remains undeveloped and largely unstated: the union is essentially taken for granted. If prompted, defence of the union usually amounts to little more than: it is better to be with Great Britain because of its large economy – as a safer haven, a bigger umbrella. Images of the Queen may adorn some walls, but it is rare to hear anyone openly making the case for a political system headed by unelected hereditary monarchs. Where is the discussion of the assumed merits of an unwritten constitution, the first-past-the-post electoral system, or the unelected House of Lords?

At a less abstract level, belief in the union is hardly strengthened by the deliberate undermining of the National Health Service for more than a decade. Free at the point of use is an important principle, but so too is another foundational principle, namely that the needs of everyone are met on the basis of medical need, not willingness or ability to pay. The failure to meet health needs in the North is now so prevalent that, again, the defence of the union based on the performance of the NHS lacks credibility. How long are we to wait for those original principles to be properly restored and honoured?

And what of the Great British economy which the Bank of England now predicts (August 2022) is heading for a long recession? Since the 2008 financial crisis, average wages and household incomes have stagnated, falling below those in Germany, France, the Netherlands – and, yes, Ireland. In the words of a recent Resolution Foundation report:

The UK's combination of relative decline over the past 15 years and high inequality for the past four decades is a dangerous combination. If sustained, they risk the UK entering a prolonged period of stagnation, posing serious risks to not just our economy but to our society and democracy too.²

Brexit is compounding the trends, with the devaluation of sterling, the decline in investment, the shrinking of trade with the EU, the hit to GDP, labour shortages and low productivity. Yet still, defence of the union persists, most obviously as opposition to the protocol. This is a matter of blind faith not rationality, an unconvertible sentiment like belief in Brexit itself – more of a mood than a policy.³

1 Economist David McWilliams notes that: "Ireland's manufacturing sector is now half as big as the UK's ... despite the UK having more than 13 times our population". *Irish Times*, 30 July 2022.

2 Resolution Foundation (2022) *Stagnation Nation: The Economy 2030 Interim report*, <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org>

3 Jonathan Freedland, 'Brexit is a mood, not a policy – and Liz Truss captures it in all its delusion,' *The Guardian* 22 July 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jul/22/brexit-liz-truss-delusion-rishi-sunak-tory-members>

This is to say that a minority of people are unlikely, ever, to be persuaded to join the conversation on Irish unity. Like the 29 per cent in the North, and six per cent in the South, who voted against the Good Friday Agreement, for some people wallowing in negativity will always be preferable to working together to create a better future. So engaging with Irish unity is not an alternative to addressing all the disruptions we are facing currently, but a way of confronting them together. The biggest threat we face, the climate crisis, requires cooperation across the planet. The challenges of decarbonised energy production, transport and agriculture, for example, will be faced most coherently with the combined resources, human and other, across the island of Ireland as a whole.

No-one should be in any doubt, however, that uniting Ireland faces many challenges. Arguably, one of the biggest of these at the moment is fear: fear of change and fear of the unknown consequences of constitutional change. This applies on both sides of the border. Our ignorance of each other's social and economic policies and circumstances needs to be reduced.

If people in the North follow what's going on in the South at all, they will fear unaffordable housing, medical charges and the high cost of living – the highest of 27 EU countries alongside Denmark – 40 per cent above the EU average, according to the latest Eurostat figures.⁴ Don't expect to find 'UK' in these statistics for obvious reasons.

In recent times, opinion polls in the South have asked the somewhat loaded question: would you still

support unity if you had to pay more taxes to fund it? Unsurprisingly, a majority say they would not be willing to pay more taxes to fund a united Ireland – traditional sentiment seemingly giving way to harsh realities.⁵ The assumption that the North is a costly basket-case economy, requiring a high level of subvention from the British Treasury, is already built into political narratives in the South. Less attention is paid to research that has debunked the subvention myth and shown that the elements of the North's deficit that would most probably transfer to a united Ireland amount to €2.8 billion a year, not the commonly-quoted figure of €10 billion.⁶

My own research on poverty and social security policies scrutinises the subvention myth further.⁷ Social security finance is one of the most important areas of social policy yet one of the least talked about in the united Ireland discussion. By the end of the 2010s, two-fifths of all public expenditure went on social security benefits on both sides of the border. This remarkably similar profile was reflected further in the proportion of social security spending devoted to pensions – 38 per cent in the South and 42 per cent in the North, reflecting the older age structure in the latter.

The scope of social security provision North and South is also similar up to a point, which isn't surprising given how the Republic has often looked to Britain for social policy ideas. The British and Irish social security systems may have developed at a different pace, but both are based on social insurance with contributory pensions, both have in-work social security supplements and child benefits (no longer universal under the British system), and

both over the long-term have moved away from subsidising the building of social housing to subsidising rents paid to private landlords. More recently, however, important differences have emerged with the British introducing US-style tax credits as direct payments and, most recently, the attempt to merge all means-tested (assistance) benefits and in-work tax credits into a single computerised system of Universal Credit.

This similar history, however, led to substantially different outcomes. Rates of income poverty for pensioners and children have been consistently higher in the North than the South over the last decade. This is mainly because of two things: benefit levels are relatively low in the North and disposable income inequality is higher. For instance, under the British system, child benefit lost 18 per cent of its value in real terms from 2009 to 2019.⁸ In purchasing power terms child benefit for two children in the South is worth 1.7 times what it is in the North. This is not to say that child poverty is a marginal issue in the South. It's not: one in seven of the population lacks two or more of eleven basic necessities and one third of these are children, according to the latest figures.⁹

Gross (before tax) market income inequalities in the South were very high in 2015 but have come down since and are much closer to the Euro-area average now. The Irish PAYE system is more redistributive than the British system, so disposable income inequality is lower in the South than in the North. And this points to a major limitation of the North's Assembly and Executive. Social security is a

constitutional issue in the sense that key revenue raising decisions, such as the rates of national insurance contributions of employers and employees, are retained by the British government.¹⁰ Technically, social security policy is devolved but any attempts to break away from British policies face punishment in the form of 'fines' by the Treasury and deductions from the block grant.¹¹

What is not always appreciated is that the North's subvention is the product of two things, spending on the one hand and revenue raising on the other. British governments have chosen a particular path for taxation such that revenue raising shifted towards VAT and 'sin taxes' (excise duties on alcohol, tobacco and gambling) and away from income tax, wealth taxes and corporation tax.¹² In other words, taxation became more regressive such that the gap between spending and revenue worsened.

