

UNITY NEWS

#TIME4UNITY
#AM LE HAONTACTH

NUAHT NA HAONTACTHA

AUGUST LÚNASA 2021

BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM FOR UNITY



CHECK IT OUT!

More pictures from CLIMB FOR UNITY events across Ireland

PAGE
3



Activism was at the heart of the campaign for Irish Unity in July. Hundreds of party members took to the hills and mountains of Ireland to raise the banner for a United Ireland. At the same time Uachtarán Mary Lou McDonald held a two hour meeting with ANC and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa in which co-operation on Irish Unity topped the agenda.

The conversation on Irish Unity continues to grow with more and more groups, academics, columnists and individuals saying there is a need to plan for Irish Unity. Along with Sinn Féin many have also been publicly calling on the Irish government to organise a Citizen's Assembly to discuss and prepare for constitutional change. Nowhere has this been more obvious than in the growing number of Gaels signing letters to An Taoiseach Micheál Martin urging him to establish a Citizen's Assembly. Thousands have now become part of this important initiative.

A welcome addition to this was the call by SDLP leader Colm Eastwood on 23 July for the Irish government to establish a Citizen's Assembly. Eastwood's view that the discussion needs to involve as many people as possible and must ultimately "come from government" is one that would be shared by all of us calling for the Unity Referendum and Citizen's Assembly. Change needs to be planned for.

July also saw the publication of a paper by Philip

McGuinness of Dundalk Institute of Technology which looked at electoral results in the North and compared the 1921 election results with the 2019 local government election on a county by county basis. This report suggests that on the basis of election returns four counties - Derry, Armagh, Tyrone and Fermanagh - now have nationalist majorities while in Antrim and Down pro-union voters make up slightly less than 50 per cent of the vote. This is further evidence of underlying electoral shifts in the North.

A headline in the Tory paper The Express revealed that the former Irish Ambassador to Britain Bobby McDonagh told LBC radio in London two weeks ago that Brexit has lent momentum to the debate on Irish Unity. McDonagh acknowledged that the Irish government "don't want to set timeframes" on when the unity referendum will be held but "Brexit has speeded up the process". The former Ambassador to London revealed that his preference was that the issue of unity should be put off for several more decades - a position shared by many in the Dublin establishment - "But of course Brexit has forced the issue somewhat up the agenda."

Another factor in the conversation around the future of Ireland is the attitude of the British public. According to a poll published last week for the New Statesman a third of people in Britain (34%) do not feel connected

to the people of the North. Only 10 per cent felt very connected.

The poll reflects a lack of interest in Irish affairs among British voters. It's worth remembering that another poll in 2019 found that Conservative Party members were willing to sacrifice the North to achieve Brexit.

The New Statesman report concludes: "Ultimately, the polling suggests Britain lacks a strong desire for Northern Ireland to remain part of the Union: 38 per cent say they neither support nor oppose Irish unification. This is compared with 30 per cent expressing support for unification and only 11 per cent opposing it (21 per cent don't know)."

So, the debate on Irish Unity is well advanced. We need more people to engage with it and for those of us who are United Irelanders to redouble our efforts. This is especially important in reaching out to neighbours and workmates and others who are unionist or nationalist or neither but who are not yet persuaded of the merits of unity. This means having a conversation. Not lecturing or hectoring but an open, friendly discussion in which all of those many issues that give people pause for concern, can be discussed in a socially inclusive and responsible way.

#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht



UNITING IRELAND ENGAGEMENTS WITH YOUTH ACTIVISTS

Over the months of June and July the Uniting Ireland Project held a series of meetings with party activists under the age of 30. Gerry Adams, Emma McArdle and Grace McDermott led the UI team. All of the meetings, which were organised in conjunction with the party's regional secretaries, were well attended and the engagements with the youth members were insightful and thought provoking.

There is an obvious desire among the activists who attended to be involved in the campaign for a United Ireland and already there are plans to mount a Uniting Ireland trailer billboard in Monaghan and large numbers of young people participated in the recent Climb for Unity.

