

UNITY

NEWS



“I am inviting everyone to be part of planning the future. ‘The New Ireland is for Everyone – Have Your Say’, are the main pillars of this Commission.”

Mary Lou McDonald

MARY LOU McDONALD LAUNCHES ‘THE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND’

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD launched the Sinn Féin Commission on the Future of Ireland in July and announced that the inaugural People’s Assembly will take place in Belfast on 12th October in the Waterfront Hall between 7pm and 9pm.

Party Chairperson Declan Kearney has been appointed Chair of The Commission and Seanadóir Lynn Boylan will be the Deputy Chair.

Mary Lou McDonald TD said: “I am inviting everyone to be part of planning the future. ‘The New Ireland is for Everyone – Have Your Say’, are the main pillars of this Commission.

This is an opportunity for citizens to have their say on the future of Ireland; our economy, our constitutional arrangements; political and democratic structures and governance; the role of the Irish government; the rights and equality agenda; the protection of minorities; future economic and public policy models and a future all-island public health service. The Commission will seek to engage with the protestant, loyalist, and unionist section of our people.”

BELFAST PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY FOR OCTOBER

Declan Kearney said: “In the summer of 2021 the Sinn Féin Ard Chomhairle agreed to establish a ‘Commission on the Future of Ireland.’ It is an ambitious, open consultation on the future of the island. Its launch was delayed for a time by the worsening COVID-19 public health emergency.

The Commission is not a substitute for an all-island Citizens’ Assembly, but it is a genuine initiative from Sinn Féin to constructively nurture the increasingly vocal, public and academic campaign on constitutional change and Irish Unity. The Commission is intended to widen democratic participation and to serve as a model of grassroots consultation.

The Commission extends an open invitation to all citizens and

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**ABAIR LEAT
HAVE YOUR SAY
HAE YER SPAKE**
THE NEW IRELAND IS FOR EVERYONE



BELFAST PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY

**WATERFRONT HALL
WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 12TH
7PM - 9PM**

**THE COMMISSION ON
THE FUTURE OF IRELAND**

THE NEW IRELAND IS FOR EVERYONE

Sinn Féin
www.sinnfein.ie

#Time4Unity **Am d’Aontacht**

'The Commission on the Future of Ireland' - Cont'd

sections of society and the Irish diaspora to submit their views, concerns and aspirations. The views of those with alternative visions for the future are welcome.

Its mission is to discuss the different visions of Ireland that exist and to widen the current conversation through public, sectoral and private discussions on the future of Ireland. The starting point for the Commission is that everyone and every sector in society should be part of planning for the new Ireland.

The Commission will seek to engage with the protestant and unionist sections of our people. Our neighbours with a British identity, and the unionist, Protestant and loyalist members of our community are especially welcome to participate.

The inaugural People's Assembly will take place in the Waterfront Studio, in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast on 12 October between 7 and 9pm.

There will also be Women's Assemblies, Youth Assemblies and Assemblies in Gaeltacht areas.

To make a submission to The Commission please click on the QR code below.

We have a collective responsibility to help shape the new Ireland and ensure the best democratic foundations are laid for a new society that will be democratic, respectful and inclusive. The Commission will provide an important forum to facilitate involvement in that process and actively encourage all citizens to have your say."

ABAIR LEAT
HAVE YOUR SAY
HAE YER SPAKE
THE NEW IRELAND IS FOR EVERYONE



TIONÓL AN PHOBAIL BÉAL FEIRSTE

HALLA AN WATERFRONT
DÉ CÉADAONIN
12 DEIREADH FÓMHAIR
7PM - 9PM

AN COIMISIÚN UM
THODHCHAÍ NA HÉIREANN

ÉIRE NUA DO CHÁCH

Sinn Féin
www.sinnfein.ie

ABAIR LEAT
HAVE YOUR SAY
HAE YER SPAKE
THA NEW AIRLAN BES FUR AABODIE



BILFAWST RESYDENTERS' SEMMLIE

FOREWATTÈR HAA
WADNESDAY UPTOBER 12T
SEIVIN TAE NINE I' THA E'EN

THA CONVENERIE ANENT
THA AIRLAN O THA ONCUM

THA NEW AIRLAN BES FUR AABODIE

Sinn Féin
www.sinnfein.ie



Irish Unity August Weekend of Activism

Mountain top walks; banners; videos; photographs and drone footage of activists with Uniting Ireland banners and much more have all been part of the increasing public campaigning around Irish Unity.

In August Sinn Féin activists in all parts of the island of Ireland are being asked to organise for 'Irish Unity Weekend.'