Part of the work that needs to be done in preparing the case for unity is to produce accurate annual estimates of what would be raised from the North under the Irish tax code. The assumption should be that, for revenue-raising purposes, the North is integrated with the South in a unitary Irish state. The argument for this is that, even in nation states with high levels of devolution to federal and sub-federal levels, control of major taxes, social insurance contributions and benefit systems remain centralised. But there is another reason. Research carried out with a 'deliberative forum on constitutional futures' – a mini citizens' assembly – found that 'most preferred an integrated model in which

4 Eurostat, 'Price level index for final household consumption expenditure index 2021', June 2022. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Comparative_price_levels_of_consumer_goods_and_services

5 For example, the *Irish Independent*/Kantar poll taken in the spring of 2021. <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/centenar-ies/centenarypoll/majority-favour-a-united-ireland-but-just-22pc-would-pay-for-it-40375875.html>

6 John Doyle, 'Why the "Subvention" does not Matter: Northern Ireland and the All-Ireland Economy', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Volume 32, Number 2, 2021, pp. 314–334. See also: Seamus McGuinness and Adele Bergin, 'The political economy of a Northern Ireland border poll', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Volume 44, Issue 4, July 2020, Pages 781–812; Adele Bergin and Seamus McGuinness, 'Who is Better off? Measuring Cross-border Differences in Living Standards, Opportunities and Quality of Life on the Island of Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Volume 32, Number 2, 2021, pp. 143–160.

7 Mike Tomlinson, 'Social Security in a unified Ireland', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Volume 33, Issue 2, pp. 227–245.

8 See Goretti Horgan, Pauline Leeson, Bernadette McAliskey and Mike Tomlinson, *Recommendations for an antipoverty strategy: Report of the Expert Advisory Panel*, Belfast, 2020. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/report-anti-poverty-strategy-expert-advisory-panel>

9 Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2021*, May 2022. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2021/>

10 The final report of the Fiscal Commission (May 2022) recommended the devolution of income tax but not national insurance contributions. <https://www.fiscalcommissionni.org>

11 This is best illustrated by the stand-off in the mid-2010s over the Welfare Reform Act (which introduced Universal Credit). Mike Tomlinson, 'Risking Peace in the "war against the poor"? Social exclusion and the legacies of the Northern Ireland conflict', *Critical Social Policy*, 2016, Volume 36, Number 1, pp. 104–123.

12 Fiscal Commission figures show that 6.8 per cent of all the taxes paid per head in the South come from excise duties compared to 9.4 per cent in the North. For VAT the figures are 17.2 (South) and 17.4 (North) even though the rate of VAT is three percentage points higher in the South.

Northern Ireland would be dissolved, to a model in which Northern Ireland becomes a devolved entity within a united Ireland'. That was the preference among participants in the North and also when a similar exercise was carried out in the South.¹³

In terms of the tax take, preliminary calculations suggest that more would be raised through the Irish PAYE system than under the British, mainly because of higher income tax for the top third of earners and slightly higher social insurance contributions from employers of low paid workers – at least ten per cent more overall. The standard rate of VAT is higher in the South (23 per cent) than in the North (20 per cent), and full-rate VAT exemptions differ, but revenues from the North would probably increase from €3.4 billion (2019/20) to around €3.9 billion. On the other hand, corporation tax receipts would go down, even if they are grossly underestimated for the North at present.

When it comes to social security expenditure, there are three major issues to consider. The first concerns state pension liabilities at the moment of transition to unity. As argued elsewhere,¹⁴ entitlement to a state pension is based on a person's history of social/national insurance contributions; and mutual recognition of contribution records between Britain and Ireland has been in place since 1924. The latest agreement (Convention on Social Security 2019) came into effect in 2021 and replaces the pan-EU system under which responsibility for the state pension "is distributed among the Member States concerned in relation to the length of insurance in each of these Member States".

Britain currently pays state pensions to half-a-million people living in EU countries of which 133,000 are

living in the Republic. The pension entitlement of all of these people was determined by their history of insurance contributions paid under the British system over their working lives. There is no reason to believe that, in the event of Irish unity, Britain would stop paying these pensions or current pensions in the North (numbering 298,000 at the moment), and there is no case to be made for a new Irish state to assume financial responsibility for them.

The state pension of Northerners retiring in the future would depend on their social insurance contributions in the new Irish state and their national insurance contributions under the British system prior to unification. Their state pension would therefore come from two sources as described in the procedure for calculating pensions under the Irish/British Convention.

In practical terms and compared with a no unity scenario, Britain would face a declining cost over time for pre-unity pensions of those in the north. For those retiring after unity, it would be paying less and less a share of the pensions. Clearly, how this would work out in practice is one of many financial issues that would need to be discussed when the time comes.

The second issue concerns responsibility for long-term sickness and disability benefits. These costs are unusually high in the North – €1,437 per head of population (2019/20) according to the Treasury. Even Wales (at €968), with its history of coal mining and heavy industry, comes nowhere near this figure. There is strong evidence that the high spending on this category is directly related to the decades of conflict and their impacts on physical and mental health in the North.¹⁵ It would make sense for such conflict-related costs to be factored into financial discussions between Ireland and Britain.

The third major issue is, what exactly would integration of social security mean in terms of benefit levels? Inevitably there would be a period of transition but what would be the policy proposition? First, there should be a principle of no loss in the transition. Secondly, the aim should be to harmonise benefit levels over a relatively brief period of time. In the case of pensions, it would be open to the new Irish state to supplement the relatively low British state pension, but only in cases where no other supplementary pension is in payment. Thirdly, the policy aim should be to reduce poverty, especially child poverty, through raising the rate of child benefit currently paid in the North.¹⁶

My final point is about tax and social insurance. Both employers and workers in the North need to know what deductions would be made under the Irish tax code (including social insurance and universal social charge). For employers, an online interactive facility needs to be available, including currency conversion and purchasing power parity options that shows the comparative cost of employing someone in the North and in the South, as things stand and change with the budget each year.¹⁷ Similarly, employees and the self-employed need a facility for seeing by how much they would be better or worse off under the Irish tax code.¹⁸ My estimates suggest that all but the richest third would be slightly better off. Such facilities will help reduce the fears around the transition to a new unitary Irish state.