The Uniting Ireland Group will meet again with young activists in the Autumn to discuss how they can be fully involved in the national campaign and how they can develop their own UI campaigns and activities.

These meetings are also essential to ensure that the unity campaign message is resonating both with young party members and other young people who may not be politically affiliated.

BORDER CORRIDOR COUNCILLORS' MEETING ON UNITY

On 15th July Sinn Féin's National Councillors' Forum hosted the inaugural meeting of Border Corridor Councillors.

Sinn Féin is by far the largest political party along the border region and many of our councillors are involved in cross border groups such as the Irish Central Border Area Network or ICBAN which was founded in 1995. Eight Councils which straddle both sides of the border are members of ICBAN whose focus is on promoting cross-border co-operation and communication at a Local Government level and on common regional development concerns. Other cross border groups include the Northwest Strategic Partnership, East Border Region and the Newry Mourne and Down/Louth County Council MOU Committee.

Each of these groups is responsible for the administration of huge amounts of funding for projects which develop links in border areas. These projects deliver real benefit for people living in that region. There is a very practical synergy between the work of these groups and the Uniting Ireland Project and there is also huge scope to develop a Border Unity Campaign which our elected reps along the border corridor will be central to.

There was a strong appetite among attendees for the meeting to be reconvened in September and the National Councillors Forum is currently considering how best to advance this initiative.



Chris Hazzard MP, Mary Lou McDonald TD, Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC and Declan Kearney MLA.

Irish Unity tops the agenda of ANC & Sinn Féin meeting

Following a series of meetings between Sinn Féin and African National Congress (ANC) representatives in recent months, President of the ANC, Comrade Cyril Ramaphosa and Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD, held a two hour virtual bilateral in July.

The Sinn Féin delegation was led by Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD and included National Party Chairperson Declan Kearney MLA, and former Party President Gerry Adams. ANC President Cyril Ramaphosa was joined by ANC National Chairperson Gwede Mantashe MP, ANC Deputy Secretary-General Jessie Yasmin Duarte, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Alvin Botes MP, and ANC Treasurer General Paul Shipokosa Mashatile.

The two hour long conversation marks an important stage in the strengthening cooperation between the two parties, and between Ireland and South Africa. Among the matters discussed was the growing conversation around and demand for the referendum on Irish Unity and for a United Ireland. President Ramaphosa reiterated the ANC's pro-active support for the process of democratic constitutional change in Ireland and its willingness as a party and as the government to assist in promoting Irish Unity within the international community.

The ANC leadership agreed to use its influence in government, at the level of the United Nations, the G20, and other multilateral institutions, to encourage international good will for a planned transition towards a united Ireland.

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald described the meeting as "important and productive and we look forward to continuing to work together and to help in deepening relations between our two countries."

She added:

"There are strong historic ties between our two parties. Irish republicans worked in solidarity with the ANC and the people of South Africa during the struggle against apartheid. The ANC provided significant support to the Sinn Féin during the development of the Irish Peace Process.

Just as the mobilisation of the international community was essential to bring apartheid to an end in South Africa, so too will progressive international support for Irish unity be important to achieve, and win a referendum on Irish unity, and to assist the process of positive constitutional change in Ireland."

Time 4 Unity **Am d'Aontacht**

CLIMB FOR IRISH UNITY

In bright sunshine and clear blue skies hundreds of Sinn Féin activists across the island put on their hiking boots over the weekend of 17 and 18 July to 'Climb for Irish Unity.'

From North Antrim to Mount Gabriel in West Cork; from Slieve Patrick in South Down to Slieve Gullion in South Armagh; from the Sugar Loaf to Bray Head; from Cnoc Chamais in Conamara to Knockavoe overlooking the River Foyle in west Tyrone; to Loughcrew and Patrickstown in Meath; from Carntogher to the Black Mountain and Cave Hill overlooking Belfast and at all parts in between hundreds of activists braved the scorching weather to climb summits and hills, small and large, with their banners and posters to promote the Irish Unity cause.