The dates are the 12th/13th/14th of August.

Take an action for Irish Unity and upload your pictures to social media using the #Time4Unity hashtag.

Irish Unity GET INVOLVED! Weekend

WHEN: 12th/13th/14th August

WHERE: YOUR LOCALITY

WHAT: Take an action for Irish Unity and upload your pictures to social media using #Time4Unity

- ▶▶ Hill climbs
- ▶▶ Beach walks
- ▶▶ Talks and debate
- ▶▶ Information stalls

Pick your activity and raise your voice for Irish Unity!

#Time4Unity
Am d'Aontacht

#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht

Seanad welcomes 'all views' on Constitutional Future

To mark the centenary of Seanad Éireann the Seanad will host a public consultation on the constitutional future of Ireland over three days beginning on 30 September, 7 October and 4 November.

The event is being held under the auspices of the Seanad Public Consultation Committee, which has representatives on it from all the parties and independents including the chairperson of the Seanad, Mark Daly, who is the project's rapporteur, and Sinn Féin Seanadóir Niall Ó Donnghaile.

The purpose of the public consultation is to invite submissions from individuals, interested groups and organisations to consider the constitutional future of the island. A statement from the Committee said: "The committee encourages people from all traditions and opinions to lend their voices to this process and welcomes the voices of the unionist community and their vision for the future."

There will be a particular focus on the views of young people; the lessons from referenda in other states, including Scotland's 2014 independence referendum. In addition it is seeking views on: the economy including the north's so-called subvention from Britain, health care, cultural identity, language and reconciliation, housing, education, climate change and biodiversity.



"This is a crucial opportunity to make your voice heard about the future of Ireland."

Seanadóir Niall Ó Donnghaile

The Seanad Public Consultation Committee specialises in providing a platform for topics and communities not often heard in the Oireachtas. On this occasion the issue of constitutional change and the voices of unionists is of particular interest and relevance. The committee is casting its net very wide to encourage the widest possible participation in the debate in the Seanad.

The Seanad Committee is seeking the views of citizens, public bodies, government departments and the media. It is also looking the views of experts in the area of constitutional politics; educational institutions at secondary and third level; youth organisations and public representatives across Ireland.

At the end of this process the Seanad will produce a report that will include recommendations.

This initiative comes in the wake of increasing interest in and debate around the constitutional future of the island of Ireland and the setting of a date for the referendum on unity provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.

Seanadóir Niall Ó Donnghaile has encouraged citizens and organisations to engage with the Seanad committee. He said: "This is a crucial opportunity to make your voice heard about the future of Ireland."

NATIONAL HUNGER STRIKE COMMEMORATION 2022

The first National Hunger Strike Commemoration since the Covid 19 Pandemic, will take place on Sunday, August 21st in Belfast.

Assemble at Dunville Park at 1:30pm. The march will leave for the Republican Plot in Milltown Cemetery at 2pm sharp.

The main speaker is former hunger striker Pat Sheehan MLA.

Areas are asked to begin plans to mobilise for this commemoration now.

Comóradh Náisiúnta ar an Stailc Ocras 2022

Beidh an chéad chomóradh ó bhí Paidéim Covid 19 ann i mbliana ar an Stailc Ocras Dé Domhnaigh, 21 Lúnasa, i mBéal Feirste.

Beidh an teacht le chéile ag Páirc Dunville ar 1:30pm.

Rachaidh an mórshiúl chuig áit uaigheanna na bPo-blachtánach i Reilig Bhaile an Mhuilinn ar 2pm.

Is é Pat Sheehan MLA a bheidh mar phríomhchainteoir ann. Iarrtar ar cheantair tosú ar pheleananna chun an comóradh seo a eagrú anois.

20 **H** **22**
1981
2022

National Hunger Strike Commemoration
COMÓRADH BLIANTÚIL
AR AN STAILC OCRAS
BELFAST I BÉAL FEIRSTE

Sunday 21st August
DUNVILLE PARK,
BELFAST TO
MILLTOWN
CEMETERY
Assemble at 1:30pm

#Time4Unity **Am d'Aontacht**

“It is very, very important that everybody, including unionism, understands they have a voice, stake and a say in the journey to a united Ireland and in shaping the final destination.”



Mary Lou McDonald meeting Senator Wong, Australia's Foreign Minister



Mary Lou McDonald meeting the Electrical Trades Union



Mary Lou McDonald pictured at the with the Irish Australian Chamber of Commerce

UNITED IRELAND POLL THIS DECADE

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald has just concluded a hugely successful visit to Australia. The Sinn Féin President travelled from the east to the west coast of that huge country meeting Irish emigrants, native aboriginal peoples, trade unionists, business leaders, and politicians.