13 The research is described in Frank Connolly's book, *United Nation: The Case for Integrating Ireland*, Dublin: Gill Books, 2022, pp. 128–134. See also, John Garry, Brendan O'Leary, John Coakley, James Pow & Lisa Whitten, 'Public attitudes to different possible models of a United Ireland: evidence from a citizens' assembly in Northern Ireland', *Irish Political Studies*, 35:3, 422–450, 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2020.1816379>; and John Garry, Paul Gillespie and Brendan O'Leary, 'What people in the Republic actually think about Irish unification', *Irish Times*, 23 September 2021. <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/what-people-in-the-republic-actually-think-about-irish-unification-1.4681111>

14 Mike Tomlinson, 'The economics of Irish unity: *Irish Times* gets it wrong on United Ireland pensions policy', available at: <https://belfastmedia.com/economics-of-unity-irish-times-gets-it-wrong> 17 March 2022.

15 Mike Tomlinson, 'Risking Peace in the "war against the poor"? Social exclusion and the legacies of the Northern Ireland conflict', *Critical Social Policy*, 2016, Volume 36, Number 1, pp. 104–123.

16 The North's Expert Advisory Panel on an anti-poverty strategy recommended the introduction of a new child payment (along the lines of the Scottish benefit). If this was introduced prior to unity then the gap between Irish and British rates of child benefit would be much narrower, or even disappear. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/report-anti-poverty-strategy-expert-advisory-panel>

17 Along the lines of the Ireland Payroll Calculator <https://www.icalculator.info/ireland/ireland-payroll-calculator.html>

18 There are a number of commercial apps that calculate PAYE deductions (e.g. TaxCalc.ie) but none which incorporate the comparative elements proposed here.



**SPORT AND
IRELAND'S FUTURE**



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SPORT AND IRELAND'S FUTURE

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There are those on the island of Ireland for whom sport is central to their lives, whether as participants, spectators or club members, paid/unpaid administrators, coaches, and other officials. For them, sport (including play, leisure, and games) is a personal touchstone of identity, but this is also the case for communities and societal groups. Many believe intensely in the power of sport to change people's lives for the better and we are learning more about the complex mechanisms involved. Sport, like other cultural activities, allows groups to build and maintain social capital. Much has been made of its role in subverting conflict, building bridges, and bolstering peace and reconciliation. But there many others too who are disinclined towards sport, who may dislike or even abhor it. For them sport is trivia - of far less importance than health, education, the welfare state, economy, and politics for instance. It has even been said that sport is and should be untouched by politics and other ideological considerations.

Nevertheless, sport is inextricably bound up with all of these. This is borne out by the wealth of international research evidence since the 1960s. Building on our published open access work on the role of sport in a shared island¹, on the island's complex sportive histories and relationships, and on our collective personal and professional insights, here we explore the links between sport and identity. This requires immersion in our sporting heritage, aspects of which are still being discovered, as well as listening carefully to sports stakeholders, North and South, many of whom we have already interviewed.

Precisely because of the utility of sport, we believe that dialogues about the future of this island which omit sport are not only out of focus but, more importantly, they ignore an important cultural force.

Thus, irrespective of where you place yourself on the sports continuum - from living and loving sport to being nonplussed or even detesting it - we invite all of you to take this reflexive journey. This is in order that everyone might participate in and share the possibilities for a genuinely shared and inclusive sportive future on this island; that is, one based on mutual understanding and respect and offers new perspectives on old issues. Here, we consider north-south relations and their relevance for sport. In doing so we signpost interim steps and highlight some challenges that we think are likely to arise. First, however, we set out the utility of sport and its role as an expression of cultural and national identities. Here we keep one eye on the past in ways that do not blind us to the future.

THE UTILITY OF SPORT: PAST AND PRESENT

Two contemporary examples of the utility of sport involve government actors, civil society, and individual sports competitors on this island. In May 2022, 81 members of Northern Ireland's newly elected assembly who were present signed a letter calling on the International Gymnastics Federation to reverse its decision to reject the entries of three male gymnasts to the Commonwealth Games. This was despite there being no elected speaker. In the centennial year of the creation of Northern Ireland (NI), and amidst the ongoing challenges of a consociational political model, sport was held by many to be a binding cross-community force. This letter was matched by statements from the Irish government, via Minister of State for Sport, Jack Chambers, and by Gymnastics Ireland amongst others. Sport was similarly highlighted in the 2021 Ireland-Scotland Joint Bilateral Government Review

¹ Available at: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/849124>

as being an important element of ancient and contemporary cultures for both communities and diasporic groups. And there have been many historical examples too of the utility of sport to political leaders, such as Nelson Mandela's wearing of the Springbok jersey in 1995, Irish government support for the Aonach Tailteann Games in the 1920s and 1930s and Northern Irish government and civil society interventions with British and international sports leaders regarding the jurisdiction and affiliation of six-county athletics and cycling for example.

At its core, the social fabric of sport acts as a constitutive force for identities. Think about the naming/renaming of sports stadia and clubs, the forging of emblems and the waving of flags and other insignia, the adoption of songs and performances of banter between competitors and supporters. The playing of anthems and the symbolic silences and protests of players are particularly visceral expressions of national identity as are the self-asserted rights of sports governing bodies to jurisdiction over a claimed territory and to governance responsibilities for its members. In Ireland we find a distinctive conglomeration of such rights and identities, owing to its colonial and Imperial history.

Irish histories are replete with symbols that reveal possibilities, prejudices, and contention. National and indigenous Gaelic games and sports made claims to the distinctiveness of cultural and social life, north and south, and played an overt role in renewing Irishness. Yet all-island practices existed in many sportive organisations founded before 1921 as they did for many civic organisations. The fusion of sport with socio-political issues borne of the turbulent twentieth century was, perhaps, unavoidable. Both resistance and openness to British influence and connection was reflected in the growth of 32-county Gaelic games and the establishment of six-county and 26- sportive associations such as athletics and football/soccer.

Historically, then, there was a role for sport in augmenting national cohesiveness, international reputation, status, and influence. Indeed, diverse

views on sport, politics and representation had different bearings across the development of sport on the island, and on relationships with Great Britain and the world. This was reflected, for instance, in Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera's lobbying of British Foreign Office representative, Philip Noel Baker, about team designation in advance of the 1948 London Olympics. 50 years later, NI First Minister, David Trimble, and eight other unionist MPs, backed a parliamentary early motion in support of the NI Cycling Federation's right to govern cycling. And as recently as last year, David Campbell, chair of the Loyalist Communities Council, wrote that it was not acceptable for NI competitors to compete under a foreign flag 'that they may well consider obnoxious and alien to their own nationality'.

