



**Ireland's  
Future**

Todhchaí na hÉireann

# **IRELAND 2030**

PROPOSALS FOR THE PERIOD  
BETWEEN 2024 AND 2030



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Ireland's Future  
Teachas na hÉireann

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE  
NEW AND U

# Introduction ►

Ireland's Future is strongly and unequivocally committed to achieving a new and united Ireland. Our goal is to secure stable and peaceful constitutional change. Our message resonates not only with those who share our constitutional vision but with all those who are open to exploring how we can build a better future for everyone.

Electoral evidence, demographic change, and the damaged, unequal, and dysfunctional nature of northern society lead us to a stark conclusion: there is no credible alternative to urgent preparations for referendums, north and south, on Irish unity. Our view is that the Irish government and state must urgently prioritise this programme of work.

The post-Brexit acceleration of interest in discussions about constitutional change in Ireland is now well established. The intensification of serious engagement is beyond dispute. This is evident in the extent of civic and political work being undertaken. The debate has moved a long way since our formation.

The desire to promote responsible management and planning for change is commendable. It underlines our commitment to peaceful and democratic change and defies the lazy rhetoric of our detractors.

**Our firm view is that the collective effort must focus on securing a pathway towards referendums and the practical exercise of an informed choice.**

This discussion paper is a significant and important contribution to building sufficient consensus around that overarching goal. The aim is to map out our view of the next stage in the process from now until the year when we believe a referendum could and should be held in 2030.

As we indicated in our paper *The Conversation on Ireland's Future: A Principled Framework for Change* (2020) our initial objectives were: 'normalising' the constitutional conversation; planning and preparing for constitutional change; and ensuring that the Good Friday Agreement (the Agreement) functions as the guiding framework.

We believe that these preliminary strategic ambitions have been realised and we are therefore confident that the next steps should be taken. As a civil society organisation not aligned to any one political party, we are determined to work collaboratively with others to construct an inclusive coalition to ensure that people are given a choice about their constitutional future this decade.





Ireland's  
Future  
with the best of both worlds

# GALA LUNCH

CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL  
SILVER BRIDGE

FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2016

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# Executive Summary

- There is an evidential basis to support the view that a border poll may be called before the end of this decade.
- A defined timeframe assists proper planning: Ireland 2030.
- The social, political and economic benefits for everyone of constitutional change are apparent.
- The concurrent referendums must be preceded by extensive and inclusive preparation.
- Valuable work has been completed and is in progress, but there is an urgent need for more direct governmental, political and civic engagement.
- There is significant clarity on the procedural parameters of the process - framed by the Good Friday Agreement - and an encouraging measure of convergence among those committed to reunification.
- The focus of the next phase must be on shaping the production of a **Programme for a New Ireland**, including through participative processes that draw on international and comparative experience. A priority must be to facilitate an informed choice based on reliable and credible evidence.
- We believe that the **Programme for a New Ireland** will assist in making a compelling case for change.
- We acknowledge that there are differing views, including on sequencing and timing. Our aim is to encourage those debates with the intention of building a broad political and civic coalition for change.

We recommend:

- Political parties supportive of a new and united Ireland must reflect next steps in their election manifestos, with particular reference to the options and indicative timeline outlined.
- A Programme for Government commitment to preparation for constitutional change with the required governmental, political and civic structures and resources included.
- A guarantee that planning for constitutional change will be given direct governmental attention as an agreed and specific objective. The outcome can be achieved in several ways. That is why our focus is on outlining options. For example, the work might be undertaken through a dedicated department with the task of coordinating preparations, delivering ambitious proposals and promoting a 'whole of government' approach. We accept that there are other ways of doing this. If the Shared Island Initiative does continue, in any form, it must expand to align with this new overarching governmental focus.
- The establishment of a dedicated Joint Committee of the Oireachtas on the Constitutional Future of the island of Ireland.
- The creation of a standing All-Island Civic Forum/Assembly/Dialogue as a mechanism to assist in the promotion of inclusive deliberation before, during and after. This must be resourced adequately and supplemented with additional civic initiatives, including work with universities. We suggest imagination and creativity in designing the best possible civic mechanism to support participation on an ongoing basis. There are matters that will not be resolved before the referendums take place.
- Public bodies and civil society organisations across the island must consider the implications of constitutional change for their strategic planning processes.