The epidemic of photographs on twitter and facebook of gorgeous views, across breathtaking landscapes, against clear blue skies were amazing.

SO, WELL DONE TO ALL. IT WAS A GREAT IDEA. LET'S DO IT AGAIN SOMETIME.



BRAY HEAD



CARNTOGHER SOUTH DERRY



BENBRADAGH



CNOC CHAMAIR CONAMARA



KNOCKAVOE, STRABANE



DOWNPATRICK HEAD, MAYO



CAVE HILL, BELFAST



MOUNT GABRIEL WEST CORK



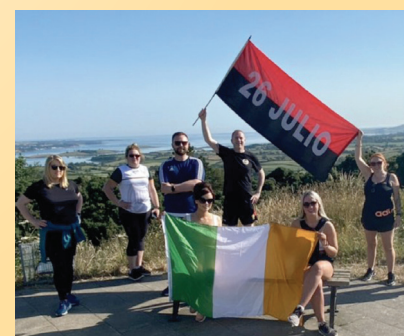
LOUGHCREW & PATRICKSTOWN, CO. MEATH



SUGAL LOAF



SLIEVE GULLION, SOUTH ARMAGH



SLIEVE PATRICK

#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht

Tyrone Gaels back call for Citizens Assembly

It began in May with over three thousand Antrim Gaels signing a public letter to An Taoiseach Micheál Martin and publishing an advert in the Irish News carrying all of their names. Their letter called on An Taoiseach to plan for the future of the island of Ireland in an inclusive manner. Specifically, they called on the Irish government to convene a Citizen's Assembly "reflecting the views of citizens North and South to achieve maximum consensus on a way forward" toward an "agreed shared Ireland."

In June over one thousand Fermanagh Gaels signed up to the letter and also calling on An Taoiseach Micheál Martin to "establish an All Island Citizen's Assembly." There was also evidence that Gaels in other counties were similarly organising. The County Tyrone letter has now attracted signatures from over two thousand Gaels. Among those who have so far signed the letter are Ultan Blee, Mickey Coleman, Ailise Coyle, Antoin Fox, Sean Harte, Rita Hannigan, Red Hand defender and All-star Ronan McNamee, the former footballer of the year, Stephen O'Neill, ladies star Siobhan Sheerin, Eugene McConnell and Sean Hurson. Conor Sally, Chair of Omagh St. Enda's has said that those behind the initiative want to send a clear message to the Taoiseach.

The family of Tyrone Gael Aidan McAnespie who was shot and killed by a British soldier is among those supporting the letter. They said: "Aidan was a proud Tyrone Gael and we, his family are proud to sign the letter to the Taoiseach calling on the Irish government to begin planning for Irish Unity. We urge all Tyrone Gaels to join us by hitting the link and adding your name to the letter - <https://forms.gle/NpBfdKT1THwLt8Z6>"

The Tyrone letter concludes:

"It is the responsibility of the Irish government to ensure that the democratic rights of all citizens are respected and protected, regardless of where they live on the island. This is important at times. But it is especially so now in the wake of Brexit. We urge you to start this process based on the vision of democratic change set out in the Good Friday Agreement. The planning needs to start now. We are committed to playing our part."

TYRONE GAELS' LETTER TO THE TAOISEACH

AN TAOISEACH, MÍCHEÁL MARTIN TD
OIFIG AN TAOISIGH
TITHE AN RIALTAIS
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2

A THAOISIGH,

WE WRITE TO YOU AS GAELS WHO ARE INVOLVED IN GAELIC GAMES IN COUNTY TYRONE. AS IRISH CITIZENS, WE BELIEVE THAT THE FUTURE PROSPERITY AND WELL-BEING OF ALL CITIZENS ON OUR ISLAND WILL BE BEST UPHELD LIVING IN EQUALITY TOGETHER IN AN AGREED SHARED IRELAND.