Today, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement is meant to ensure dual eligibility rights for elite athletes from NI who can represent various configurations of sportive Ireland or Great Britain, even if its spirit and implementation is not yet consistent internationally, as noted in the example of the gymnasts. But 32-county sports were certainly not culturally neutral. Some, like rugby union, were deeply divided and their meaning to the rugby nation has changed over time. An influential Protestant unionist outlook persevered among the rugby union elite up to the mid-twentieth century but at the same time the game also attracted a broad church and became more culturally diverse. Because of controversies around national flag and anthem at international games, rugby's membership has recognised these matters of cultural identity and has successfully reached beyond these. Ireland's Call is one illustration as is the support from unionists and those from working class backgrounds in NI who also support Ireland in rugby.

Boxing, also a 32-county sport, is the most successful in medal terms across Olympic, World and Commonwealth competitions. Many elite sportspeople, boxers included, adopt a pragmatic approach to national team selection and allegiance, using a combination of passports, domicile, and club affiliation to meet selection criteria, such as that of Dundalk woman, Amy Broadhurst, who won a medal in the recent Commonwealth Games for NI. A

predecessor, Bill Britton, born in Tipperary and who lived and worked in Cavan, won Ireland's first medal (silver) at the inaugural Commonwealth (then British Empire) Games in 1930. This was the only occasion in these Games that an all-island team competed, under the harp flag. The significance of this should not be lost, being some nine years after the War of Independence and amidst the upshots of partition, political and sportive. This may yet have implications for how Ireland might view its future position vis-à-vis the Commonwealth itself, and in the entry of an all-island team in the Commonwealth Games, either by invitation or as a formal member. There is a notable similarity between historical views about this 1930 Irish team, which included one Belfast runner and an Irish emigrant, and those that are expressed today: participation in the Commonwealth Games might create further discord, political and sportive, owing to its attached political significance; sport and politics should not mix at all (see above); the Games are an opportunity to project onto the international/global stage, as Northern Ireland, Ireland or both and, for some, they are yet another reason to inject distance with the legacy of empire.

Many of these views are borne of apprehensions, misunderstandings, and lack of sustained cultural engagement along north-south lines.

OLD AND NEW NORTH-SOUTH IDENTITIES

There is no one homogeneous identity on the island, even within a group who sees itself, unproblematically, as either Irish or British. In fact, there is both old and new Irish, some with Anglo-Norman heritage. Today, groups with no known historical connection to the island also regard themselves as Irish and there are Irish nationalists of Anglo-Irish descent. Some Ulster unionists too have differing views to those of loyalists about the future.

There have also been many past disagreements between these groups that were reflected in sport. In the twentieth century, laudable attempts to grow goodwill, mutual understanding, and cooperation and to establish one all-island athletic federation foundered on the double-edged sword of jurisdiction

and international status under one licence. Today, the new generation of fulltime professional sports officials know less, potentially, of these complex all-island sports histories. Nonetheless, even in working relations between North and South they live, feel, and sense their impact. Indeed, many in the South still struggle to comprehend the NI question and underestimate the destabilising impact of Brexit on relationships. As a result, there has been a narrowing of the scope to deal with post-conflict tensions on the island.

Studies of NI reveal the intensity of feeling evident there, in everyday life, in political discourse, and in cultural expressions. This is because cultural space is contested. Emotions of unease, fear, and disgrace as well as confidence, celebration of identity, and triumphalism all intertwine, held in suspense by a negative silence embodied in the Good Friday Agreement. However, even in politics few complexities rival the world of Irish sport and almost every variety of governance can be found in Ulster and NI. In athletics for instance, Athletics Ireland (AI) and Athletics Northern Ireland (ANI) have jurisdiction over twenty-six and six counties respectively, but clubs in the counties of Ulster not in NI are registered to ANI while clubs in NI are affiliated to AI. To host an international tournament in NI and depending on the host club in question permission must be sought via either Athletics Ireland or British Athletics, to whom ANI is an affiliate member. And in a further complication, the Ulster Athletics Council (UAC) holds a special position in the current working arrangement between the two Irish national governing bodies.

There is a movement towards greater inclusivity in sport in NI and many people play sports and support local teams and clubs, irrespective of political or cultural persuasion. But it is equally true that sport is an important signifier of the defended link to the United Kingdom (UK). Hence, for some in NI, sports like soccer are the preserve of those whose personal and collective identities remain strongly wedded to a six-county Ulster and/or NI and, more widely, to the UK. Their identities, in life as in sport, are defined in more oppositional and dominance terms, being neither Irish nor Catholic. It is in this context that the

intense competitive forms of sport can become a potential lightning rod. Football/soccer is an important ideological crutch for those living in NI's most socially deprived areas and it preserves a space for Protestant-unionist-loyalist identities. In Irish league soccer, Ulster Unionism trumps connection with Britain for instance. In this sport, the imagined 'wee country' of NI is brought to life and projected through the display of the crowned red hand of Ulster (the Ulster banner) and the singing of God Save The Queen.

Footballers from NI have expressed a variety of views to us and to others concerning sportive identity codes: from 'leave my flag alone' and 'if you don't like it, you can play for another country' to 'time for an agreed NI anthem' and 'what about a separate football flag like rugby has done?'. None have yet proffered one all-island football association. Dual eligibility remains a bone of contention between the two football associations and for many NI football supporters too. The creation of an official all-island football team would be a clear acid test of how strong and deeply entrenched is this imagined community. Moving in this direction, discussions about governance, funding, assets, and official roles would be required that would also impact on the club game (north and south and at amateur and professional levels). The same point applies to the Unionist/English Amateur Athletics Association conspired political boundary rule of 1934 in international athletics, whose current status means that in World Athletics-sanctioned events, the Irish team represents a 26-county organisation in terms of its jurisdiction, even though it includes athletes like Ciara Mageean, from NI, and who represented the 'wee country' in the recent Commonwealth Games, winning silver, behind the Scot, Laura Muir. Some 18 days later, in the European Championships she again won a silver medal, this time for a 26-county body under the title Ireland, proudly displaying the Irish Tricolour in her lap of honour. Reflecting on her family heritage she observed:

My granny Kathleen. I know she would have absolutely loved to see me out there racing. I have a grandfather that never got to see me do athletics, he passed away when I was 13 ... If he

knew that I was running for Ireland, the pride that he would have ... I do believe that he's somewhere up there watching down seeing that, but there are little parts where you're like, 'God, I wish I could tell him that'. The pride my Granda Mageean would have had knowing that his little grand-daughter was running around with the tricolour over her shoulder and bringing a medal back home.

