AM LE HAONTACHT

FEBRUARY FEABHRA 2022

WALKING
The Unity Walk that was
FOR IRISH cancelled due to Covid
restrictions is on again for
UNITY! 26/27 February

Citizens Assembly - A PLATFORM TO THE FUTURE

The latest conference of Ireland's Future -Planning for a New Ireland - took place in Derry on 22 January. Initially the event was to have an audience but it was decided because of the rise of Omicron victims that it would be a virtual conference. The participants included Sinn Féin National Party Chair Declan Kearney, Irish Examiner journalist Aoife Grace Moore, academic Patricia McBride, writer Susan McKay, SDLP leader Colum Eastwood and Professor Colin Harvey.

Colin Harvey is Professor of Human Rights Law in the School of Law, Queen's University Belfast, a Fellow of the Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, and an Associate Fellow of the Institute of Irish Studies. Has been the target of sustained and serious abuse and threats in recent time because of his very public stand in support of Irish Unity.

A few days after the Ireland's Future conference in Derry Amnesty International called on the British government to ensure Professor Harvey's safety. Amnesty said: "We're deeply concerned at this campaign of sustained hostility against Professor Harvey - something which should have no place whatsoever in our public discourse. Academics must be able to contribute to and enrich public policy debates with their expertise and research without becoming subject to harassment."

Professor Harvey told the online conference that Ireland's Future plans to publish a major document on health services on the island of Ireland. He said: "We want to get this right. Nobody wants a situation where people are painting lies on the sides of buses. People want an evidenced-based planned approach to constitutional change."

Sinn Féin National Party Chairperson Declan Kearney told the conference that Irish unity is the defining issue of our generation. He said:



"Constitutional change is now firmly fixed on the political horizon. It's no longer a question of if, or even when, reunification will come about. The important question is how we bring it about."

Consequently now is the right time to establish a national Citizens Assembly on constitutional change.

Declan Kearney said: "There is no sense for this Irish Government delaying the decision to establish a Citizens' Assembly. This would create a platform to give Irish society an opportunity to develop the public policy priorities and the political frameworks to enable the transition towards a new Irish national democracy...

The milestones are clear. A national Citizens

Assembly should be convened. A date should be set for a unity referendum. We need an informed debate to win that referendum. And, there must be a process to prepare the constitutional and political modalities to shape a new constitutional national democracy. That transition must be orderly, carefully planned and geared towards unlocking a society and economy which is forward looking, inclusive, and multicultural.

New national and democratic arrangements will represent a new modernising influence, similar to other watershed social transformations in recent decades. Constitutional change should be embraced as an unprecedented opportunity to help redesign Irish society."



Valentine's Day Card

Send a Uniting Ireland Order your Uniting Ireland St Patrick's Day Card

All of these are available through The Sinn Féin Bookshop, 58 Parnell Square; www.sinnfeinbookshop.com and An Fhuiseog, 55 Falls Road; www.thelarkstore.ie

















Johnny Guirke TD Meath West planting a tree for Irish Unity in Delvin with members of the Keenan Dermody Cumann. Plaque made by Dermot McEnroe.

na Sao



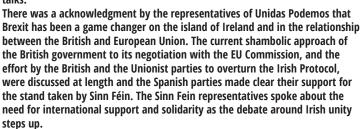




CASE FOR IRISH UNITY HEARD IN EUROPE

January was a busy month for Martina
Anderson who has been putting the skills and
connections she made as an MEP, to work
as the party's representative engaging with
continental Europe. Martina works closely with
Chris MacManus MEP and the Sinn Fein team in
the European Parliament.

On 25 January Martina and Sinn Fein's National Party Chairperson Declan Kearney met with the Unidas Podemos which is an alliance of two Spanish parties Esquadrias Unidas and Podemos. The role of the Good Friday Agreement, its inclusion of the right to self-determination and the provision of a Unity referendum were top of the agenda for the



January also saw a Sinn Fein delegation, including Martin Kenny TD, Martina, Sean Murray and John Finucane MP, along with solicitor Niall Murphy from Ireland's Future, meet with the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH). The ELDH has a network of lawyers from 21 European countries, including the Haldane Society of Socialist



Lawyers. They work for human rights and civil liberties, social and economic rights, democracy, the rights of migrants and refugees and much more, including equal rights for men and women.

