

The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund

Peace - Reconciliation - Support

REMEMBERING THE PAST BY BUILDING THE FUTURE

REPORT BY THE DIRECTORS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND MEMORIAL FUND

August 1999

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Minister for Victims, the Rt Hon Adam Ingram JP MP, of the deliberations, findings and conclusions of the Directors of the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund following the six months since their inaugural meeting in December 1998.

Background to the Government's Response to Victims

1.2 On 24 October 1997 the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP, announced the intention of establishing a commission "to look at possible ways to recognise the pain and suffering felt by victims of violence arising from the troubles of the last thirty years, including those who have died or been injured in service of the community".

1.3 On 19 November 1997 the Secretary of State wrote to Sir Kenneth Bloomfield with the following terms of reference: "to lead the commission and to examine the feasibility of providing greater recognition for those who have become victims in the last 30 years as a consequence of events in Northern Ireland, recognising that those events have also had appalling repercussions for many people not living in Northern Ireland".

1.4 Sir Kenneth published his report entitled '*We Will Remember Them*' in May 1998. His report contained twenty recommendations which considered ways of recognising, acknowledging and addressing the needs of those who had become victims as a consequence of events in Northern Ireland during the last thirty years.

1.5 The Secretary of State accepted the recommendations in Sir Kenneth's report and appointed the Right Honourable Adam Ingram JP MP as Minister for Victims. In June 1998 the newly appointed Victims' Minister set up the Victims Liaison Unit to begin to take this work forward, and an initial £5 million was allocated by the British Government to implement the recommendations in Sir Kenneth's report. One of Sir Kenneth's recommendations was that "consideration should be given to the creation of a fund to assist, in particular, children and young people affected by the death or injury of a parent". It became apparent following consultations with many victims/survivors, and those groups which represent and support them, that such a fund should not be exclusive of the wider needs of victims and should be a living memorial to those who have suffered and continue to suffer. In response to this, the Victims' Minister announced his intention to establish a Memorial Fund that would address some of the very real problems faced by many victims/survivors, and pledged an initial donation of £1 million.

1.6 On 23 December 1998 the Victims' Minister announced the appointment of nine Directors to administer the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund under the Chairmanship of Professor George Bain. In the months that followed, a further five Directors were appointed to the Fund, bringing the total to fourteen.

Terms of Reference

1.7 No formal written terms of reference were provided by the Minister. Following the first series of meetings, the Directors agreed the following **Terms of Reference**:

The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund will seek to identify the needs of those who have suffered and continue to suffer as a result of events in Northern Ireland and assist and support them, and those involved in the provision of support for them, in a practical and meaningful way.

Mission Statement

1.8 The Directors agreed the following **Mission Statement**:

The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund will promote Peace and Reconciliation by Supporting the Victims of the 'Troubles'.

Theme

1.9 The Directors agreed the following **Theme**:

Remembering the Past by Building the Future.

ESTABLISHING THE FUND

Meetings and Discussions

2.1 The Board of Directors of the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund held their inaugural meeting on 9 December 1998, and have met monthly since then. The initial meetings focused on identifying and developing the nature and direction of the Fund and involved discussions with members of the Touchstone Group.

2.2 The Directors also secured the services of Mr John Edmond and Miss Jane Wells, both PR and marketing consultants, working independently. The consultants were asked to advise the Directors on an appropriate strategy to develop and market the Fund both at home and abroad.

2.3 Following several discussions with both consultants, the theme "Remembering the Past by Building the Future" emerged. With the assistance of a copywriter, the following text was developed as a means of conveying the purpose of the Fund to a wide audience.

Remembering the Past by Building the Future

2.4 The people of Northern Ireland are moving towards a new millennium with real hope and confidence. The sense of belief that Northern Ireland is on the recovery path is overwhelming.

2.5 Northern Ireland has changed over the past number of years. Continuing peace initiatives, ceasefires and talks have led to a real sense of hope in the hearts and minds of the people of Northern Ireland. Despite setbacks, this hope and confidence in a brighter future continues to grow.

2.6 But for the casualties of thirty years of conflict, the relatives of over 3,600 people who lost their lives and over 40,000 individuals estimated to have been injured, the damage is permanent. For them life has irreversibly changed. For these tens of thousands of people to continue every day is an act of supreme courage that goes unnoticed, yet the power to forgive, to reconcile and to rebuild lies with them first, and the rest of the community afterwards.

2.7 Our survivors and victims can inspire us to do everything in our power to build a better future for everyone in Northern Ireland. Many have used their devastating experiences to make enormous contributions to the lives of others. In their lives lies the highest dignity: a belief that they can overcome and vanquish the dreadful injury inflicted on them. They are the examples the rest of the world will follow and learn from when seeking resolutions to conflict.

2.8 The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund seeks to ensure that our victims and survivors are remembered by providing them with help and support to aid them in building a better future for themselves. Their example of how to overcome adversity will be an example to the wider community.