- Human rights, equality and environmental impact assessments – and associated values – must shape every stage. There is much to learn from the innovative approaches already being used by civil society. The opportunity exists for a New Ireland to be world-leading in advancing transformative change.
- The Irish Government must make effective use of its international partnerships to signal its intentions and prepare the diplomatic ground. The global goodwill towards this unifying project must be harnessed.
- A binding Joint Declaration must be adopted by both governments, within the framework of the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference. This Declaration to be informed by widespread consultation on the management of all stages of the referendum process in each jurisdiction.





# I. The Framework: Our Approach ►

## What does the Good Friday Agreement say?

The Agreement provides a framework for the process of Irish reunification. What does it mean to make this statement? Here we set out our current thoughts on the proper approach.

First, this is a matter of law and politics, a carefully negotiated constitutional compromise that is foundational to our peace settlement. The Agreement is international law – a bilateral treaty (the British–Irish Agreement) between Ireland and the UK – with legal obligations falling on both states. Aspects of the Agreement have been enshrined in legislation in Ireland and the UK, notably in changes to Bunreacht na hÉireann and the enactment of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. While the new version of Articles 2 and 3 prioritise uniting the people of Ireland, the constitutional imperative of achieving a united Ireland remains.

The Irish Government and State are obliged to work towards this outcome. In that specific sense, Ireland is not neutral on the constitutional question. The Agreement is also a multi-party political agreement that has been supplemented, including by the St Andrews Agreement 2006.

Whilst the absence of the DUP from the talks in 1998 is well known, if anything, the Agreement has grown in political stature since then. This was evident in the approach to the 25th anniversary, with the visit of President Biden and the major events held. The scale and extent of international political support remain impressive. The Agreement – unlike other such documents – enjoyed renewed overwhelming popular endorsement across the island of Ireland and internationally.

We recognise that for some communities, enthusiasm and support for the Good Friday Agreement has waned since May 1998. We wish to be sensitive to their concerns but abide by the belief that in the interests of legal and political viability, all arguments about our future constitutional status must comply with the Agreement. Taken together this means that only good faith arguments that are 'Agreement credible' stand any chance of influencing law, policy and practice and thus shaping the next stages.

The following reflects the present thinking of Ireland's Future:

- The process will be framed by a good faith interpretation of the requirements of the relevant sections of the Agreement. Our view is that this constitutional compromise is the foundation stone on which everything else flows. This has substantive and procedural implications for governmental, political and civic processes.
- There must be no preconditions imposed that infringe what has been negotiated and agreed on the right of self-determination. The constitutional compromise of 1998 is fundamental. The content of the Agreement already provides a significant limitation on the exercise of the right of self-determination and neglecting this basic fact is a serious mistake. There is, for example, no requirement to achieve 'reconciliation' (however this concept is defined) in advance of a referendum being held and our view is that any such objective will only follow the transition to new constitutional arrangements on our shared island. Reunification is a reconciliation project.
- The right to self-determination belongs to the people of the island of Ireland alone and must be freely and concurrently exercised without external impediment. While there is – quite rightly – considerable focus on the principle of consent, the significance of this all-island dimension is not sufficiently appreciated.
- The choice is: the union with Britain or a united Ireland. Agreement compliance requires that no other constitutional options are permissible.
- Concurrent referendums will take place on the same date. We believe that people, North and South, will vote on the same day, with due regard for the distinctive constitutional traditions in each jurisdiction. We underline that constitutional change will not happen

without a majority of the eligible electorate in the north voting for it – respect for the principle of consent guides our work.