Addressing the National Press Club of Australia the Sinn Féin leader said: “We have built the peace. Now we look to the next phase, the reunification of Ireland. We are living in the end days of partition, and the momentum behind Irish Unity is unprecedented. We are energised with the opportunity to build a new and united Ireland. We are the generation that can and will redefine our nation.

“The Good Friday Agreement provides for referendums on Irish Unity, and I believe that these will happen in this decade. So we must prepare. Both governments have a responsibility to prepare. The Irish government in particular has a duty to change from bystanders into persuaders for unity.

“The people of Ireland are ready. This is an

important time in the shaping of Ireland's future. It is an exciting and positive time, full of potential. Irish Unity is about opportunity. The social and economic opportunities are immense. The reunification of Ireland will be a positive and progressive development for the world.”

Speaking about the unity referendum commitment in the Good Friday Agreement the Sinn Féin President said the reunification agenda was “not about reclaiming territory” but about “uniting our people.” Mary Lou McDonald said: “The winning margin is 50 per cent plus one – the standard democratic norm – but of course we would have an ambition to win the referendum by a much more substantial margin than that. It's our ambition to win it, and to win it well.

It is very, very important that everybody, including unionism, understands they have a voice, stake and a say in the journey to a united Ireland and in shaping the final destination.”

In commenting on the special relationship between Australia and Ireland Mary Lou McDonald pointed to the changes that

have taken place in our island nation over recent years. She also addressed those who have been forced to leave Ireland in search of work and are now living in Australia. She said: “I want you to know that we are working hard to change things for you, and that we will change things for you. We will make Ireland the home that you deserve. To those young Irish people who want to come home I say, I want you to have the chance of returning to your place of origin. I also want you to enjoy your time and your experience in this incredible country for however long it may last.”

In the course of her visit Mary Lou McDonald met with Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong in Parliament House in Canberra. She also met with Ministers Brendan O'Connor and Bill Shorten, and Assistant Ministers Ged Kearney, Emma McBride, Stephen Jones and Jenny McAllister. She also met with members of the House of Representatives and Senate including Senator Patrick Dodson, special envoy for Reconciliation and with many representatives at State level.

#Time4Unity **Am d'Aontacht**



CATALUNYA MURAL

A new mural was unveiled this month in Catalunya by Ógra Shinn Féin agus Jovent Republica. "We stand United for self-determination and for the freedom of our nations!"



"IRISH UNITY IS THE SOLUTION TO BREXIT!"

Support for Irish Unity and the British Union neck and neck

Public support for Irish Unity is growing. A new poll published in July by the Irish Studies-University of Liverpool and the Irish News revealed that in the event of a referendum being held tomorrow 39.4 percent of those who responded would vote for unity. The gap between those for and against unity was just over one percentage point (1.2 percent) with 40.6 backing the existing arrangements.

The poll also indicated that support for unity is set to increase in the time ahead while the percentage of people who would oppose unity dropped to 33.8 percent when they were asked if they would vote for Irish Unity in 15-20 years.

Last April a similar poll found that 32 percent of those polled would vote for reunification. The latest poll suggests that support for unity has grown by almost eight percent in just five months.

Of particular interest to those advocating for the unity referendum almost 20% of respondents didn't know how they would vote. These are the persuadables; that section of public opinion open to persuasion in favour of Irish unity. The poll also revealed that there are already significant sections of unionism seriously contemplating shifting their support to a united Ireland.

When respondents were asked how they would vote in 15-20 years time almost a quarter of respondents – 24.3 per cent - weren't sure how they would vote. However almost 40 percent of those in this group who are unionist agreed

that; a "lower cost of living in the Republic would persuade them to support Irish unity ...; among the same group 35.4 % of unionists agreed that higher public spending in the Republic would persuade them to support Irish unity... 72.7% of unionists agreed that secure employment would persuade them to support Irish unity....; 24.3% of unionists agreed that a new flag and anthem would persuade them to support Irish unity."

The poll also found that Sinn Féin had consolidated its historic election result in the north breaking the 30 percent barrier for the first time and 10 points ahead of the DUP. Under existing legislation if a government has not established by October 28th then a further election must be held within 12 weeks. Some have speculated that the DUP is holding out for a rerun of the election in the hope of toppling Sinn Féin as the lead party and taking the position of First Minister. On this poll that hope would appear forlorn.