Among those they met were Prof Bill Bowring President of the ELDH, Secretary General Thomas Schmidt and Declan Owens – from the north, a lawyer and co-chair of Haldane Society.

The ELDH also cooperates with the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IVDJ) and other progressive legal and human rights organisations such as the European Democratic Lawyers (EDA), the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), trade unions, universities and the European Network Against Racism (ENAR).

The Good Friday Agreement; its central role in delivering peace; the threat posed by Brexit and the British government, and the unity referendum were top of the agenda.

The representatives of the ELDH and of the Haldane Society made clear their deep commitment to the principles of the Good Friday Agreement.

The plan by the British to introduce amnesty legislation was also discussed. John Finucane briefed the international lawyers on the depth of opposition, across all parties on the island of Ireland to the British government's efforts. The ELDH committed to speaking out on these issues and to send a fact finding mission to examine these matters further.

In addition to these meetings Martina has held meetings with the European Institution for Peace EIP; the German Christian Democrats CDU; the Socialist Party of Norway, and briefed EH Bildu (Basque) and Esquerra Republicana (Catalans).

Finally, a meeting was held with the Berghof foundation based in Germany.



Irish Unity raised at the European Parliament

On the 50th anniversary of Ireland's accession to the EU, Ruairí Ó Murchú, the Sinn Féin TD for Louth, told the Conference on the Future of Europe that a United Ireland is happening and that the EU must plan accordingly. Teachta Ó Murchú made his remarks in the European Parliament as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe meeting in Strasbourg on January 26th.

Teachta Ó Murchú said; "In 2017 the European Council indicated its support for the Good Friday Agreement and it agreed that in the event of a united Ireland the entire territory of the island would automatically be a part of the EU.

This is extremely important in the campaign for Irish self determination and reunification.

I took the opportunity to remind parliamentarians that Ireland could not be collateral damage in the Brexit process. I also invited the European Commission Vice President, Maroš Šefčovič, to visit county Louth and the border areas and to see for himself the adverse impact of partition and of Brexit."

MacManus addresses Sortu Congress in Basque Country

Speaking at Sortu's 2nd National Congress in Bilbo, MEP Chris MacManus reaffirmed Sinn Féin's solidarity with the Basque struggle for independence and national sovereignty and expressed solidarity with Basque political prisoners and their families.

The Sinn Féin MEP expressed solidarity with Basque political prisoners and their families. He said that at this stage of the peace process all political prisoners should have been released.

Chris MacManus said:

"The issue of Irish Unity is central to everything we do as Irish republicans. The reunification of our island and the exercise of self-determination is our principal objective.

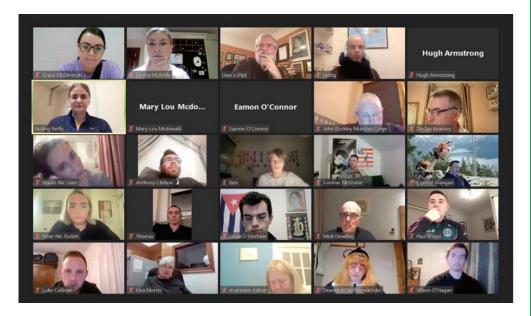
The last few years have seen Brexit and Covid-19 accelerate the calls for unity. Debates and conversations have become the norm across the island. The conversation is not about if Irish unity will happen, but when."

He concluded saying that the Irish government "as well the EU, need to be part of those conversations to ensure they are prepared for unity.

Sinn Féin is committed to ensuring that people have their say by popular vote but we must plan well in advance a vision of an inclusive and progressive Ireland for all.

During the Congress MEP MacManus also engaged with international visitors from Palestine, Catalunya, Western Sahara and Uruguay.