- The outcome will be decided in each jurisdiction by a 50%+1 majority.
- We remain determined to secure decisive endorsement for our preferred outcome, north and south, and we are conscious of the need for robust guarantees and assurances on, for example, equality, rights, and mutual respect. We acknowledge and fully accept how challenging constitutional change may be for many in Northern Ireland and we will work hard to embed meaningful protections. The process and outcome will benefit, for example, from regular equality and rights-based impact assessments and we note the significant and valuable role of international oversight, advice and support in the past.
- The preparatory work should be completed in advance to ensure transparency and to assist in an orderly post-referendum transition (if people opt for change). This should not, however, become an elaborate obstacle to securing a time frame for a referendum. It may be, for example, that mechanisms will be necessary after the referendums to resolve matters fully that cannot be taken forward before the vote. We note, for example, the approach adopted under the Agreement to advance further work. Our call is therefore for as much advance clarification as is possible and appropriate to enable the electorate to make a fully informed decision. The necessity of giving people a definitive choice should not be lost in endless wrangling over competing visions of the present and future.
- As we highlighted in our earlier document *Rights, Citizenship and Identity in a United Ireland* (2021), proposals for a new and united Ireland must accord with relevant guarantees, including those of the Agreement. It is vital to underline that constitutional change will take place within the framework of obligations – including international standards – that must be respected. There is also clear scope to learn the lessons from international and comparative experience to reflect a best practice approach to constitutional arrangements in a new and united Ireland if, for example, there is a preference for the development of a new constitution.
- We have made clear elsewhere our ongoing commitment to wide and deep civic engagement across the island of Ireland and we once again stress the need for an innovatively designed all-island Assembly/Forum/Dialogue. Our overarching focus is on the achievement of effective and sustained all-island civic inclusion. We continue to recognise and accept that there are different ways to achieve this objective.
- The governmental context should not be neglected and there is a real risk of the Irish Government neglecting its existing obligations. History demonstrates where this leads and the tragic consequences of leaving matters of profound public interest to civic/private organisations/institutions alone.



- The process of constitutional change should be preceded by intensive dialogue within the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference designed to achieve agreement on the approach both governments will take. Despite much of the rhetoric around this debate, it is not in keeping with the rights and obligations enshrined in the Agreement for the British government to proceed on an arbitrary and unilateral basis.
- The overall role of the British Secretary of State, British Government and Westminster Parliament is conceived essentially as an enabling one. The objective is to facilitate a choice that will be exercised in each jurisdiction by the people of the island of Ireland. The obligations flowing from the Agreement – on the nature of the right and of rigorous impartiality – are clear and distinctive with regard to the limitations placed on the role of the British Government.
- It is worth re-emphasising that the electoral franchise in the North should reflect modern trends towards inclusion, for example, on age and nationality. Given the practical impact for everyone in the region, the selection of franchise should aim for maximum participation. Any decision taken by the British Government must follow extensive consultation and include a credible human rights and equality impact assessment. This is a matter that requires urgent attention given the nature of the relevant tests.
- We have set out our position on a range of other matters in previous documents and in a variety of public interventions and we invite people to continue to engage with these materials.

Our view is that the principal parameters for the referendum process are largely settled. Our belief in participative and deliberative forums across the island remains strong. However, we believe that both governments must play a complementary leadership role in mapping out in unambiguous terms the time frame and key stages. This is a legal, political and moral imperative.

Enough is known now for proper and focused planning to commence. In a post-conflict society we believe the weight of emphasis should be on honest and open planning for a border poll. The notion that this should be triggered in an arbitrary and unilateral manner by the British Government – without extensive preparation, planning and political/civic groundwork – should be firmly rejected.



## II. Preparing the Ground: Towards a Programme for a New Ireland ►

### 2030 will be The Agreement's 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary. Why is that the right time to hold a unity referendum and what must be done between now and then?