CONVERSATIONS ARE TAKING PLACE ACROSS SOCIETY REGARDING WHAT SHAPE OUR ISLAND WILL TAKE IN THE COMING PERIOD. THEY ARE ALSO HAPPENING AT EVERY LEVEL AMONGST THE GAA COMMUNITY. WE WANT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE LEAD IN PLANNING THESE DISCUSSIONS AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.

WE ARE ASKING THE GOVERNMENT TO ESTABLISH AN ALL ISLAND CITIZENS ASSEMBLY REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF CITIZENS NORTH AND SOUTH TO ACHIEVE MAXIMUM CONSENSUS ON A WAY FORWARD. GAELS ARE UNIQUELY WELL-PLACED AT THE VERY HEART OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO CONTRIBUTE CONSTRUCTIVELY TO THE CONVERSATION ON THE FUTURE OF THIS ISLAND. WE WANT TO ENCOURAGE CITIZENS FROM ALL TRADITIONS TO BE PART OF THIS DISCUSSION.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THAT THE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS OF ALL CITIZENS ARE RESPECTED AND PROTECTED, REGARDLESS OF WHERE THEY LIVE ON THE ISLAND. THIS IS IMPORTANT AT ALL TIMES. BUT IT IS ESPECIALLY SO NOW, IN THE WAKE OF BREXIT.

WE URGE YOU TO START THIS PROCESS, BASED ON THE VISION OF DEMOCRATIC CHANGE SET OUT IN THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT. THE PLANNING NEEDS TO START NOW. WE ARE COMMITTED TO PLAYING OUR PART.

IS MUIDNE LE MEAS.

ULTAN BLEE MICKEY COLEMAN TOMÁS COLTON AILISE COYLE
ANTOIN FOX RITA HANNIGAN SEAN HARTE
BRENDAN HURL SEAN HURSON EUGENE MCCONNELL
DONNA MCCRORY CIARAN MCGARVEY AOIBHINN MCHUGH
RYAN MCMENAMIN RONAN MCNAMEE STEPHEN O'NEILL
LORCÁN O'MÁIRTÍN CONOR SALLY
SIOBHAN SHEERIN NIALL SLUDDEN

LABOUR

AND THE CAUSE OF IRELAND



John Finucane MP

Responding to remarks by British Labour leader Keir Starmer during his visit to the North in early July North Belfast MP John Finucane said: "The future of our island and of how we as an island people share it together in peace, equality and inclusivity is our decision not Starmer's. That should also be the position of the British Labour Party." Starmer visited the North for two days and in the course of that visit he asserted his determination to stand "very much on the side of Unionists, arguing for Northern Ireland to remain in the UK". "I believe in the United Kingdom", he said. Starmer went on to claim that there is no prospect of a united Ireland in the foreseeable future. He said that such an eventuality is "not in sight".

Starmer's position is a rejection of the right of the Irish people to self-determination. It is also at odds with the Good Friday Agreement which specifically states that: "it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively and without external impediment, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given ..."

In his weekly blog (www.leargas.blogspot.com) Gerry Adams asked: "What part of 'it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone' and 'without external impediment' does Keir Starmer not understand? Has he no understanding of the divisive, negative, inept, condescending, violent contribution that successive British governments, including Labour governments, and successive British politicians, including Labour politicians, have had in Ireland?"

Gerry Adams reminds us that: "It was a British Labour Government which deployed the British Army on the streets of the North in August 1969. They should have faced down Ian Paisley and forced through civil rights reforms. Labour's failure to do this marked the beginning of decades of conflict."

Four years later under the direction of Labour Secretary of State for the North, Merlyn Rees political status was ended, the H-Blocks were built, the criminalisation and Ulsterisation policies were ruthlessly pursued and the conveyor belt system of torture, special Diplock courts, and changes to the rules of evidence, all began to take shape.

In April 1976 Rees was replaced by Roy Mason. His time in the North was marked by brutal beatings in the interrogation centres, house raids, arbitrary arrests, plastic bullets, shoot-to-kill operations, the blanket and no wash-protests in the H-Blocks and Armagh Women's prison, and state collusion with unionist death squads.