Successful Youth Conference held

Over the past year several engagements were held with the Uniting Ireland Project Team and young party members via zoom. These engagements were focussed on the centrality of Irish Unity to the party and to republican politics and provided an opportunity to discuss this with young people and get an insight into the main issues affecting them. Why did they join Sinn Fein and how important is Irish Unity to them were the questions most frequently asked. A commitment was given to go back to the young people for a follow up conversation in the form of a National Youth Meeting.

An online meeting was held on Wednesday 2nd February which was attended by upwards of 120 young people from across the country. The meeting was chaired by Aisling Reilly MLA and speakers included Gerry Adams, Tadhg Hickey, and Declan Kearney MLA. Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD opened the conversation.

Key themes at the meeting included the importance of self-determination, needing to take control of our own destiny, ideas for campaigning initiatives such as 'Votes at16', the establishment of a Citizens Assembly and various other topics.

The meeting focussed on the next steps and where young people see their activism fitting in with the huge task of securing and winning a unity referendum. It was a very good meeting with lots of very good contributions and a real willingness to keep the conversation going.

Speaking afterward Aisling Reilly MLA

said:

"Tonight young republicans from across the island of Ireland came together online to talk about the future. I want to thank Mary Lou McDonald and all of those who organised and participated in an exciting conversation about how we can reshape the partitioned Ireland of today into the prosperous, inclusive New Ireland of tomorrow.

It is clear that young people are focussed on building on the growing momentum toward the unity referendum promised by the Good Friday Agreement. They also believe that the Irish government has a responsibility to provide leadership and want it to establish a Citizens Assembly to plan for Unity. Well done to all."

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WAYS VOLING MEMPERS

YOUNG MEMBERS

- and everyone else CAN HELP WITH THE
CAMPAIGN FOR IRISH UNITY

The UI campaign affects your generation more than any other – it is up to you to do all you can to make sure you live in a country which is not being held back by partition.

INFORM YOURSELVES

- read Unity News, it is
a resource for activists
and shows every month
what is happening within
the party to progress the
campaign. You should also read Éire
Nua which is a quarterly which the
Uniting Ireland group also produces.
It's a broader publication with guest
contributors and it examines key
societal themes through the prism of
Irish unity.

GET INVOLVED IN
CAMPAIGNING – every
area has been asked to
prepare a local uniting
Ireland workplan, find
out what's happening in
your area and if nothing is happening
start to organise, it doesn't have to
be major events, get a poster up, hold
an information stall, deliver a leaflet
– the Uniting Ireland campaign group
has produced generic UI leaflets that
are available to all areas, they're there
for you to use

BRING THE UNITY
CONVERSATION
INTO OTHER SPACES
– if you're involved in
a youth group, foroige
etc. get a discussion going,
invite in a speaker, broaden, widen
and deepen the discussion even just
informally among your group of
friends

NORTH WEST RESPONDS TO ALL ISLAND RAIL REVIEW

Derry and Strabane Council has joined with Donegal County Council to deliver an agreed and ambitious response to the All-Ireland Strategic Rail Review launched by the North's Dept of Infrastructure and the South's Dept of Transport.

The review was launched last April and has been considering how the rail network on the island of Ireland can be improved to promote sustainable connectivity into, and between, the major cities. It has also been examining regional accessibility and how an improved rail network can improve regional development. The Review is looking at current usage and future potential usage for passangers as well as freight and is looking at the feasibility of introducing high trains (speeds up to and possibly above 200km/h). Currently the rail network is largely skewed toward the east of the island and includes around 2,300 kilometres of track. The public consultation opened on 29 November 2021 and closed on 21 January. Derry and the wider northwest (Derry, Donegal, Tyrone) is the region with the highest unemployment and economic inactivity levels in the country, has the highest levels of poverty, social deprivation and inequality and a high dependence on private modes of transport for sub-regional and inter-urban travel due to limited public transport provision, particularly rail. Sinn Féin Councillor Conor Heaney said: "There is a clear gap in the northwest of the island in that five counties of Ulster (Donegal, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Monaghan, and Cavan) have no connection to the rail network. The line that does exist

The line that does exist provides only limited connectivity to/from Derry to other cities of the island due to lengthy and circuitous routes." In its corporate response Derry and Strabane Council have called for increased speed and frequency of rail services to and



from Derry to Belfast. It is also seeking a connection to and from Dublin, as well as a future direct line via Strabane and Omagh.