Our strong view is that the focus should now be on preparing the ground for referendums that we anticipate being held this decade. In the year 2030 the people of Ireland, north and south, should be given a choice in concurrent referendums and we have outlined a proposed timetable in this document. Our aim in this section is to outline the preparatory steps that should be considered with the intention of producing a compelling *Programme for a New Ireland*.

Here we make several recommendations for consideration by the Irish government, all political parties considering the constitutional future, and civil society, but these proposals are advanced to promote discussion across Irish society.

A starting point is that the work must be a prominent feature of the plans of the next Irish Government. The strongest possible governmental signal must be sent that this is now a central pillar of public policy for Ireland. That means inclusion in election manifestos and the Programme for Government, and we note in this regard the origins and remit of the current Shared Island Unit and initiatives. We see no need to abandon or diminish the impressive work that has already been completed and, in our view, a new and united Ireland is a shared island. There never was a tension between these concepts.

The Programme for Government of the next Irish Government should contain a clear commitment to completing the preparatory work for a border poll and commencing the necessary conversations with the British Government.

The production of a comprehensive Green Paper within the first six months of a new government taking office would assist in mapping out a broad consultative process for the necessary work aligned with the establishment of the institutional framework we recommend here.

We accept fully that there is scope for divergence of opinion – even among those who support a united Ireland – on the best way to reach our preferred outcome and we emphasise that this is a discussion paper intended to assist public deliberation.

There are different models of governmental, political and civic action that may be adopted. What matters more than formal titles is a clear commitment to face into the task. The creation of a dedicated government department that will lead this collective effort is a way forward with considerable merit. A Minister advancing this project, with sufficient powers and resources to do so, is an attractive option. The existing Shared Island Unit, within the Department of the Taoiseach, has done valuable work and we acknowledge its contribution. If the broader Shared Island Initiative does continue – in some form – it must be more expansive and ambitious in terms of reunification. We are relaxed about the language used to describe this governmental work, as long as the substantive objectives are as outlined here, and the work is conducted as a 'whole of government' planning exercise. It is essential that whatever model is eventually adopted a joined-up approach is promoted.

**We recommend a Programme for Government commitment to planning and preparation for constitutional change with a clear outline of the required governmental, political and civic structures, resources and practical steps.**

Oireachtas Committees have already undertaken productive work on these matters, for example, the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and the Seanad Public Consultation Committee on the Constitutional Future of the Island of Ireland. A dedicated committee must be created as a forum for civic and political engagement and drawing in relevant expertise throughout the planning phase. It could, for example, be assisted in this task through the recruitment and appointment of specialist expert advisers. In particular, the Committee will work closely with the relevant governmental structures and the All-Island Civic Forum/Assembly/Dialogue (noted below) – including receiving updates and reports.

**We recommend the establishment of a dedicated Joint Committee of the Oireachtas on the Constitutional Future of the island of Ireland.**

An All-Island Civic Forum/Assembly/Dialogue will be established to promote intensive participation and engagement across the island drawing on lessons learned from existing deliberative forums in Ireland and internationally. The deliberative mechanism adopted could be usefully assisted by the appointment of an Advisory Panel drawing on local and global expertise and experience, in addition to a Steering Group working closely with the appointed Chair.

From the beginning of our work, we have placed a strong emphasis on inclusive participative processes, thus our central recommendation for an all-island Citizens' Assembly. The template used for Citizens' Assemblies in Ireland will need, however, to be adjusted to achieve our basic objectives, but the principled idea remains. It is essential to the long-term success of this project that it does not become an elite-led and driven process that neglects serious engagement with the people of the island of Ireland. Significant effort should be invested in ensuring that there is a sense of wide public ownership of the transition process. Our recommendation here has the flexibility to ensure that attention remains on the desired objective of inclusive all-island participation rather than the precise institutional vehicle of delivery. We do note again, however, the impressive track record in Ireland of deliberative forums. Serious consideration should be given to ensuring that the mechanism that is created continues to function throughout the process of reunification.