When Mageean ran in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games she was selected by the Irish Olympic Federation, constituted as a 32-county body. Irish or GB representation is open to all NI athletes in the Olympic Games and is, for some, a delicate conflicted issue.

In international sport, we have seen that national team selection can even become a flag of convenience. Like their rugby counterparts, track and field athletes and supporters demonstrate some capacity to separate political and sportive allegiances. It is not easy to predict how any potential constitutional change might impact the cross-community appeal of athletics in NI, owing partly to the injection of an overt political dimension that has subsided, to a degree. But it is reasonable to expect that the tacit working agreements between Athletics Ireland and Athletics Northern Ireland would certainly come under greater scrutiny.

There are many potential futures on this island – whether united, divided, renewed, or even federalised – and many questions arise. What role might sport play in the nature and meaning of identity in unionist/loyalist and northern/southern nationalist responses? What of the symbolic role of sport in a shared Ireland and how might it assist in projecting mutual understanding and achieving consensus on the future? What potential changes in anthem, flag, emblem, and other symbols might there be? And what might be the practical implications of political constitutional change for sport? Here we can but sketch initial steps in this direction built on the premise that sport is one of the most powerful transfer mechanisms for culture.

INITIAL STEPS

Across sports and throughout the four provinces, we need to be able to talk about all possible futures, freely and feasibly with optimism. A constructive shared dialogue is required, underpinned by an inclusive, consultative process that can command the support of those connected to sport as well as the wider public – akin to an all-island sportive assembly. This dialogue must start as soon as possible and certainly prior to any future border poll. If this does not happen, then any changes to national symbols such as flags, emblems and anthems resulting from constitutional change would likely prove challenging and even divisive. Ethno-national identities, socio-economic class and gender are likely to inform and shape the responses of national governing bodies of sport, of their members, and the wider sporting populace. Yet, while sport will be important in Ireland's future it cannot be expected to do the 'heavy lifting' alone, isolated from wider social currents and debates. We see three interwoven areas – structural, symbolic, and socio-cultural – in which future sportive and civic relations will be forged.

STRUCTURAL: HOW WE ORGANISE OUR SPORTING LIVES ACROSS THE ISLAND

There are already models or templates that might steer future sporting structures. Some work on a cross-border basis, acting to minimise the effects of the border in many instances. But developing best practice on a shared structural future will make demands, not only of existing all-island organisations as diverse as rugby, boxing, and swimming, but also of those who might take on a new form. Sports representatives who can think beyond the status quo will be crucial in this dialogue. Future state funding for sports structures, whether in merged, devolved and/or federalised forms, could be tied to requirements for reform and engagement, exemplified in balanced diverse board membership. The symbolism of unity – for example, one team, one league, one FIFA representative in the sport of football – will also have to be addressed across communities and not only in the senior executive

boardrooms of sports bodies or on the floors of parliaments.

Dual state funding for sport in NI, via Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland, will also be subject to review. In addition, joint north-south structural initiatives in health, exercise, and well-being, as well as integrated government departments could highlight the extent to which challenges perceived to be unique or distinctive to one group/community are, in fact, common to many. The establishment of an all-island sportive assembly with an independent chair and expert representation would be a productive first step in this regard and would be a constituted forum of stakeholders from playground to podium in the four provinces.

This Assembly could explore the evidence base for sports-based interventions that foster friendship formation, community harmony and peace building in societies emerging from conflict. For sports can act as both social glue and toxin and thus require careful management to deliver verifiable positive outcomes. Crucially, athletes themselves must be involved in any all-island assembly and in all community fora in which new structures are debated and enacted. Here, as in other aspects of forging a new future, there will be a need both for visionary leadership and imaginative thinking but also a grounding in community views, dialogue, and shared involvement. Dual eligibility/identity would remain for the foreseeable future and thus those sportsmen and women from NI would be free to represent their country of choice. After all, in celebrating Ireland's recent historic series win in rugby over New Zealand, few took exception to three Kiwi-born players playing for the 'men in green'.

SYMBOLIC: HOW OUR IDENTITIES ARE MADE AND RENEWED THROUGH SPORT

Sport matters. For better and sometimes worse, sport is a morality play in which both participant and spectator identities are made and expressed in a mutual quest for exciting significance. At the symbolic level, the rituals of sport, its anthems, emblems, flags, and uniforms, and its crowd cultures, move people emotionally, socially, and, at times,

politically. As such, its symbolic significance must form part of the debates on the future of sport in Ireland. It is inescapable to how people on the island view themselves, view others, and nation groupings.

Difficult though these may be, questions of place and space must also form part of discussions regarding the symbolic side of sport. Questions about anthems, emblems and flags are part of the cultural DNA of Irish sport as are the location of sporting events and clubs across the island. Hence, discussion of where and when major sporting events could and should be located, and under what flag(s) – Belfast and Dublin, of course, but also Cork, Limerick and/or Galway too – must be part of this new thinking.

The role of existing major stadia and their place in both national and provincial life would also need to be rethought. Planning the optimum use of these facilities – Windsor and (redeveloped) Casement Parks, the Aviva and Croke Park stadia – as multi-sport venues would no doubt be subject to intense deliberation given the existing emotional economy of the 'Big Three' mass spectator sports. Likewise, transforming governance structures towards integration in parallel with political change will be a challenge.

SOCIO-CULTURAL: HOW WE LIVE AND EXPERIENCE SPORT TOGETHER

If, in a border poll, people voted for reunification, then UK funding for sport in NI would have to be reviewed (together with other exchequer transfers and public subsidies from Westminster). Equity in funding to all four provinces will have to be achieved ensuring, we would hope, an uplift in spending on sport, exercise, and well-being. Having benefited from EU Peace Funding through 'Sport Uniting Communities' for example, sport in NI could offer leadership to others on the challenges that are common to all. Because of the traumatic intergenerational effects of the Troubles on all communities, but especially the working classes, NI has specific needs in this sphere which will have to be addressed. Funding may continue to flow from the

USA and the EU, but fellow citizens in the South may also have to own and share the legacy of the past.