Tony Blair brought a new style to Labour and to its Irish policy. He was still a British unionist but was prepared to take risks for a peace process that the Tories had squandered. Jeremy Corbyn was for a United Ireland. And he was prepared to state that.

The current Labour leader - Keir Starmer - has now said he is for the Union and is prepared to ignore the principles of the Good Friday Agreement and back the unionist position. He has chosen to ignore the growing and widespread democratic debate currently taking place around the unity referendum and the prospect of a united Ireland.

Responding to Starmer North Belfast MP John Finucane said: "It is for the people of the island of Ireland to determine our own future. British interference has only made things worse. If Keir Starmer wants to keep repeating the mistakes of the past that is his choice but Irish Unity is the way forward and more and more Irish people are raising that demand."

#Time4Unity **Am d'Aontacht**

DEALING WITH THE LEGACY OF CONFLICT

In March Sinn Féin published 'Inclusion and Reconciliation in a New Ireland.'

Unity News has been serialising extracts from the paper which sets out Sinn Féin's position on promoting inclusion and reconciliation, ending sectarianism, addressing the issue of legacy and building an agreed New Ireland.

This month we address the issue of Legacy which now tops the political agenda following the proposals published on this issue in July by the British government.

Its proposals provide the clearest evidence yet of the British government's intent to hide its violent role in the conflict and to protect its armed forces.

The proposals show a complete disregard for the people of the north, for victims of the conflict, for our peace process and for the many agreements that have been reached, including the Stormont House Agreement in 2014 which dealt with this issue. Successive British governments without exception have connived in covering up the illegal and violence actions of policies and of its agents. In July the British binned the Good Friday Agreement. They binned the St. Andrew's Agreement. They binned the Eames Bradley proposals and the Stormont House Agreement. And they binned the New Decade New Approach Agreement. They set aside all of the previous conversations on addressing legacy and outlined a legislative course of action that will reinforce the policy of cover-up and denial.

Despite this the families have made clear their determination to #NeverGivingUp. In this new context the proposals contained in our policy paper are even more relevant. In our policy paper Sinn Féin states:

DEALING WITH THE LEGACY OF CONFLICT

The past cannot be changed or undone, nor can the suffering or pain experienced in our society be disowned.

It is vital that all conflict actors, including state actors, make a positive contribution to acknowledgement, reconciliation and healing.

There are victims and survivors on all sides.

There can be no hierarchy of victimhood when it comes to acknowledging the loss experienced by many families. Many still live with the psychological and physical scars of the conflict.

Sinn Féin acknowledges the grief associated with all lives lost, on all sides in the conflict.

All victims deserve acknowledgement of their pain and loss as a first step towards a healing process.

Sinn Féin believes that the best way to achieve that is through the establishment of an Independent International Truth Commission. This has always been our preferred model, but in an attempt to assist building a wider political consensus our Party compromised on this policy position and accepted the Stormont House legacy mechanisms agreed in 2015.

In furtherance of building that consensus, and in spite of British government bad faith and duplicity over the handling of legacy issues, Sinn Féin remains committed to:

Comprehensively dealing with the issue of legacy through the full human rights compliant implementation of legacy mechanisms outlined in the Stormont House Agreement;

- ✓ The delivery of high-quality services, which address the needs of all victims, including the provision of a pension for all seriously physically and psychologically injured;
- ✓ Embedding a gender sensitive approach to all mechanisms for dealing with the past;
- ✓ Continued engagement with families living with bereavement or serious injury including those affected by Republican actions. Sinn Féin is committed to progressing this work with compassion and humility.
- ✓ Exploring the transformative potential for an initiative of common acknowledgement. Such an initiative of common acknowledgement by all sides – British, Irish, Republican and Unionist – of the hurt and injustices caused by, and to each other, could introduce a powerful new dynamic to the Peace Process;
- ✓ Exploring how best to remember all victims of conflict in Ireland, and the introduction of a National Reconciliation Day.