**We recommend the creation of a standing All-Island Civic Forum/Assembly/Dialogue as one mechanism to assist in the promotion of inclusive deliberation before, during and after constitutional change. The model adopted should be innovative, draw on lessons learned from existing processes (including on appointments), and reflect best international and comparative practice. It could be assisted, as appropriate, by the appointment of an Advisory Panel and a Steering Group working closely with the Chair and secretariat.**

The suggested steps outlined above incorporate the roles of the next Irish Government and Oireachtas in preparatory work with the defined purpose of producing a compelling case for a New Ireland. This will only be part of the picture and is not intended to discourage the many productive ongoing civic initiatives and conversations, including those taking place in universities across these islands and internationally. As outlined above, we believe all these mechanisms and initiatives should be resourced and facilitated to draw extensively on local and global expertise and experience.

In our view, a well-managed combination of complementary governmental, political and civic dialogue stands the best chance of producing a persuasive case for change within the time frame identified in this discussion paper.

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TOGETHER WE

SATURDAY 1ST OCTOBER 1PM | 3A

Ireland's  
Future  
Teachtal na hÉireann



### III. Delivering an Informed Choice ►

#### How do we actually get to the point where a referendum is called?

Thus far we have addressed the work of preparing a case for change. An obvious related question is how a referendum will be called – keeping in mind once again the distinctive constitutional and legal traditions in each jurisdiction.

Ireland's Future is a civic movement advocating constitutional change. Our principal objective is to achieve a new and united Ireland. We are not, however, naïve about the challenges of securing a referendum and the opposition of some communities to such a move. We know the obstacles that will be placed in the way. Despite the exhaustive references to the principle of consent in our politics, we anticipate that there will be significant opposition to holding a referendum.

In our view, the British Government is unlikely to enable a border poll without a formal request from the Irish Government, reinforced by widespread international support. The Irish Government must therefore mobilise its international partnerships and networks – within all relevant international and supranational forums – to secure cooperation and support for its desired outcome. The strength and effectiveness of these diplomatic efforts were evident during the Brexit negotiations, and this must once again be operationalised to ensure people are given a choice about their own future.

**We recommend the Irish Government – in line with new Programme for Government commitments – must make effective use of its international partnerships to signal its intentions and prepare the diplomatic ground for a border poll.. A priority focus in such engagements is facilitating an informed choice about the constitutional future for the people of the island of Ireland.**

Recent years have seen increased focus on the precise parameters of the relevant provisions of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and these have been tested in court. While there are prescribed constraints, the dominant theme is one of political flexibility. This has led to considerable speculation about opinion polls, electoral evidence, and demographic shifts. While the British Secretary of State enjoys a wide discretion to commence this process at any time there is also a duty to do so if it 'appears likely' a majority would vote for change.

Our response to the current position is unequivocal: enough is known now to begin the relevant processes and outline a time frame. We reject the notion of a unilateral and arbitrary approach by the British Government and suggest that intergovernmental dialogue should instead proceed as a matter of urgency. Discussion should be initiated within the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference with a view to securing agreement on how each government plans to approach the referendum process in its jurisdiction in line with the values, principles and obligations of the Agreement. Our view is that the governments should commit to giving the people a constitutional choice via a referendum at some stage in the year 2030. This has the advantage of offering a focused time frame while providing sufficient flexibility over a twelve month period.

**We recommend that a binding Joint Declaration to be adopted by both governments within the framework of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference in the context of wider consultations with relevant intergovernmental/supranational organisations such as the UN, Council of Europe, and EU in line with new Programme for Government commitments.**

Taking fully into account the distinctive political, legal and constitutional traditions in each jurisdiction, giving effect to the intergovernmental agreement noted above, and respecting the obligations highlighted in this discussion paper and elsewhere, each government should then commence preparations for the required referendums.

