



SINN FÉIN TOPS THE POLL IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS WINNING 144 SEATS



Sinn Féin Vice President and First Minister Designate in the north of Ireland Michelle O'Neill has said the British and Irish governments must do more to restore the local Assembly and Executive.

Michelle O'Neill was speaking after Sinn Féin became the largest party in local government after an historic win in council elections in the north.

Michelle O'Neill said:

"Sinn Féin went into the election campaign with a positive message of wanting to make politics work for all.

"We asked people to vote for Sinn Féin candidates who will work hard in councils every day to deliver on the issues that matter to them.

"The election was an opportunity to send a clear signal.

"To support Sinn Féin's positive leadership and a party that wants to get the Assembly up and running, deliver first-class council services, support people with the cost of living crisis, and invest in the health service.

"The voters have now spoken.

"Sinn Féin took 31% of the vote and we have won 144 seats, an increase of 39, making breakthroughs in areas right across the North.

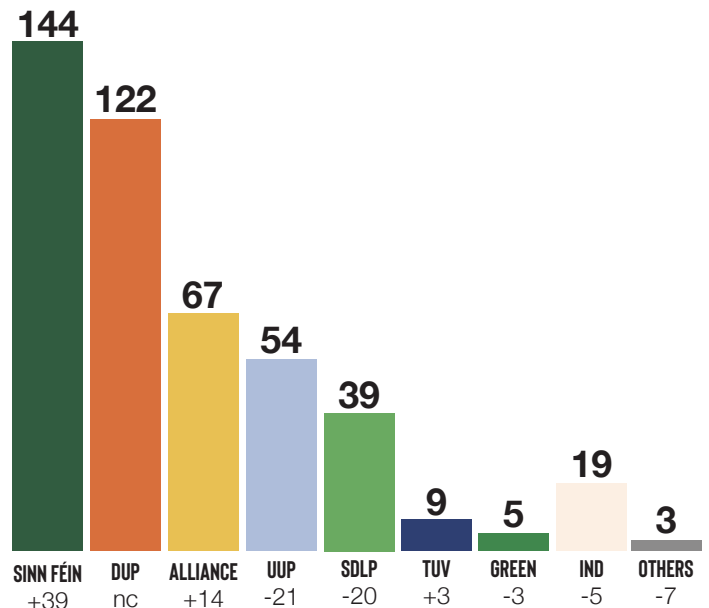
"The onus is now firmly on the British and Irish governments to come together and meet to put in place a plan to restore power-sharing.

"They should call a British Irish summit as soon as possible to get the Assembly and Executive back up and running. That meeting should be at a Taoiseach and British Prime Minister level.

"The DUP's boycott of the Assembly cannot go on and an Executive must be formed.

"The political landscape across the island is changing and Sinn Féin is leading that real change.

"It is time to make politics work to deliver for all right across this island."



NEW SINN FÉIN SPOKESPERSON ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS & DEFENCE - MATT CARTHY

Sinn Féin TD Matt Carthy has been appointed as the main opposition spokesperson on Foreign Affairs & Defence as part of a major reshuffle announced by party leader Mary Lou McDonald, who stated that her new team would lead the party into the next general election.

The reshuffle will see Matt Carthy move to the new role of shadowing Tánaiste Micheál Martin in Foreign Affairs and Defence. Carthy was previously a member of the European Parliament.

Following his appointment Matt Carthy said:

"I look forward to furthering the great work of John Brady TD and preparing for a Sinn Féin government. We will work with Ireland's friends across the world and ensure that Ireland uses our military neutrality to play a positive role in promoting international peace and justice.

"Irish people live and work in every corner of the globe. They retain a huge interest in the real change which is happening at home, and they want to play a role in that change.

"I look forward to working with that Irish diaspora and as we move towards a referendum on Irish Unity, international relationships will be crucially important. Building upon those relationships will be central to everything I do.

"The current Irish government has overseen a recruitment and retention crisis within our Defence Forces.

"I look forward to working with the women and men of the Irish Defence Forces who deserve the resources and supports required to build the necessary capacity on the ground, in the skies and at sea.

"In the period ahead, as Sinn Féin sets about making the case for the retention and enhancement of Irish neutrality, those resources and supports are the foundation needed to facilitate our Defence Forces personnel in meeting their domestic obligations and peacekeeping duties abroad.