Commenting on the poll Declan Kearney said: "We are living in exciting times. Change is all around. The opportunities are boundless. The challenge for all that hold to the Good Friday Agreement and for positive progress is to manage that change. To bring as many with us as possible. To build a new, united and peaceful Ireland. A home for all.

In this context and on the strength of this poll and others there is an imperative on the Irish government to begin the process of planning; of consultation and conversation and advocacy for unity and to address the concerns that some have around unity. That is what Sinn Féin will do in Government."

The Institute of Irish Studies,
University of Liverpool
The Irish News
4th Attitudinal Survey
July 2022



THE IRISH NEWS



Tickets for Ireland's Future 3 Arena event released

The civic nationalist group Ireland's Future has released tickets for its massive event planned for the 3 Arena in Dublin on 1 October. Ireland's Future chief executive Gerry Carlile said the venue is the largest the group has booked "by some distance" and will be a "special event".

The group will also launch a 200-page "vision document" for the future of Ireland on October 1.

Mr Carlile stressed that the event was not a rally but a conference which aimed to include anyone with an interest in Irish unity and a new Ireland. He said the group is in discussions with high profile speakers from the US and European Union, as well as major figures from across Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

"We want to reach as far and wide as possible, into the Irish diaspora and also the EU. The majority of people in the north voted to stay in the EU and a united Ireland brings us back into the EU again."

He said the conference aimed to be as inclusive as possible. "We appreciate there are so many people that have to be included in this conversation and that want to be included. We don't want to put barriers in their way. We've always tried our best to make it as easy as possible for people who want to get involved to get involved."

Mr Carlile said the event will be a "scaled up version" of the group's conference in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast in January 2019 but with "elements of surprise". "The entire discourse has advanced and developed several years on from the Waterfront event," he said.

"There is an increasing number of people asking an increasing number of questions about what Irish unity means for them and their families. It's very exciting. The feedback we are getting is truly phenomenal."

Mr Carlile said the vision document will provide information about the process of holding a referendum and will cover issues including health, the economy and infrastructure. Mr Carlile called for an all-Ireland citizens' assembly to discuss constitutional issues ahead of any referendum. He said: "The conversation about a referendum and potential constitutional change is now moving to the next level".



Tickets for the 3Arena event "Together We Can" can be purchased at [ticketmaster.ie](https://www.ticketmaster.ie) from 9am on Wednesday July 13. <https://www.ticketmaster.ie/irelands-future-presents-together-we-can-dublin-01-10-2022/event/18005CE6A4072AD7>

#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht



Michelle Gildernew addressing the LAOH



Friends of Ireland Group



Michelle O'Neill with Derek Chollet, Counselor of the U.S. Department of State



Michelle O'Neill with Terry O'Sullivan LiUNA and Speaker Pelosi



Michelle O'Neill with Senate Majority leader Schumer

Irish Unity takes centre stage in the USA

In mid-July Michelle Gildernew MP and Sinn Féin North American Representative Ciarán Quinn travelled to Pittsburgh to attend the biannual Ancient Order of Hibernians/ Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians. The Hibernian movement is by far the largest Irish American Organisation by membership in the US. The achievement by peaceful means of Irish Unity is a central tenet of the Hibernians. The event was an opportunity to meet with the leadership of both organisations and address their memberships. Each has Freedom for All Ireland Committees made up of informed and dedicated activists. Many of whom are frequent visitors to Ireland. The discussions centred on the current British Governments cover-up proposals, Brexit, and planning for Irish Unity. The discussions were detailed and the questions probing. Addressing a plenary session of the LAOH, Michelle Gildernew MP said, “Our struggle for Irish unity owes a debt of gratitude to Irish America and to women who protested, raised funds, and engaged America in our struggle for unity and independence. We are

closer to achieving that goal than at any time in our history. Irish unity is achievable by wholly democratic and peaceful means.” The Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians passed a resolution to prioritise the work of building support for Irish Unity in their coming term. The delegation also used the opportunity of the visit to Pittsburgh to meet with and address both the Irish American Unity Conference and the Ireland Forum. These lively, informed and informal discussions addressed the growth of Sinn Féin across the Island and the potential of Irish Unity. Immediately after the successful visit to Pittsburgh, First Minister (Elect) Michelle O’Neill arrived in Washington. In a Whirlwind trip, the Sinn Féin Vice President met with Congressional leaders to thank them for their support, to update them on the political developments following on from the historic election of May and the challenges that lay ahead. From Capitol Hill, Michelle met with Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senator Chris