Interim, joint (cross-border) structural initiatives along the spectrum of health, exercise, and well-being, and integrating educational, health and sporting initiatives across Ireland could be a useful steppingstone. Likewise, in developing play, games and physical education structures for children, future generations should have the opportunity to cherish their heritage but also to create new legacies and sporting memories and heroes – but only by playing together. In inter/intra community relations within and between provinces, sport can provide a space and place in which a greater shared sense of belonging might unfold. Liberty and equality will be necessary ingredients but so too will fraternity.

FROM CAUTIOUS TO JUDICIOUS OPTIMISM

For the sporting populace – from children to the elderly, from participants to spectators and from playground to podium – something other than the sport itself is, and will always be, at work. In these shared spaces, new joys and sorrows can be created that supersede, or at least dilute, the pain and anguish of the past. Embracing multiple notions of Irishness and celebrating the plurality of the people who represent 'us' symbolically on the sports fields is part of this process. In the future, many of these will be second generation immigrants from across the world. And, it will be an incremental process: slow, uneven, with many setbacks, requiring understanding and mutual respect, but also care, kindness, and dare we say, a new recognition of a common heritage.

Sport can anticipate a transition to the future that involves these structural, symbolic, and socio-cultural dimensions. Sporting reunification may have a federal and/or devolved layering built into it. As we have seen, when identity is conceived in fixed dichotomous terms, and not relationally, sporting activities – with their rituals, symbols, and narratives – can act to amplify social divisions. This may prove to be the most intractable problem to face. In some

ways, in people's everyday thoughts, feelings and actions, northerners and southerners of all persuasions have to some extent become strangers to each other, relatively estranged from what unites them, even in the largest all-island sporting organisation, the GAA. Most closely interwoven with Irish cultural nationalism and identity, and perceived as exclusive and sectarian by many Protestants, the end of the GAA's ban on 'foreign games' has had a slow and equally long-term effect on its supporters and detractors in equal measure.

The social initiatives across Ulster and NI that celebrate a common heritage in music, art and language, such as those led by Linda Irvine, Brian Vallely and others, are also beginning to find expression in sport in general and in Gaelic games in particular. Rugby highlights how things can change in terms of the symbolic and socio-cultural significance of an all-island team. Whereas in the mid twentieth-century rugby was seen as the preserve of northern Protestants and not representing 'the nation', the recent series victory by the men's team over New Zealand and being ranked world number one is a source of pride, North and South. The significance of the performance has not been overlooked. Michael D. Higgins congratulated the team as President of Ireland, Taoiseach Micheál Martin observed a lift for 'the entire nation' and Unionist leaders such as Doug Beattie and Jeffrey Donaldson also heralded the achievement. In a nod to our complex past on this island, one of the team's star players is Josh Van de Flier, born in Wicklow, of Dutch ancestry, whose grandparents moved to Ireland in the 1950s. Playing together, united in a common endeavour, can be, under certain conditions, a signpost and a source of optimism for Ireland's future.

**THE
ECOLOGICAL CASE** 



The nation-building project for a reunified Ireland is taking place in a world on fire. The concept of climate change, ubiquitous throughout much of our lives as a threat waiting for us in the distant future, is now a relic.



THE ECOLOGICAL CASE

SEÁN FEARON

ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF A REUNIFIED IRELAND

The nation-building project for a reunified Ireland is taking place in a world on fire. The concept of climate change, ubiquitous throughout much of our lives as a threat waiting for us in the distant future, is now a relic. The climate *has* changed, irrevocably, and we now approach ecological tipping points that may permanently reorder the living world on our planet.

As we campaign for a border poll to reunify the island of Ireland, it is essential that we do so fully equipped with the knowledge of a pending ecological catastrophe. The Good Friday Agreement, the vehicle for reunification through a popular referendum, was signed almost 25 years ago. In that time, the Arctic ice shelf has contracted by about 40%¹. In the next 25 years, the Maldives and coastal areas around the world may be under water². In Ireland, we understand the post-GFA period as one of social restoration and political transformation. For our climate, it has been a period of unprecedented degradation – half of all carbon emissions since 1751 have been pumped into the atmosphere in this time³.

A united Ireland cannot exist in a destabilised climate. The choice for the reunification project, of which we are all a small part, is clear – either we impose limits on the ecological pressure we are exerting on our global ecosystem, or nature will. Fortunately, Irish reunification itself can be an instrumental part of our fight against climate and ecological breakdown, for a number of reasons.

CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

The existence of two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland creates confusion and inconsistency when it comes to setting emissions reduction targets, an indispensable part of the legislative response to the climate crisis. Evidence of this can be seen in just the last year when parliaments in both the North and the South of Ireland passed the Climate Change Act and Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, respectively.

Rapid decarbonisation, now demanded by law in these acts, means a transformation of our relationship with energy; how we use it, how much we use, how we produce it, and how we manage waste when we're done with it. We use energy in three main forms: as heat, as transport, and as power (electricity). As a small, deeply integrated island, at least two of these three are fundamentally all-Ireland in nature. Our transport systems, by road and by rail, are connected (and should be more so as we expand our public transport infrastructure in a bid to lower emissions). Our electricity consumption is similarly connected across the island in a number of ways. The integrated single electricity market (I-SEM) trades power on an all-island basis, and responsibility for the transmission of this power is now carried out across 32 counties (indirectly) by EirGrid, following its purchase of the System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) in 2009.

However, different targets for decarbonisation exist across the island. For example, the North has pledged to reduce emissions by some 48% by 2030⁴, but a more ambitious target has been committed to in the South, at 51% by 2030. Moreover, the policies

¹ <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/arctic-sea-ice/>

² 'This Changes Everything', Naomi Klein, 2014

³ <https://ieep.eu/news/more-than-half-of-all-co2-emissions-since-1751-emitted-in-the-last-30-years>

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/31/enacted>

for achieving these targets, despite the national integration of the infrastructure it relates to, is decided across two different government departments in two jurisdictions. The North's landmark Energy Strategy, for example, published in late 2021, contains scarce mention of the inescapable all-Ireland nature of our energy systems or the need for an island-wide just energy transition. This lack of coordination at a time of real urgency presents a challenge that can be overcome by reunification.

This transition to a decarbonised Ireland, as part of our fight to secure a stable global climate, will require *nothing short of transformation*. According to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) we need 'rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems...', concluding that 'These systems transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily in terms of speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors'⁵.

The occasion of Irish reunification, demanding as it does root and branch political, constitutional, and economic change for which there is already considerable momentum, can be the means for this energy and ecological transition. Irish unity will undoubtedly involve a large-scale and negotiated transition of public finances between the North and South (in terms of assets and liabilities) and will have real economic consequences – it is this moment of economic reconfiguration that must be harnessed to drive economic and energy transformation on our island in order to achieve legally-binding emissions reduction targets.