## IV. Next Steps: An Invitation to a Conversation about Constitutional Choice and Change ►

### Do you want to play your part?

We offer this discussion document as a contribution by Ireland's Future to deliberations on the next steps. Our view is that the lack of certainty about the way forward, and the failure to confront the inevitable challenges is short-sighted and potentially destabilising. Whatever position is held about the constitutional future, both governments, political parties, our business community and civil society need clarity and there is a strong public interest in advancing this project.

Our intention is to facilitate dialogue and the suggestions made here are aimed at building sufficient consensus among those who wish to prepare well for constitutional change. We are clear about our preferred outcome and how it should be delivered, but equally, we believe that the denial of an informed choice is ill-judged and unsustainable. We therefore invite anyone who cares about democratic consent in a post-Brexit environment to join with us in these deliberations. We look forward to the conversations ahead.





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## Conclusion ▶

The focus of our discussion paper is on providing practical options for those who are serious about embarking on a pathway to change in Ireland. The origins of our own work rest on a profound commitment to equality and rights-based approaches. We are building an Ireland that will be a better place for everyone.

Our emphasis on participation remains deliberate. We want to maximise engagement in these constitutional conversations, and as a civil society organisation we have made our views known on substantive questions about the future. We take this opportunity to underline once again our commitment to inclusion in a new and united Ireland. It is apparent from much public comment that there continues to be a lack of awareness about protections and guarantees for the unionist/loyalist community. We reaffirm that we will strive to ensure that the Ulster British community feels comfortable, safe and secure in the new arrangements and will therefore play a leading part in making a success of the outcome. Not simply as a matter of fine political rhetoric but through the enactment of legal obligations that will fully respect what has already been agreed. For example, the right to identify and be accepted as British or Irish or both.

We know, accept and welcome the fact that this will prompt challenging discussions. But this island must learn the hard lessons from the mistakes of the past – on all sides – and use the opportunity that a border poll will present to deliver imaginative and creative constitutional, legal and political solutions. This is why we will continue to reach out to all communities in a spirit of generosity and accommodation.





# Indicative Timeframe with Suggestions and Options 2024 – 2030

	Suggestions & Options for Irish Government & Parties	Republic of Ireland	NI, GB, EU and Rest of World
<b>2024</b>			
June	Pathway to Change event - SSE Arena, Belfast		
September	Election Manifesto commitments to the development of planning for a Programme for a New and united Ireland		
November	Possible Irish General Election		Possible British General Election
Nov/Dec/Jan	Possible timeframe for negotiation of a Programme for Government		
<b>2025</b>			
January	Government formed New Government firmly commits to working in a focused and determined way towards securing a border poll during its term of office and completing relevant preparatory work	Critical role of social partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Trade Unions</li> <li>■ Business Groups</li> <li>■ The Wheel</li> <li>■ Irish Farmers' Association</li> <li>■ Conradh na Gaelige</li> <li>■ GAA</li> <li>■ Womens' Council</li> <li>■ Etc</li> </ul>	Critical role of social partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Trade Unions</li> <li>■ Business Groups</li> <li>■ NICVA</li> <li>■ Ulster Farmers' Union</li> <li>■ Conradh na Gaelige</li> <li>■ GAA</li> <li>■ Womens' Council</li> <li>■ Etc</li> </ul>
January - June	Potential establishment of Institutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Government Department</li> <li>■ Shared Island Unit reform</li> <li>■ All-Island Civic Dialogue</li> <li>■ Oireachtas Joint Committee</li> </ul>	A critical element for setting the agenda and co-ordination is a Cabinet sub-committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Potential for 3-5 ministers</li> <li>■ Exists to coordinate across Departments</li> <li>■ Advisable to have Taoiseach and Tánaiste in this sub-committee given its importance</li> </ul>	Role for North-South Council