2.9 The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund will seek to promote peace and reconciliation by supporting our victims and survivors.

2.10 As a result of these consultations, the Directors identified the following principles by which the Fund should operate.

Timescale

2.11 Current proposals are based on a five year period. The Directors consider it unrealistic to make longer term plans at present.

Victims

2.12 It is not the Fund's responsibility or remit to define victimhood; that is a matter for the wider community. The Fund will distribute its resources based on the needs of victims and not the nature of victimhood.

Response

2.13 The Fund's response should add to the services and support that are currently available from both the statutory and voluntary sectors. The Fund will initially endeavour to direct its resources into areas that are either not currently being provided by, or the responsibility of, the voluntary or statutory services. In developing its response, the Fund will remain particularly conscious of those who have suffered and continue to suffer financial hardship as a direct result of their personal experiences.

Funding

2.14 The Fund will be primarily a donor-driven organisation. It will actively seek contributions from donors at home and abroad, and indeed the wider community in Northern Ireland. However, the Directors are conscious that the Fund is a clear reflection of Government policy in relation to victims. For this reason, and because the Directors anticipate that the demands of the Fund will outstrip the fundraising

capabilities of the Directors, the Fund will seek regular financial support from the Government for the duration of its existence.

Establishing the Memorial Fund

2.15 The Directors were advised to establish the Fund as a company, limited by guarantee and having charitable status, rather than a Trust Fund. The Directors employed the services of Mr Alan Hewitt, L'Estrange and Brett Solicitors, to take this forward and the Fund was registered with the Registrar of Companies on 18 May 1999. The Fund was also awarded charitable status for tax purposes by the Inland Revenue on 18 May 1999. The fund received the £1 million contribution from the NIO on 18 June 1999.

IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS OF VICTIMS

3.1 The Board of Directors met on two separate occasions with members of the Touchstone Group. Both meetings provided the Directors with the opportunity to discuss what the cross section of Groups represented by Touchstone perceived the immediate needs of victims to be. Both of these meetings proved to be very informative and gave the Directors a good indication of where the Memorial Fund should initially focus its response. In addition, a number of Directors visited several Victim Support Groups to discuss the needs and concerns of individual victims from different communities. These meetings demonstrated the extent to which some victims continue to suffer as a result of their personal experiences. The Directors also met with a variety of interested parties, individuals and groups in the course of their deliberations.

Following these consultations and discussions, five broad areas of need were identified:

Pain Relief and Respite Care

3.2 Waiting lists for individuals requiring treatment for pain relief are considered unacceptably lengthy by those victims using the service. ~~At present there is only one trained specialist and this person is not yet in post.~~ Additionally, wheelchairs and artificial limbs supplied by the Health Service are generally considered by victims to be heavy and less attractive than those available privately or from sources in other countries.

* Line deleted as per C Mc Cormick minute (VLU) 1.10.99

Trauma and Counselling Services

3.3 As the peace process and the political process move forward, many people now feel comfortable enough to come forward to seek counselling. The statutory sector does provide some services in this area, particularly in the case of severe trauma counselling. However, many feel there is a stigma attached to the use of statutory services and victims have indicated a general preference to receive first-stage counselling from within their own support groups and local communities. For the most part, counselling is bought-in by support groups, but there is, unfortunately, no standardisation of counselling services, nor is there an accredited Northern Ireland Training Standard.

Relief/Support Fund to Assist Victims Suffering Financial Hardship

3.4 Over 90% of those killed were male. In many cases they were the main breadwinner. This situation, which in many cases was compounded by inadequacies in the compensation system particularly prior to 1988, has resulted in many families suffering long-term financial hardship. This unfortunate result continues to impact on a daily basis with many families struggling to make ends meet.

Training and Educational Assistance for Children and Adults

3.5 The education of many children and adults has been interrupted and affected by their personal experiences. The Educational Bursary Pilot Scheme run by the Victims Liaison Unit, which targeted a specific category of victim (those who were in education when the incident occurred) demonstrated and confirmed the need to provide educational assistance and re-training to a broad spectrum of victims.

Networking, Lobbying, and Information Services

3.6 Groups supporting victims tend to find their own sources of funding and often follow their own path to acquire funding for their organisations. There is no collective or co-operative approach to funding and services and, as the availability of future funding looks uncertain, it has been suggested that groups will need to network more closely, share information and services and lobby as a collective force.

Developing the Fund's Response

3.7 Having agreed the five broad areas, the Directors divided into five committees, each comprising three Directors. Each committee was tasked with researching and developing how the Fund might initially respond to their specific area of need. Each committee met with a variety of relevant individuals and groups to discuss the extent of the need and how the Fund might respond appropriately. For some committees this was an easier task than for others, as information and research indicating the likely extent of the problem, or the level of services currently available to victims, was not readily available in some of the five areas targeted.