It also urges the establishment of rail connections from Derry to Letterkenny and Sligo and for the Galway Atlantic Corridor.

Cllr Heaney added: "The close collaboration between Derry and Strabane Council and Donegal County Council is hugely important. We need a coherent, agreed local government approach if we are to successfully achieve a fundamental and unique shift in rail strategy for the North West and for the island of Ireland."

THE KEY DEMAND ARES:

- Increased speed, urgency and frequency to/from Belfast and seamless onward connection to/ from Dublin.
- Direct connection to/from Derry to Dublin via Strabane and Omagh.
- Connection to/from Derry to Letterkenny and onwards to Sligo and Galway/Atlantic Corridor.
- Derry and wider northwest suburban rail service centred on Derry with services to Letterkenny, Strabane, Coleraine and with halts at Ballykelly and City of Derry airport.
- Provision of freight services to/ from Derry and Foyle Port to other ports and cities.

Is féidir Éire nua a chruthú

Tá an comhrá ar fud na hÉireann faoi thodhchaí bunreachtúil an oileáin ag dul i méad. Plé corraitheach dinimiciúil atá faoi dheis nach bhfuil ag mórán i saol an lae inniu; sochaí nua a chruthú ón talamh aníos ag na daoine.

Tá an díospóireacht ar aontacht na hÉireann anois i gcroílár an chláir oibre pholaitiúil ar bhealach nach bhfacthas ó cuireadh an chríochdheighilt céad bliain ó shin. Tubaiste d'Éirinn, Thuaidh agus Theas ba ea an chríochdheighilt. Rinnean tír, an mhuintir agus an geilleagar a roinnt.

Toisc gur cuireadh an Breatimeacht i bhfeidhm i gcoinne thoil mhuintir an Tuaiscirt léiríodh tá béim mhór arís ar an mBreatimeacht. Tá neamhaird rialtas na Breataine ar vóta an tromlaigh i gcoinne an Bhreatimeachta in 2016 ag spreagadh athmhachnaimh ó go leor faoin bhféidearthacht go mbeadh Éire nua ann, Éire chomhroinnte. Creideann níos mó agus níos mó daoine gur féidir Éire nua a chruthú.

Taispeánann staidéir eacnamaíocha neamhspleácha go mbeadh buntáistí eacnamaíocha agus fostaíochta ann ach Éire Aontaithe a bheith ann. Tá grúpaí de shaoránaigh i mbun feachtais agus ag reáchtáil imeachtaí ar líne ag plé aontacht na hÉireann. Le déanaí tháinig grúpaí ceardchumainn le chéile chun páirt a ghlacadh sa chomhrá agus chun aontacht na hÉireann a mholadh ar mhaithe le cearta oibrithe. Tá Éire Mheiriceá freisin, a raibh ról lárnach aige i bpróiseas na síochána, ag glacadh páirte sa chomhrá. Taispeánann pobalbhreitheanna rathúla líon méadaitheach daoine atá ag iarraidh aontacht na hÉireann.

Níl Sinn Féin ag éileamh go reáchtálfar reifreann amárach nó an tseachtain seo chugainn. Tá gá le hullmhú agus le haghaidh díospóireachta agus plé ceart. Tá sé tábhachtach a thabhairt faoi deara go bhfuil go leor aontachtaithe ag glacadh páirte sa chomhrá seo cheana féin.

Mar sin, caithfidh rialtas na hÉireann an bealach a threorú. Ba cheart dó páipéar bán ar aontacht na hÉireann a thabhairt ar aghaidh agus Tionól / Coinbhinsiún Saoránach a thionól a chuimsíonn an t-oileán ar fad chun aghaidh a thabhairt ar an iliomad saincheisteanna a éiríonn as an bpróiseas athraithe bunreachtúil.

Rud amháin ar féidir linn a bheith cinnte de - beidh reifreann ann. Tá sé de dhualgas ar Phoblachtánaigh, mar aon le daoine eile ar aon intinn, ullmhú don reifreann sin chun a chinntiú mbíonn an lá linn.