"I am also looking forward to re-engaging with governments and parties across the world, and, in particular in Europe. I have previously built relationships there during my time as a Member of the European Parliament.

"It's vital we make common cause where our interests align and make the case and build support for a United Ireland."

**Matt
Carthy TD**



Ursula von der Leyen addresses Good Friday Agreement 25th Anniversary Conference in Queens, Belfast

Speaking in Queen's University marking 25 years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, Ursula Von Der Leyen, President of the European Commission made it clear that,

"The future of Northern Ireland belongs to its people. Only you can make the seed of the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement continue to grow and to flourish. Only you can take the next step on the path of prosperity and possibility".

President von der Leyen said her children, in their twenties had learnt a story of reconciliation and hope.

"A story of economic and social progress. For young Europeans, Northern Ireland is today a cool place. It is a place of music; film sets and stunning landscapes. This brighter reality is only possible because on Good Friday, 25 years ago, the leaders and the people of Northern Ireland

decided to plant a seed in soil previously stained with blood and tears. It is the seed of peace and possibility for new generations, which has been growing defiantly ever since".

The President made it clear that the EU would remain fully involved with the peace process, saying

"I can reassure you that we, the European Union, will continue to do our part and to accompany you on the path of peace and prosperity. Today, my grandchildren are toddlers. What Northern Ireland – and the whole island of Ireland – will look like when they are in their twenties depends on all of us.

"But the ultimate choice lies with you, the people of Northern Ireland, to shape your history and that of the next generation. The gateway to a bright future is open. All you need to do is walk through it".

Friends must speak honestly to each other

Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald speaking in Brussels IIEA event.

Addressing the Institute of International and European Affairs in Brussels Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald TD made it clear that Ireland's future is "to be at the very forefront of the European project, driving change and improvements that benefit progress, prosperity, and the uplift of ordinary citizens".

Acknowledging the transformation of Ireland from one of Europe's poorest countries to one of economic progress and progressive social change through European membership, she said, "friends must speak honestly to each other. The future we are trying to build together calls on us to critique and confront the points of real concern - growing militarisation, deregulation, privatisation, and the reflexive unleashing of austerity at times of economic crisis.

"In the past, there were those who used crises as alibis to retreat into narrow thinking and to block progress. To cut our way out of economic difficulty and assert that working people must pay the heavy price. "We are living through times of great volatility and change, and I believe that we as European nations face a crossroads and a choice.

"Does Europe choose a path where the Union becomes more disconnected and removed from the lives of ordinary people or do we together revive the vision of Europe as a beacon of partnership, solidarity, and equality?

"To strengthen the European Union, we must enhance its democratic legitimacy, and build a future in which every woman, man and child has a real stake.

"That means working together to ensure our people have affordable housing, access to world class public healthcare and education, the foundations of a good life where every



President of Sinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald addresses The Institution of International European Affairs IIEA in Brussels

person has the opportunity to reach their full potential".

Addressing the issue of Ireland's neutrality the President of Sinn Féin said, "to those who say that Ireland should surrender our neutrality, they're wrong. Our future, Ireland's future in Europe, is too big and too bright for such a retreat.

"Now is the time for a vision of Ireland as a European leader of prosperity, peace and hope.

"Ireland's future within Europe must be to spearhead a union of equals that is about

advancing the empowerment of citizens and communities,

"About building a future of opportunity, inclusion, and prosperity for all.

"About shaping Europe as bastion of peace, human rights, and the championing of justice rather than fortifying as another military powerhouse".

The Sinn Féin President concluded, "Now is the time to embrace positive change and empowerment, to confidently step forward with big and ambitious ideas to build a better Europe and a better Ireland".

Link to full speech,

<https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/654>



European Parliament: 25 years of European support for the Good Friday Agreement – Chris MacManus MEP

The Presidents of the European Parliament, European Council and European Commission addressed the European Parliament which marked the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, and all pledged to continue supporting the Good Friday Agreement.

At a separate packed symposium event in the Parliament, hosted by Chris MacManus and fellow Irish MEPs, there were contributions from community and sporting leaders from Ireland who had travelled to Brussels.

Sinn Féin MEP Chris MacManus praised European Institutions for putting the protection of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) front and centre for the past 25 years.