Murphy, Speaker Pelosi, Congress Members Bill Keating and Mary Gay Scanlon. The Sinn Féin leader also had the opportunity to address the Congressional Friends of Ireland at the invite of co-chairs, Rep. Richard Neal and Rep. Mike Kelly. Michelle was clear that while we are dealing with a British government that is actively undermining the Good Friday Agreement and is prepared to break international law Sinn Féin is determined to move ahead. The debate on Irish Unity is live and there is the real opportunity to realise the potential of constitutional change. The State Department rolled out the diplomatic carpet in recognition of the May election result. Following a meeting with Derek Chollet, Counselor of the Department of State, he called for the re-establishment of Government in the North of Ireland. Speaking in Washington Michelle O’Neill said, “Now is the time to assert the primacy of politics, the honouring of agreements, and respect for international law”



Michelle O'Neill with SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon, Edinburgh

SCOTS TAKE DECISIVE STEP TOWARD INDEPENDENCE

The Government of Scotland has taken a decisive step forward in holding a referendum on sovereignty and independence. It has set 19 October 2023 as the date.

In June it began publishing a series of detailed documents spelling out the advantages of ending the Union and reversing the Brexit disaster by becoming a member of the European Union. At the end of that month, in a coordinated series of announcements designed to politically and legally challenge the Tory government on an independence referendum, the Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced that she had written to Boris Johnson seeking formal consent for the referendum vote to take place. If Johnson refused she said the Scottish government would press on regardless. The referendum question would be the same as that in the 2014 referendum: "Should Scotland be an independent country?". The same day Nicola Sturgeon made her announcement Scotland's top law officer, the Lord Advocate, served papers on the Supreme Court in London seeking clarity on the legality of Scotland going ahead with a referendum. And as the First Minister spoke to the media the Scottish government published a Referendum Bill. Finally, Scotland's First Minister made it clear that if the Westminster government obstructs the right of the people of Scotland to determine their own future then the Scottish government would fight the next general election on a single issue platform – a de facto referendum on independence.

Speaking in Madrid An Taoiseach Micheál Martin reportedly "appeared to signal soft backing for the holding of a second Scottish Independence referendum next year." Martin said: "Scotland sees its future economic trajectory as being one which will benefit from remaining within the European Union. So there are tensions around that within the United Kingdom more generally." Responding to these developments Sinn Féin National Chairperson Declan Kearney MLA welcomed the announcement. He said: "The people of Scotland have a fundamental, democratic right to decide their own future through a referendum. This decisive strategic initiative by the Scottish government now provides a road map for the Scottish people to determine their own future. Successive elections and polls have demonstrated a growing majority in support of Scottish independence and change"

The Sinn Féin National Party Chairperson added: "Brexit has changed everything across these islands. Just like the people of the North, Scotland overwhelmingly rejected Brexit and voted to remain with the EU. At the same time the momentum for constitutional change in Ireland has never been stronger. The Irish government should now also act positively, and immediately convene a national Citizens Assembly on the constitutional future of Ireland. This would represent an important landmark towards securing an Irish unity referendum."



The Dublin Mid West Walking Crew are planning to take their United Ireland banner to all of the mountain tops on the island of Ireland. So far they have been to Kildare, Meath and West Meath and next week will be in Armagh.

CRANN NA SAOIRSE HAVE YOU PLANTED YOURS YET?

Areas are continuing to plant Crann na Saoirse. Some in memory of comrades and others as a reminder of the key importance of Irish Unity to the future freedom and prosperity of the Irish people.

On Sunday 31st July members of the Patsy Kelly Cumann in Dromore, Co Tyrone, were joined by Gerry Adams to plant a Crann na Saoirse at the republican monument in the town centre. The monument is in memory of Bobby Sands and his 9 comrades who died on hunger strike. Dromore was part of the Fermanagh-South Tyrone constituency that Bobby was elected to in 1981. It's fitting and poignant that the current MP for West Tyrone Órfhlaith Begley and a new generation of young Republicans of similar age to Bobby attended the event. This tree will grow tall in a free and united Ireland.

On the 1st of August a Crannna Saoirse was also planted by the Adams family in Canada. Support from the international community as we prepare for organised, democratic and peaceful constitutional change is hugely important. Initiatives such as these are an opportunity to create a talking point on Irish Unity and the role communities throughout the world can play. Why not plant your own Crann na Saoirse? For your clann? Your club? Your community groups? Yourself? Help the environment and bring pleasure to a future generation.



#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht

IT'S TIME TO PLAN - Declan Kearney

“There is an unprecedented momentum for Irish unity. It is exciting. We are arguably fast approaching a tipping point for Irish unity. Let’s seize the moment we are all living through and shape the opportunities. It is time to prepare and plan for the change which is coming.”