CONSTITUTIONAL TRANSITION

It should be made clear that radical efforts to tackle climate breakdown are not contingent upon Irish unity and must continue apace come what may. But the constitutional reconstruction of Ireland sparked by reunification provides an unmissable opportunity

to lock in principles for a new, decarbonised, and ecologically conscious national character.

Like radical constitutional shifts in countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador, it allows us to instil within a new all-Ireland constitution the inviolable rights of nature and for a new relationship with the natural world not based on extraction and exploitation. In the same way that the Programme of the First Dáil in 1919 committed to a radical set of social principles and objectives, the constitution of a new and united Ireland must be fit for and acknowledge the dire ecological crises we face in the 21st century. It can set a new, radical benchmark for our relationship with the natural world based on harmony, reciprocity, restoration, and sustainability.

These opportunities for structural political change are essential, particularly given the singular failure of parliamentary bodies on the island to initiate the radical change future generations, and our own, need for survival. Constitutional change, through conventions directly involving the participation of citizens, can empower people across the island in the design of a new, eco-social and reunified Ireland. The same role exists for Citizens' Assemblies. Proponents of Irish unity have already made these bodies integral to the campaign to involve citizens' voices in constitutional change, and equally they are essential in the need for urgent ecological change.

RADICAL ECONOMIC CHANGE AND REORIENTATION

This scale of transformation of our energy and economic systems, and of the way in which we live our lives, is one which the state of the North of Ireland is entirely ill-suited and ill-equipped to achieve. Vast sums of investment capital will be required for, among other things, construction of rail and public transport infrastructure, upgrading and expanding the capacity of the electricity grid (as we shift to a renewable, electrified energy system), financing a just transition, locking in a pathway to a post-growth economy, and preparing our

communities and infrastructure to withstand the effects of global heating which are already locked in.

Anyone with even a cursory understanding of the political economy in the North of Ireland will know the powers afforded to the Executive, the Assembly and local government are in no way sufficient to mobilise a public investment programme of this scale. The Executive has, of course, no sovereign monetary independence, no access to private financial markets to borrow, and no means of broadening its base of taxation to fund the investment needed for a liveable world. Moreover, the neoliberal structure of devolution and relationship with Westminster, starving government of essential public resources to empower the private sector, means that the meagre financial schemes available to government in the North must be passed through the market facing entities. In this context, a clear and succinct case exists for Irish reunification in that it will imbue the North of our island with the financial capabilities of any modern, sovereign state.

It is, crucially, these powers that are needed to mount any meaningful response to climate breakdown, and so realise the social and economic benefits of the same - warmer homes, cheaper and clean energy, accessible public transport, ownership of community energy, socially valuable work in green jobs, and so on. It is clear that no such transformational green programme will be coming from a British political establishment in a petrified state of intensifying climate denial - loosening fracking restrictions, and seeking to extract more coal, oil, and gas at a time of cascading climate disaster.

These benefits are a welcome but nonetheless unavoidable consequence of rolling out the scale of change demanded by the IPCC, climate science, and the natural world. This is to say, we have no choice but to radically change our economic system, including its perilous and ecologically destructive inclination towards endless economic growth. The scale of the Republic of Ireland economy breached the ability of our local ecology to sustain it as far back as 1969⁶. Since then, the rapid economic expansion

precipitated by the Celtic Tiger – and the socially inequitable economic model on which it is based – has intensified this ecological pressure. Today the Irish economy, in the amount of energy and material it takes in, and the corresponding waste it pumps out into the atmosphere or our oceans, is totally and utterly unsustainable. If we are to meet our climate objectives of net zero by 2050, to reverse the ongoing 6th mass extinction event, and realise the benefits of a greener society, we need a new economic model fit for purpose and informed by climate science. Once again, the scale of transition invoked by Irish reunification, and the promise it holds to rectify long-standing social inequities and grievances, gives us the opportunity to reset the economy along more compassionate and scientifically literate lines.

Irish reunification is by no means a cure of all ailments, and the reimagining of our island's constitutional future alone will not prevent climate breakdown. Indeed, one can feasibly imagine possible, if not likely, scenarios where we achieve reunification by doubling down on an economic system that has produced such profound inequalities, social exclusion, poverty, and ecological collapse. We must instead tap into the rich well of transformational potential represented by the nation-building project of Irish reunification and use it to mould for ourselves an inclusive nation which cherishes people and planet.

⁵ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/SPM_version_report_LR.pdf

⁶ <https://data.footprintnetwork.org/#/>

SUBMISSION TO
THE SEANAD



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SUBMISSION TO THE SEANAD

1. We are a civil society organisation working to encourage debate about the future of Ireland. Our objective is to ensure that preparations take place for the referendums envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement. Our focus is on getting the transition to a new and united Ireland right, and thus ensuring a sustainable and successful future for all who share this island. We believe that a persuasive set of proposals can be advanced that will convince people to vote for change.
2. Ireland's Future was established to advocate for, and promote, discussion about the constitutional future, including the possibility and viability of new arrangements on the island. We are guided by the obligations, principles and values of the Agreement and dedicated to the protection of human rights, equality and fostering mutual respect between all views and traditions that share this island. We believe that the division and separation of this island must be overcome for good and for the benefit of all.
3. As is well known to this Committee, Brexit has dramatically changed the social and political dynamic by effectively repartitioning the island. N. Ireland has been removed from the EU against the wishes of its people. The guarantee of automatic re-entry to the EU is a new element to the constitutional conversation. People quite rightly want to be offered this option. As this is constitutional change that will occur within the EU, we also believe that EU institutions and Member States have an interest in the outcome. The reunification of Ireland will be warmly welcomed in Europe and across the world.
4. We are not a political party and we are not affiliated to any political party. We welcome participation from anyone interested in furthering the goals of Ireland's Future. We note that any move to new constitutional arrangements requires serious thought, consideration and planning. We believe that the requisite planning for these potential changes must be broad, inclusive, detailed and comprehensive.
5. We welcome this consultation process and commend the Committee for its leadership. Our principal aim in this submission is to outline our contributions thus far. As indicated in our covering letter, we would be pleased to appear before the Committee to explain further and answer questions.
6. During the Brexit negotiations we played a leading role in ensuring that special arrangements were put in place and that the interests and rights of people, including Irish/EU citizens, were taken seriously. This effort included dialogue with the Irish Government, public letters and a series of events; we have also held meetings in recent years with a range of political parties (including Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the Alliance Party).
7. Perhaps the best known contribution, thus far, is the conference we organised in the *Waterfront Hall* in Belfast on 26 January 2019. This gathering in Belfast is now widely regarded as a significant historical moment in the expanding campaign for constitutional change. We followed this with public meetings across Ireland, internationally (New York and Philadelphia) and at Westminster.
8. Our aim remains to encourage wide and deep debate, and our panels have brought diverse and fresh voices into the public sphere on this subject. We are pleased to observe the numbers now taking part and are convinced that this trend will grow. This collaborative and collective work on enabling dialogue is based on our firm belief in building a broad coalition for change. This is reflected in the spirit that is shaping the approach to our landmark 'Together We Can' event in the 3Arena in Dublin on 1 October 2022. This is no mere slogan: it is what guides us.