British must set out referendum conditions - Corbyn

Jeremy Corbyn, the former leader of the British Labour Party, was the guest speaker at the events in Derry commemorating the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday.

Corbyn, who has long campaigned on justice issues relating to Ireland, including on behalf of those falsely imprisoned as a result of miscarriages of justice, was given a warm and enthusiastic welcome by the Guild Hall audience on Saturday 29th January when he gave the Bloody Sunday Memoriam lecture.



In a keynote part of his remarks Jeremy Corbyn addressed the central question of Irish self-determination and its connection to colonialism.

Commenting on how far this issue has advanced in the last 50 years he said: "Irish people are finally able to reach towards self determination and social justice, although massive obstacles remain. Their efforts are an inspiration, not just here, but throughout the world. In places as far flung in Palestine, the occupation widely seen as a parallel to what's happening here.

Wherever there is colonial rule, occupation and denial of self determination, it's followed by oppression, by massacres, by cover-ups. We've seen that again and again, including other places - Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, where countless lives have been lost and justice absent. The atrocities of colonialism and empire can never be accepted and will never be forgotten."

The former Labour leader called on the British government to spell out the conditions necessary for the unity referendum provision of the Good Friday Agreement to be called. He said: "The British government especially has an obligation to explain how the poll will be triggered, and I call them on to begin that process so we can have that understanding and that discussion."

Corbyn also condemned proposals from the British government that would provide an amnesty for conflict related actions. He described how the amnesty Bill to be introduced by the Tories "would shut down all further inquiries into the state's actions during the Troubles. Such a law ... would have prohibited the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday."



Well done to Ógra Shinn Féin Chorcaí

ÓGRA SHINN FÉIN CHORCAÍ AMUIGH AR SHRÁIDEANNA CHORCAÍ

Ógra were out on the streets of Cork City at the end of January spreading the message of Irish unity and left republican politics. Well done to those involved. Keep up the good work.

#Time4UnityAmd'Aontacht



Cambridge Union votes to end the Union

It hasn't been a good few months for DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson. His ally Boris Johnson is embroiled in a crisis over Covid Parties amid a clamour for him to resign. An effort to allow for double jobbing that would have allowed Donaldson to remain an MP while standing for an Assembly seat – tabled by former leaders of the SDLP and Alliance Parties and supported by the NIO - fell flat leaving Donaldson embarrassed. His back-up plan to have a clear run at Edwin Poots Lisburn Assembly seat was thwarted by the South Down DUP who chose Diane Forsythe and said NO to Edwin. And then he engaged in a debate in the Cambridge Union with Sinn Fein National Party Chair Declan Kearney – This House believes NI Ought to remain part of the UK - and losses!

Declan Kearney argued a logical case around the right of the people of the island of Ireland to the right to self-determination and won. Speaking in the Union the Party Chair told his audience that the continued jurisdiction of the British state in the north of Ireland represents a denial of the universally recognised right to self-determination.

He told the Cambridge Union that: "In Ireland, the conversation about constitutional change and Irish unity has now moved centre stage.

The narrow English nationalist ideological agenda which has defined this Tory government and its reckless pursuit of the hardest possible Brexit, has had disastrous consequences. Brexit has been a catastrophe not only for the north of Ireland where the majority of citizens voted against Brexit."

Speaking on the Good Friday Agreement he accused successive Tory administrations of being derelict in fulfilling the British government's co-guarantor obligations in the Agreement to ensure rigorous impartiality in its implementation.

He pointed out that: "Brexit has caused an earthquake at the heart of the British state. It's after effects, the pandemic and now the impasse between the British government and the EU over the Protocol, have been driving unstoppable change.

- The level of support for Scottish independence is now at an all-time high.
- There is a growing demand for maximised devolution powers for Wales.
- Now in Ireland, the prospect of constitutional change is fixed on the political horizon ... "

The Good Friday Agreement was overwhelmingly endorsed through referenda held north and south by the citizens of Ireland. It guaranteed parity of esteem and equality for all citizens and established a framework of democratic rules for managing change.