THE INCLUSION AND RECONCILIATION PAPER IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT

<https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/60497>



DÉILEÁIL LE OIDHREACHTNACOIMHLINTE

Ní féidir an t-am atá thart a athrú nó a dhíchur, agus ní féidir an fhulaingt ná an phian atá inár sochaí a dhíbirt.

Tá sé ríthábhachtach go gcuirfidh gach gníomhaí coibhleachta, lena n-áirítear gníomhaíthe stáit, go dearfach le haitheantas, athmhuintearas agus leigheas. Tá íospartaigh agus marthanóirí ar gach taobh. Ní féidir aon ordlathas bua a bheith ann maidir le haitheantas a thabhairt don chailleadh agus a bhíonn ag go leor teaghlach. Tá a lán daoine fós ina gcónaí le coilim síceolaíochta agus fisiciúla na coimhlinte. Adhmaíonn Sinn Féin an trua a bhaineann leis an saol go léir a cailleadh, ar gach taobh sa choibhleacht. Tá aitheantas tuillte ag gach íospartach dá bpian agus dá gcaillteanas mar chéad chéim i dtreo próiseas ceasaithe. Creideann Sinn Féin gurb é an bealach is fear chun é sin a bhaint amach trí Choimisiún Fírinne Idirnáisiúnta

Neamhspleách a bhunú. Ba í seo an tsamhail ab fhearr a bhí again i gcónaí, ach in iarracht cabhrú le comhthoil pholaitiúil níos leithne a thógáil chuir ár bPáirtí isteach ar an seasamh beartais seo agus ghlac sé le meicníochtaí leagáide Theach Stormont a comhaontú in 2015.

Ar mhaithe leis an gcomhdharcadh sin a thógáil, agus in ainneoin droch-mheon agus dúbailt rialtas na Breataine maidir le láimhseáil saincheisteanna leagáide, tá Sinn Féin tiomanta i gcónaí:

- ✓ Déileáil go cuimsitheach le ceist na hoidhreachta trí chur i bhfeidhm iomlán na meicníochtaí leagáide a chomhlíontar i gComhaontú Theach Stormont;
- ✓ Seirbhísí ardchaighdeán a sholáthar, a thugann aghaidh ar riachtanais gach íospartach, lena n-áirítear pinsean a sholáthar do gach duine a gortaíodh go dona go fisiciúil agus go síceolaíoch;
- ✓ Cur chuige atá íogair ó thaobh inscne a leabú i Leith na meicníochtaí uile chun déileáil leis an am atá thart;
- ✓ Rannpháirtíocht leanúnach le teaghlach a chónaíonn le méala nó gortú tromchúiseach lena n-áirítear iad siúd a dtéann gníomhartha Poblachtacha i bhfeidhm orthu. Tá Sinn Féin tiomanta don obair seo a chur chun cinn le comhbhá agus le hómós.
- ✓ Iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar acmhainneacht chlaochlaitheach thionscnamh admhála coitianta. D'fhéadfadh tionscnamh den sórt sin ina n-adhmaíonn gach taobh – na Breataine, na hÉireann, na Poblachta agus an Aontachaithe - an gortú agus na héagóracha a rinne, agus dá chéile, dinimic chumhachtach nua a thabhairt isteach sa Phróiseas Síochána;
- ✓ Iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar an mbealach is fearr le híospartaigh coibhleachta in Éirinn a mheabhrú, agus Lá Náisiúnta Athmhuintearais a thabhairt isteach.

What can Activists do to promote Inclusion and Reconciliation as we move towards a New Ireland?