9. In addition to providing a platform to enable voices to be heard, Ireland's Future continues to make substantive policy contributions to the constitutional conversation. We have produced very well-received and influential *papers* setting out our views on the way forward, as well as reports from our conferences. In December 2020, we produced *'A Principled Framework for Change'*. In this document we set out three overarching guiding principles for our work: Principle 1 – Normalise the Constitutional Conversation; Principle 2 – Plan and Prepare for Constitutional Change; and Principle 3 – The Good Friday Agreement Provides the Framework. We also answered several basic questions on the meaning of existing law, policy and practice. In January 2021, we published *'Advancing the Conversation: The Way Forward'*. In this document we underlined our reflections on key questions in an accessible way, in an attempt to promote clarity and further engagement. March 2021 saw the publication of our paper *'Planning for a Strong Economy in a New Ireland'*. Much of the debate on a united Ireland focuses on the economic implications of reunification. In this document, we set out the economic opportunities opened up by constitutional change, and how N. Ireland has been failed by partition. It is our strong view that reunification will unleash the potential of this island and benefit everyone. With a principled focus on everyone, our next policy intervention addressed *'Rights, Citizenship and Identity in a United Ireland'*. In this document we once again stressed our commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights in a new and united Ireland. We also highlighted the guarantees that are already there and that will have to be respected. Our concern is that there is insufficient public awareness of precisely these matters. We hope that by providing clarification there will be a measure of reassurance for those anxious about the rights-based implications of constitutional change.
10. In our view there is an ongoing denial of choice about the constitutional future that is unsustainable in the circumstances of Brexit.

While we understand the need to press the Secretary of State for N. Ireland - in precise terms - on what will trigger a 'border poll' (and much more could be done on this) the focus should be on preparation and planning for referendums that may arrive sooner rather than later. This work must be led and directed from Ireland.

11. Our call for an all-island Citizens' Assembly reflects our commitment to inclusive civic dialogue as one part of the overall process. We are essentially talking about testing the principle of consent/right of self-determination in a responsible and well-managed way, with the full and active participation and engagement of both governments.
12. Our main recommendation is this: We urge the Committee to join with us, and many others, to call on the Irish Government to take the initiative on an all-island Citizens' Assembly now. We hope that this will be a firm recommendation in your final report.
13. As the above demonstrates, we playing our part as a civil society organisation working hard to ensure proper planning and preparation takes place. We want to achieve a new and united Ireland and we are convinced that this will have a transformative impact on the lives of all who share this island.
14. Further details about Ireland's Future are available here: <https://irelandsfuture.com/support-us/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ireland's Future has hosted twenty four events since May 2020. Over one hundred panellists have taken part and over one hundred thousand people have attended or watched.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Ireland's Future has hosted twenty four events since May 2020. Over one hundred panellists have taken part and over one hundred thousand people have attended or watched.
2. Ten political parties are contributing to today's event including five party leaders.
3. Leading voices from almost every sphere of civic society are contributing to today's event.
4. Figures from the media, press and entertainment are contributing to today's event including some of Ireland's best-known names and faces.
5. Ireland's Future places an emphasis on advance planning and the need for an evidence-based and informed debate.

That is why we have suggested an all island citizens' assembly to underline the centrality of civic leadership in preparing the ground for change.

6. Ireland's Future urges political parties across the island to work together on the issue of constitutional change.

We believe it is in the national interest for political parties to set aside electoral rivalries for the purpose of planning change. This is a time like no other.

7. We believe the discussion on the future of Ireland must be shaped by human rights and equality commitments and that protections on identity and citizenship must be legally watertight.

8. It is clear that partition has had a crippling effect on the north's economy and despite immense local political will to improve the economic fortunes of the region, prospects for growth will remain poor.

The current governance and funding constraints almost ensure that the north will continue to fall behind the south and other economies into the future.

9. There should be an immediate memorandum of understanding to say that there is no border in health.

The Sláintecare initiative should be extended to the north. It's glaring downfall is that it omits the northern six counties.

The reality of an all island health approach is that it will save money rather than cost more

10. The UK's combination of relative decline over the past fifteen years and high inequality for the past four decades is a dangerous combination. If sustained, they risk the UK entering a prolonged period of stagnation, posing serious risks to not just our economy but to our society and democracy too.

Evidence suggests that everybody across the island of Ireland, bar the richest tier, would be better off in a new and united Ireland.

11. We believe that dialogues about the future of Ireland which omit sport are not only out of focus but, more importantly, they ignore an important cultural force.

12. The nation-building project for a reunified Ireland is taking place in a world on fire.

The concept of climate change, ubiquitous throughout much of our lives as a threat waiting for us in the distant future, is now a relic.



BECOME A PATRON
BE A PART OF IRELAND'S FUTURE





Ireland's
Future

Todhchaí na hÉireann

Ireland's Future Needs **YOUR** Support

BECOMING A **PATRON** WILL **HELP US TO...**

- ✓ Intensively engage with the Irish government on the establishment of an all-Island Citizens' Assembly as a forum to enable discussion on future constitutional change and to engage in widespread discussion with all sections of civic and political opinion.
- ✓ Promote the need for referendums in both parts of the island under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement.
- ✓ Encourage and popularise discussion on all salient issues relevant to Irish reunification including economic modelling and human, cultural, and political rights/protections.
- ✓ Campaign and organise a programme of appropriate events, meetings, symposia, publicity and research.

TOGETHER WE CAN



TO SUPPORT US...

please go to [irelandsfuture.com/
support-us](https://irelandsfuture.com/support-us)

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