	Suggestions & Options for Irish Government & Parties	Republic of Ireland	NI, GB, EU and Rest of World
<b>2025</b>			
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ New Government department established</li> <li>■ And/or cabinet sub-committee</li> <li>■ And/or Shared Island Unit remit expanded and resourced to continue facilitating and supporting all-island initiatives and research in support of the broader shared island planning process</li> <li>■ Work begins to publish initial Green Paper in June 2025</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The organisation of government institutions and resources around this is important for effectiveness</li> <li>■ A potential alternative/ bolster to the Shared Island Initiative could be to take it out of the department (where it is currently a division with modest staff numbers) and make it a powerful arm's length agency with a remit to work across all Departments, gather expertise, co-ordinate evidence, generate research, engage internationally, and provide policy options and advice</li> </ul> <p>There was a successful strategy deployed during the Decade of Centenaries to engage local authorities to develop their own local commemorations, with funding allocated and city/ county managers engaged also. This model offers ideas for engaging local authorities in all-Ireland social, economic and cultural themes</p>	Shared Island Initiative potentially to fund numerous north/south twin-town initiatives, school exchanges and other practical projects that have not been explored to date
March	<p>Preparatory planning tabled at British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and government intentions noted with international partners, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ European Union</li> <li>■ Council of Europe</li> <li>■ United Nations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Formation of a Sovereign Reunification Fund</li> <li>■ Irish Government closely liaising with European Union regarding funding</li> <li>■ Irish Government also begin exploring potential financial outcomes with British Government</li> </ul>	Work required to closely engage Council of Europe and United Nations
June	Publication of initial Green Paper	Initial Green Paper to be followed by more detailed White Paper – in the form of the draft programme for a New and United Ireland to be published in January 2028	
<b>2025</b>			

	Suggestions & Options for Irish Government & Parties	Republic of Ireland	NI, GB, EU and Rest of World
June	<p>June 2025 - Dec 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Island wide national conversation or citizens' assemblies established and commence</li> <li>■ thematic formats including but not limited to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ health</li> <li>■ economy</li> <li>■ education</li> <li>■ constitutional reform</li> <li>■ infrastructure</li> <li>■ social protection</li> <li>■ justice, security and policing</li> <li>■ climate</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Process to last for period of 12- 18 months</p>	<p>These assemblies are popular and can be effective. A major theme now emerging across all public policy domains is planning for future generations in the context of climate change, i.e. what are the effects of a policy change on future generations rather than the current one</p>	<p>Some of the assemblies could be regionalised to ensure the north is covered, in any case the representation included in the assemblies should be carefully crafted to ensure as broad a section of the entire island is represented</p>
<b>2026</b>			
	<p>Ongoing national conversation on areas mentioned above</p> <p>Irish Government potential plan to synergise state agencies like Invest NI and IDA to bolster all island economy and jobs potential</p>	<p>Potential for public bodies – local authorities, state agencies and ministerial departments to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Integrate all-island dimensions to their work and budgeting plans.</li> <li>■ Integrate powerful state-owned companies in energy, transport and natural resources</li> <li>■ Consider a new public service for a modern state (a not unrelated issue in the context of technological change in how government operates) and the associated symbols and modes of organisation</li> </ul>	<p>Possible juncture for Irish diaspora to be deeply engaged. Across Britain, North America, Europe, Asia and Australia</p> <p>Irish America also has a role to play in terms of diplomacy</p>