- ✓ Inform yourself of the content and proposals for inclusion and reconciliation in this document.
- ✓ Discuss these proposals with comrades.
- ✓ Engagement is key. Be proactive!
- ✓ Be proactive in challenging sectarianism whatever its source. Republicans should have a zero tolerance for all discriminatory language.
- ✓ Develop your own local public anti sectarianism campaign.
- ✓ Create platforms for calm and reasoned exchange of views.
- ✓ Could your area arrange an online panel discussion on anti-sectarianism?
- ✓ Continue to reach out and engage with those from a unionist/loyalist background.
- ✓ Hold meetings with trade unionists; and defined religious organisations, Protestant and Catholic; members of business organisations like the CBI and traders' bodies and those sporting organisations who are interested to discuss the issue with us.
- ✓ Reach out to your local faith groups, local Chambers of Commerce & business organisations, sports organisations, youth and community groups. Actively seek their opinion on this policy, current circumstances and the prospects of change.
- ✓ Consider Council motions in relation to this policy.
- ✓ Circulate the policy to other elected representatives, invite discussion on the document.
- ✓ Use Social Media to promote inclusion and reconciliation and inform others of Sinn Féin's proposals.
- ✓ Take out adverts and write letters to your local media on this topic to inform the public.

Time 4 Unity Am d'Aontacht



Rep. Richard Neal pictured with Mary Lou McDonald.

Irish Unity on Congressional agenda

Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald recently met with the Congressional Friends of Ireland Caucus. The meeting took place via zoom just before the House of Representatives went into its summer recess.

Chairman of the Caucus and the Chair of the Powerful Ways and Means Committee Rep. Richard Neal welcomed Mary Lou to the meeting and reiterated the Congress support for the Good Friday Agreement, the Stormont House Agreement, and Brexit Irish Protocol.

The meeting included a number of influential Congress members. Following a short briefing from Mary Lou, the meeting opened up to an informative and engaging discussion on Brexit, the British government's proposals on legacy, constitutional change and planning for the future.

Several Congressional leaders raised the issue of Irish unity and the unity referendum in the context of the Good Friday Agreement.

Following the meeting, Mary Lou McDonald said,

"I thanked the Friends of Ireland Caucus for their continued support for peace and our agreements. By working together, we can ensure that the British Government implements in full their commitments. The US remains a strong partner for peace, progress and prosperity in Ireland."

DERRY AND STRABANE COUNCIL TO IMPLEMENT AN ANTI-SECTARIANISM POLICY

Sinn Féin Councillor Conor Heaney brought a motion to the July meeting of Derry and Strabane Council to devise and implement an anti-sectarianism policy across the Council area.

The motion, which was passed unanimously, seeks to challenge issues as diverse as physical walls and barriers and societal segregation, the erection and flying of flags in public spaces and contentious bonfires.

It also calls for a new legal definition of sectarianism, entrenched in law and with the force of legal sanction against actions which are motivated by sectarianism and including robust incitement to hatred provisions. This would draw on the provisions of existing Scottish legislation and the experience and practice of the Scottish 'Nil by mouth' charity which exists to challenge sectarianism and promote a society where cultural and religious diversity is respected and celebrated by everyone.

Cllr Heaney said, 'Sectarianism and sectarian segregation remain major barriers to building a better future. They represent significant blockages to achieving a future defined by respect, inclusion and equality.'

Sinn Féin believes that healing the divisions that exist in our society is inseparable from the process of dialogue that is taking place around a new and agreed Ireland. Constitutional change and challenging sectarianism in all its manifestations are integral to building a culture of respect for all identities, cultures and traditions. We believe in an integrated strategy which tackles poverty and inequality and protects and values places of religious and cultural significance.'

Text of Motion:

Sectarianism and sectarian segregation remain major barriers to building a better future. They represent significant blockages to achieving a future defined by respect, inclusion and equality.

For as long as we fail to successfully address sectarianism and division, then intolerance, bigotry and fear will continue: The potential for instability and conflict will be ever present.

Therefore, this Council will devise, adopt and implement an Anti-Sectarianism

policy by reviewing its current Good Relations Policy and ensuring that sectarianism is specifically included.



Cllr Conor Heaney



RESOURCE FOR ACTIVISTS



All of the recent articles and significant contributions on the United Ireland theme are available on the Sinn Féin website. Log in to www.sinnfein.ie/irish-unity for all of the news on uniting Ireland.



sinnfein.ie

[@sinnfeinireland](https://twitter.com/sinnfeinireland)



[sinnfein](https://www.facebook.com/sinnfein)

irish.unity@sinnfein.ie