The chaotic demise of Boris Johnson as British Conservative party leader and Britain’s Prime Minister was an unsurprising climax to this phase of Tory rule. It has been a byword for scandal, the Brexit catastrophe and the undermining of relationships with the EU and Ireland. Johnson’s legacy is one characterised by deceit and irresponsibility in government. He will not be missed by anyone in Ireland. The weaponising of the Protocol and propensity for both breaking and derogating from international law now defines Tory Britain as an outlier, with respect to internationally accepted behaviour and convention.

The last 12 years of Tory government have been a disaster for the North of Ireland. Negative mismanagement of both the peace and political processes; an era of austerity; side deals and alliances with both main unionist parties; a failure to uphold obligations under the Good Friday and successive Agreements; and an undisguised partisan and pro-unionist agenda; have been hallmarks of the Tories approach. The combined effect has been to put huge pressure on the power sharing institutions and fuel political instability in the north.

The Tory government has given cover to the DUP collapsing the power sharing Executive in February and blocking its restoration ever since. Both the Tories and the DUP have colluded together in manufacturing the current Protocol impasse, which directly caused the present crisis in the power sharing institutions.

The actions of the Tories and DUP are scandalous. The democratic process has now been held to ransom by their respective narrow electoral and ideological goals. They have jointly inflamed tensions over the Protocol and tried to cast the EU as a ‘bogey man’ in an effort to recapture their lost electoral support.

Whichever of the two Tories currently battling for the leadership succeeds it is likely that he or she will continue to refuse to properly engage with the EU, will move ahead with the Johnson plan to unilaterally break international law, and is likely to provoke significant diplomatic and legal retaliation. A trade war would have serious economic repercussions and cause even greater instability for businesses.



**Declan
Kearney
MLA**

That potential will inevitably strengthen the growing view that the only way to promote and protect regional economic, business and investment priorities will be through Ireland, as a single economic unit, rejoining the EU.

The economic, democratic and constitutional arguments for Irish unity are increasingly influential. The momentum for constitutional change has never been stronger. The Irish government’s refusal to even begin the preparations for Irish unity is increasingly untenable.

In the last four most significant opinion polls in the south of Ireland, Sinn Féin has consistently recorded all time high 36% popular approval ratings. It may not be inevitable, but it is certainly ‘game on’ for a Sinn Féin led government in the south. Irish unity will be a central political, and policy objective of that administration. Much better then to begin preparing the essential policy frameworks of constitutional and political transition: to be looking at them, rather than for them.

This Irish government should do the sensible thing and convene an all-island Citizens’ Assembly on constitutional change, instead of creating silly distractions around the timing of a unity referendum. The transition towards constitutional change and a new national, democratic framework of governance in Ireland needs to be carefully planned, and resourced. It should be orderly, incremental and taken forward in phases. We need to be both ambitious and inclusive. The way forward should be guided by dialogue and a process of popular democratic participation involving all sectors of Irish society. Hope, aspiration, and a better future for all should be our ‘north star’. Irish unity is the big idea whose time has come.

We owe it to ourselves and future generations to get it right. The new Ireland cannot be the old Ireland.



UNITING IRELAND

All talks are part of Féile An Phobail 2022 August
Programme of Debates & Discussions at St Mary’s University College.

Thursday 4th August	3pm	Preparing for a New Ireland
Thursday 4th August	5pm	First People’s Assembly on a New Constitution for a New Ireland
Friday 5th August	3pm	A Double Transition: The just Transition to a United Ireland Beyond Growth
Saturday 6th August	1pm	United Nation: The case for integrating Ireland – Frank Connolly
Monday 8th August	5pm	A Constitutional Conversation without Fear
Tuesday 9th August	5pm	What will decide the Undecideds?
Wednesday 10th August	3pm	Border Poll and the Irish Referendum
Thursday 11th August	1pm	Our Ireland Also
Thursday 11th August	7pm	Gaels Le Cheile
Friday 12th August	1pm	Time to Clarify the Precise Criteria for A Border Poll

All party activists are encouraged to attend & participate
Big! linn!

FÉILE AN PHOBAIL Discussions examining constitutional change

The programme for this year’s west Belfast Féile an Phobail is jam packed as ever with community events, discussions, art, music and cultural expression. However it also devotes a significant amount of time to discussions on constitutional change and potential future arrangements.

Above is a list of discussions on Ireland’s constitutional position which are taking place as part of Féile 34 which runs from August 4th to 14th. The fact that Féile is hosting these events demonstrates the elevated position which the discussion on the constitutional future of Ireland currently occupies.