Chris MacManus said:

“The GFA put in place a new constitutional framework in the

north of Ireland, along with a peaceful political process, to guarantee equality, justice, and human rights.

“At every point throughout the Brexit negotiations, myself, and my colleagues from across the European Union put the protection of the GFA front and centre.

“The European Institutions demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the GFA on numerous occasions.

“I have no doubt our friends across Europe will play an equally important role in the next 25 years as a new chapter of the GFA unfolds.

“Today’s event sends a clear message that all Irish MEPs are not only proud of the historic achievement, but we will fight to protect it.”



Packed GFA symposium event in the European Parliament, Brussels



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen speaking in European Parliament marking 25th Anniversary of the GFA

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR BASQUE PEACE PROCESS

In April this year, Sinn Féin chairperson Declan Kearney MLA attended the EH Bildu organised Aberri Eguna (Basque National Day) celebration in Iruñea.

Writing in his Blog Declan Kearney MLA said, “The Basque independence movement has a coherent strategy. Successive political leaderships have shown great courage and foresight. Groundbreaking decisions have created the peace process and changed the political context. Preparing for government



Declan Kearney MLA – Iruñea, Basque Country

in the future is now a priority for EH Bildu.

Kearney went on to say: “No peace process can be

advanced by one side alone.

“The PSOE led coalition has been good for politics in the Spanish state. It is first progressive Spanish government, including a coalition of left-wing parties since the fall of the 2nd Republic in 1939.

“Whilst the shadow of Franco’s regime continues to contaminate political institutions and civic society in Spain, and conservative forces and a new, extreme right wing pose threats to the democratic process, this coalition government, with the parliamentary

support of Basque and Catalan MPs, has led the way in helping to implement new political strategies and social democratic based public policies.

“The Basque peace process has been strengthened as a result, but more needs to be done.”

Read Declan Kearney’s May 12th Blog in full: anphoblacht.com/contents/28511



GFA anniversary underlines international significance of Ireland's peace process



DECLAN
KEARNEY
MLA

Extracts from Declan Kearney's blog

US President Joe Biden's recent visit to Ireland on the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) coincided with the Queen's University Agreement 25 conference.

The Irish peace process would not exist today without the role played by Irish Americans, as far back as 1993. Joe Biden was as committed to peace in Ireland then as he is today.

The Queens conference gathered former and current Irish Taoisigh, British Prime Ministers, and architects of the GFA to discuss its legacy and future.

The Conference emphasized the need for power sharing, with the Executive, Assembly, and north/south political institutions to be restored immediately.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) must abandon the politics of veto, and instead fully embrace the principles of the GFA.

This conference put a strategic and political lens on the history of the GFA, and most importantly, looked forward.

Sinn Féin is now the largest party in the north and will lead the power-sharing coalition,

Attempts to subvert the principle of consent enshrined in the GFA with suggestions of new constitutional guarantees and amendments to the 1998 Act will be unacceptable.

The GFA provides a means to self-determination. Constitutional



US President Biden sharing a joke with Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald

change in favour of Irish unity will only come about through democratic persuasion, and a united Ireland within the terms of the GFA and full membership of the EU, would be best for all.

The support of the EU for the north of Ireland and the GFA was reinforced. European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen made it clear that the EU would remain fully involved with the peace process. Other long-standing friends and stakeholders in the Irish peace process, such as the Canadian and South African governments, also remain fully committed.

The GFA is an international treaty; that, and its basis in law are immutable.

If the DUP continues to refuse to accept the new democratic realities, realise that the northern state has been irreversibly transformed, and embrace the challenge of moving to the next stage of the peace process,

then the British and Irish governments must agree a new political framework for overseeing the north, with continued support of both the US administration and EU.

The peace process and managing future constitutional change in Ireland will continue to rely upon their, and other international partners' strategic support and goodwill. After 25 years of progress, it is essential to manage the changes with sensitivity and inclusivity.

The full article can be found here

<https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/28508#.ZEjNChQt5-Y.gmail>



Mairead Farrell TD and Cathy Mason MLA in Berlin

Conventional wisdom has often had it that Ireland is closer to Boston than Berlin. The recent visit by President Joe Biden and his clear affection for Ireland, his support for this island throughout Brexit and calls for the Assembly to get back up and running, would seem to confirm this.