Crucially, he said, "it removed the British government's veto on constitutional change and replaced it with the consent of citizens who live in the north of Ireland, and by extension in the southern Irish state. The GFA provides a peaceful, democratic path to achieving Irish unity. It restores the right to the exercise of self determination by the Irish people through concurrent referenda, both north and south".

The Agreement has also seen a dramatic change in the political landscape in the North. The once monolithic unionist majority has gone. In the last 5 successive elections from 2017 political unionism has failed to secure an electoral majority.

For the first time since partition Irish republican and nationalist MPs outnumber unionist MPs elected to Westminster. The balance of power has shifted and this is

reflected in the regional Assembly.

Votes within the Assembly now regularly attract cross party, cross community support. The majority of Assembly members are socially progressive; they oppose Brexit and support the smooth operation of the Protocol."

Talking about the opportunity for a united Ireland Declan Kearney remarked that; "Some from the unionist and Protestant background are beginning to think outside the contours of partition and the northern state. They aspire to a society based upon modern, liberal, democratic, pluralist values. A society where marriage equality, language rights, or women's reproductive healthcare are not contested issues.

They quite reasonably associate Irish unity as a route back into the EU. "

The Party Chair argued that we should be excited about the future prospect of two new sovereign states emerging between these islands, in Scotland and Ireland, alongside a Welsh state with maximum democratic autonomy arrangements.

This opens up the potential for new forms of positive cooperation and coexistence between these islands. The new Ireland cannot and must not be the old Ireland.

Kearney called on the Irish government to "convene a national Citizens' Assembly to create a structured forum to positively address the key policy areas and modalities for change. It should begin the process of planning for Irish unity.

When the vote was taken at the end of the debate 92 voted for the North to remain in the UK system. IO9 abstained and II9 voted No. A defeat for Donaldson and evidence that even within England support for the union between the North and Britain is eroding.

TIME FOR DUBLIN TO PLAN FOR IRISH UNITY

Fr. Joe McVeigh

Fr. Joe McVeigh along with Fr. Des Wilson and some others were among the small number of clergy who regularly spoke out in defence of the nationalist community against the injustice of the British state in Ireland.

In January he added his voice to those warning about the impact of Brexit and its threat to the Good Friday Agreement and the promise of a new future provide by the prospect of a united Ireland. His comments, in light of recent developments within the DUP, are

Writing on Jude Collins blog site Joe McVeigh said:

The discussion about Irish unity was inevitable after Brexit when the British voted to remove themselves from the European Union. In doing so they also removed the six north -eastern counties of Ireland where a majority voted to remain in the EU. This created a new political and economic situation with regard to the British imposed border in

Since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement the economic border in Ireland hardly existed since all of Ireland was within the EU. With Brexit, much to the delight of unionists, the political border in Ireland since 1920 was regarded once again as an international border. When the EU negotiated a deal with the British government they included a Protocol which would protect the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and avoid the return of an economic border on the island of Ireland. Goods entering the North would



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be checked at ports. The DUP were not happy as they saw this as a weakening of the Union of the north of Ireland with the UK, They continue to oppose the Protocol and continue to make threats to withdraw from the power-sharing executive in Stormont.

Brexit has the potential to de-rail the Good Friday Agreement and the ever growing integration of the northern counties with the rest of Ireland. That is why the support of the EU and the USA are so important ...

The debate about Irish unity cannot be confined to a discussion about uniting the people first. The first discussion has to be about the injustice of Partition and the right of the Irish people to sovereignty. When that is resolved all the other issues about identity, symbols and the rights of minorities will be resolved.

The Dublin government has a special responsibility to work to restore Irish sovereignty and to implement the will of the people. Clearly the will of the vast majority of the Irish people is to implement fully the Good Friday Agreement which includes the holding of a Border referendum. The Dublin government should be moving towards implementing the will of the people at the earliest opportunity by publishing their plan for bringing about the re-unification of Ireland. Their plan should make it clear to nationalists and republicans that they are taking their demand for the full implementation of the Belfast Agreement seriously. Only when they do, will Irish citizens be satisfied that their wishes are not being ignored by Dublin."





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.