These events promise to be interesting and informative and anyone who can do so should make every effort to attend and participate in these discussions.

MAKING SENSE OF OPINION

POLLS ON IRISH UNITY



John Doyle is the Director, Dublin City University Institute for International Conflict Resolution. He comments regularly on Irish Unity related issues and has written extensively on the issue.

In July the Royal Irish Academy published a paper by Professor Doyle in which he examined the changing results emerging from opinion polls. The DCU academic pointed out that prior to the Brexit referendum, “repeated opinion polls suggested that half or more of those who voted for Irish nationalist parties in Northern Ireland, did not want to call an immediate referendum on Irish unity and if a referendum were called, they would vote against immediate change.”

However this has shifted significantly. In December 2018 a poll found that:

- ▶ 35% of nationalists wanted a border poll to be held in 2019,
- ▶ 79% wanted one within 5 years, and
- ▶ 89% wanted a poll within 10 years.

In the same survey, 93% of nationalists said they would vote to leave the UK, and a further 5% of nationalists ‘probably would’, if the poll was held in 2019, in the context of a ‘no deal’ Brexit.

Professor Doyle examined the attitude to unity of what he described as ‘middle ground voters who largely supported UK membership before Brexit, but who are now much more divided in their views.’ He concluded that “centre ground voters are much closer in their views to nationalists, than unionists and their views on Irish unity are now clearly related to a desire to retain

as close as link as possible to the European Union.”

The closing of the gap between those for and against Irish Unity or the retention of the Union with Britain was illustrated in September 2019 when a poll by Ashcroft Polling revealed that “45% of respondents said they would vote to stay in the UK, and 46% said they would choose to leave and create a United Ireland – a lead of 51% to 49% for Irish unification when ‘don’t knows’ and those who say they would not vote are excluded.”

Doyle described this shift in polling results as marking a “watershed” in public opinion in the North. Two years later A Sunday Times poll in January 2021 “showed a majority in Northern Ireland in favour of holding a poll on Irish unity and when asked how they would vote, 46.8% said to stay in the UK, 42.3% chose a united Ireland and 10.7% were unsure. In that poll a majority of those under 44 years of age supported Irish unity.”

Professor Doyle also revealed that among those who did not vote for a nationalist or unionist party in any of the last 3 elections – 38% said they would vote for a United Ireland, 36% said they were unsure but would vote, and only 26% said they would vote to stay in the UK.”

Inevitably there are differences between pollsters. This can result from the questions asked and how they are framed;

the political climate when the poll is taken; the relative party strengths at the time and whether the polling is face to face or by telephone. Doyle also pointed out that polling in a “post-conflict and deeply divided societies is challenging. People can be reluctant to express an opinion to strangers. Polls throughout the conflict under-represented SF and over-represented Alliance, for example.”

Professor Doyle concludes: “What is clear is that more sophisticated polling is needed, both north and south. The existing polls in the Republic of Ireland all suggest that a referendum would be carried by a large majority, but as the Irish parliament will have to take a lead on defining both the process of public debate and the proposed nature of a united Ireland – polling on the detail of specific proposals, ranging from the health system, to pensions and potential devolution, after they have been publicly debated, would be useful.

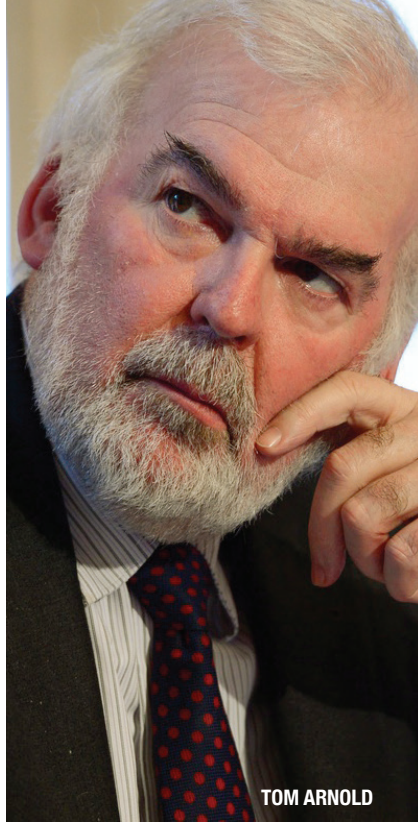
In NI, there is no clear majority for a united Ireland at this time, but opinion is more finely balanced than ever before and there is a significant bloc of voters who will only decide after more detail is available to them. At present, the majority of credible polls of likely voters, show the percentage support for remaining in the UK in the mid-to-high 40s, and therefore the currently undecided will determine the final outcome.”