	Suggestions & Options for Irish Government & Parties	Republic of Ireland	NI, GB, EU and Rest of World
<b>2027</b>			
January - March	Reports from national conversation process submitted as available to Joint Committee, Ministers, Government Departments, sub-committee and/or Shared Island Unit/Agency		
March - September	Governmental national consultation launched on a draft <i>Programme for a new and united Ireland</i>		
September - December	British and Irish Governments agree binding Joint Declaration committing to a timetable and a date for a referendum, the parameters of the referendum process, and relevant guidelines in the event of either outcome. All aspects of the referendum process to be agreed, voter age, eligibility etc	Cooperation between the NI Electoral Office and the Irish Electoral commission	Role for NI Electoral Office and any new process to be established
<b>2028</b>			
January	Irish Government presents its white paper, a <i>Programme for a new and united Ireland</i> as a framework document to assist the referendum campaigns for reunification, north and south. This is when the Irish Government presents their plans for a united Ireland should the referendum be won  Referendum campaign commences, including identification of the lead campaign themes	New Electoral Commission to be potentially involved in this, and in public information processes	
<b>2029</b>			
	Referendum campaign ongoing		
<b>2030</b>			
<b>2030</b>	Referendum held on the same day, as agreed by both governments, in each jurisdiction on the island of Ireland		

# Suggestions and Options for Period 2024 – 2030 ►

- A national civic dialogue is a necessity when planning for the potential of change. Previously the Government organised the all island civic dialogue on Brexit. This is a format which could be considered in the context of an all island civic dialogue on the future.
- A national, all island or shared island civic dialogue could be established with a focus on sectoral or thematic formats to examine the areas of health, finance, tax, education, economy, constitutional reform, infrastructure, social protection, justice, security, policing and any other issues pertaining to potential changes in the lives of citizens in the context of change.
- A series of citizens' assemblies on the future is one way to achieve civic dialogue. These would be different from any previous citizens' assembly as the composition would be drawn from across the entire island, something which has not been done before. Thought is required in selecting who and how many would attend. Selecting at random from the electoral register like previous assemblies would not work in this instance. The assemblies need to be representative of the people of Ireland as a whole. It might require an innovative or unique approach in order to get this particular form of citizens' assembly or national dialogue right.
- Ireland's Future suggests these assemblies and civic dialogues might last for between twelve and eighteen months and are followed by the publication of evidenced based reports, presented to the Department of Taoiseach, the Shared Island unit and any other relevant Government departments, notably a potential new department or minister with specific responsibility for planning for change and/or a potential new joint Oireachtas committee (as presented below).
- Ireland's Future asks the current Government and future Governments to;
  - consider the establishment of a department solely dedicated to planning and preparing in advance of a referendum **and/or**
  - consider the appointment of a cabinet Minister with responsibility for overseeing the portfolio **and/or**
  - consider the formation of a cabinet sub-committee with potential to include three to five ministers (including Taoiseach and Tánaiste) and exist to coordinate across departments **and/or**
  - consider potential alternative/bolster to the Shared Island unit to take it out of the department (where it is currently a division with modest staff numbers) and make it a powerful arm's length agency with a remit to work across all Departments, gather expertise, co-ordinate evidence, generate research, engage internationally, and provide policy options and advice.



- Ireland's Future suggests that consideration is given to the formation of a joint Oireachtas committee solely to examine issues that require careful planning and preparation ahead of potential change.
- Ireland's Future suggests that thought should be given to how the Shared Island unit remit is immediately widened, expanded and resourced. This has proved to be a valuable project. Consideration should be given to establishing ways for the work of the Shared Island unit to intensify and increase in the immediate period ahead.
- We ask political parties to consider committing to working in a focussed and determined way to secure a border poll in or around the year 2030 and complete all of the relevant preparatory work in advance.
- We ask the Government, both current and future, to give consideration to tabling the concept of planning and preparing for potential future change at a British Irish Intergovernmental Conference
- We encourage the Government, both current and future, to consider noting Governmental intentions with regard to planning and preparing for change, with international partners including the European Union, Council of Europe and the United Nations.
- We encourage the Government, both current and future to give consideration to the preparation of a green paper.
- We encourage the Government, both current and future to give consideration to the preparation of a draft Programme for a new and united Ireland and thereafter move to public consultation on this draft.





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