However, having just finished a whistlestop tour of Berlin, where Cathy Mason MLA and TD Mairéad Farrell met with high-ranking European officials including in Germany's Central Bank (the Bundesbank), Senior Parliamentarians and even the ECB's Chief Economist, Philip Lane, it is clear that there is an equal level of understanding and support for Ireland in Europe.

Mairead Farrell TD said:

"The range of discussions was broad: from Brexit to EU security matters, to the future of the European economy. It allowed for us to engage with these various issues through the prism of the Irish experience. It also gave us the perspective of the future which EU countries see for Ireland regarding



the renewable energy sector.

"The experience of Ireland and Germany within

the EU, given that Germany is the largest economy, differs greatly and the importance of discussing that other perspective among key policy makers cannot be underestimated."

The Galway TD continued:

"While some experiences may differ, the concept of reunification is something which is understood clearly by all within Germany politics. The finer details as to how Irish reunification would be achieved was something which many sought greater clarification on.

"The understanding of the need to protect the Good Friday Agreement during Brexit negotiations was clearly understood by many in Germany, however, many were not as aware of the mechanism within the GFA to achieve Unity.

"During the engagements my colleague Cathy Mason MLA set out the case for the immediate restoration of the Assembly, the Executive and cross-border bodies in the north and said continued EU support was vital to achieve this."

Stark warnings about the deterioration of human rights in the North of Ireland

Human rights are an essential part of any functioning democracy, and most people rightly expect them to be embedded in the north of Ireland 25 years after the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). Sadly, the opposite is the case.

The British Government's departure from the European Union has had far-reaching implications for human rights, as demonstrated by three European Reports detailing how the situation in the north of Ireland has worsened significantly.

The three reports by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE); the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol; and a third report by esteemed European and international human rights lawyers on the "Crisis in the Human Rights Framework of the Good Friday Agreement".

All three reports had a consistent message, the people of the north are having human rights protections diluted.

"Brexit has already led to a diminution of the rights of Irish and EU citizens in NI and threatens to do so to an even greater extent in the future".



"The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission had found that a number of measures taken by the British Government had potentially breached the rights protections set out in the Protocol".

"The British government had failed to live up to its commitment in Article 2(2) of the protocol "to continue to facilitate the work of the human rights and equality commissions established under the GFA".

"The loss of UN accreditation for the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is deeply concerning and undermines the region's ability to effectively protect and promote human rights".

"The human rights situation in Northern Ireland is deteriorating rapidly, and urgent action is needed to

address the crisis".

The evidence from these three reports is a stark warning about the extent to which human rights in the North have been deteriorating. The reaction from the British government to these reports has been one of denial and deflection.

The Good Friday Agreement, which was a hard-won peace agreement, includes strong human rights protections for all communities on the

island of Ireland: It is a political and legal binding international agreement with a promise for a better rights-based society predicated on justice, Section 75 equality legislation, a Bill of Rights, and an All-Ireland Charter of Rights.

Concerns about the diminution of human rights in the North of Ireland since Brexit have been growing across continental Europe, as evidence of our dwindling human rights protection has been presented to European Parliamentarians, foundations, and organisations.

DID YOU KNOW ABOUT IRELAND?



Micheál Mac Donncha

- While English is the daily spoken language of most people in Ireland it is not our native language.
- The native language of Ireland is Irish or Gaelic - 'Gaeilge' in the Irish language.
- Irish is one of the Celtic group of languages which also includes Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Breton.
- Our ancient language has the first vernacular literature in Western Europe after Greek and Latin.
- For centuries Gaeilge was predominant in Ireland but the English colonial conquerors suppressed it, leading to decline, especially for economic reasons as the dominant classes in land and commerce spoke English.
- This culminated in the Great Hunger 1845-1849 when one million Irish people died of starvation and disease and a further million were forced to emigrate. Most were Irish speakers.
- The revival of the language began 130 years ago in 1893 and has continued since.
- Gaeilge thrives today in Irish language schools across the island and in vibrant cultural activity. It is spoken daily in several State-recognised Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) districts.
- In the Six Counties of 'Northern Ireland', still within British government jurisdiction, Irish was only recently officially recognised in law, after a long campaign. It is the official first language of the Irish state and is an EU working language.
- 'Goodbye' in Irish is 'Slán'.



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