Fine Gael TD urges planning for Unity

Neale Richmond is the Fine Gael TD for Dublin Rathdown and in recent months he has been leading the debate within that party on the measures needed to advance the case for Irish Unity. In a platform piece in the Irish News early in July Teachta Richmond acknowledged what many have been saying; “Brexit has completely changed the narrative when it comes to the prospect of achieving a united Ireland, bringing the discussion back to the fore of our political narrative north and south at the highest levels.” Very directly Richmond called on those who support the goal of unity to prepare for it. He repeated his call for an Oireachtas Committee on Unity, and on the Irish government to “formally request” that the British government set out its position on the requirements for holding the referendum on Irish Unity committed to in the GFA. Specifically on his call for the establishment of an all-party Oireachtas Committee Richmond said that this would allow for “testimony from a range of experts and to map out the possibilities and challenges that unity would present.” The Fine Gael TD spoke of a “New Ireland” not being “merely an extension of the southern state as we know it but a much better place, combining the best of all our island.” He acknowledged that “while unionists would not vote for a united Ireland, they would at least be at ease that they will be equal and that many of their deep held concerns will be taken into account.” In a separate interview Richmond proposed a detailed engagement with the Fine Gael party on unity in advance of its Ard Fheis in November. He also revealed that a Young Fine Gael poll revealed that 84% of its members favour Irish Unity.



AILBHE SMYTH



TOM ARNOLD

Good Friday Agreement threatened

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, visited Britain for five days, finishing in July, during which she assessed the British government's system for human rights protection, the situation in the North and children's rights. In an article on the Council of Europe's website it expresses its concern at the proposal by the Tories to repeal and replace the Human Rights Act with a Bill of Rights. The Human Rights Act is at the heart of the Good Friday Agreement and of its policing, justice and equality elements. The Council notes that if voted through the proposed Bill of Rights "would alter the interpretation of European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) rights by UK courts, widening the gap between the protection of those rights by the UK courts and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights."



The Commission said: "the proposed legal reforms might weaken human rights protections at this pivotal moment for the UK, and it sends the wrong signal beyond the country's borders at a time when human rights are under pressure throughout Europe." She also noted that these changes come in a wider context of recent laws and policies already heavily impacting on human rights in concrete areas, such as the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, or of specific groups, such as refugees and asylum seekers or Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Commenting on its impact for the North she pointed out that the protection of ECHR rights is one of the foundations of the peace agreement and of the Good Friday Agreement. She said that: "It is crucial that this foundation is not undermined as a result of the proposed human rights reforms."

The article by the Council also addresses the Legacy legislation being pushed through the British Parliament. It raises serious questions for the Council about the extent to which the proposed mechanism to "review Troubles-related cases is compliant with ECHR standards on independent and effective investigations. The possibility to grant immunity from prosecution on a low evidentiary bar raises concerns that this could lead to impunity."

It notes that the "virtually unanimous, cross-community rejection of the proposals also casts doubt over their potential to contribute to reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The proposals fail to put victims at the heart of legacy. The Commissioner added: "unilaterally shutting down options that many victims and families value greatly as part of their way of dealing with the past ignores their needs and wishes, and is causing many of them deep distress."

The Commissioner's report on her visit is expected to be published soon.

Ard Fheis fringe meeting to discuss Citizens' Assembly

A very unique fringe meeting to discuss a Citizens' Assembly will take place at this November's Ard Fheis.

The event will be chaired by Declan Kearney. The panel also includes Ailbhe Smyth - co-director of the Together for Yes referendum campaign and spokeswoman and convener for the Coalition to Repeal the Eighth Amendment and Tom Arnold - former chairperson of the Irish Government's Constitutional Convention which sat from 2012 - 2014.

The Ard Fheis is returning to its normal structure on Saturday 5th November in the RDS, Dublin. In a break from previous years this Ard Fheis will take place over one day.

Activists from across the island, along with international guests, are already making plans to travel to Dublin and are looking forward to participating in the first full Ard Fheis in recent years following the disruption caused by the pandemic.

The fringe meeting - which has been organised by the UI Committee - will focus on the campaign to secure the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly. The demand for the Irish government to establish a national Citizens' Assembly to plan for constitutional change, and for the unity referendum, has been growing steadily over recent years.

The Uniting Ireland committee is also currently working on a guide to the Citizens' Assembly which will be available to activists in advance of the Ard Fheis.



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.



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