



SHAPING OUR
CONSTITUTIONAL FUTURE

CALLING FOR A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 28TH NOVEMBER 7PM

THE CELTIC SUITE, CUSACK STAND, CROKE PARK

MARTINA DEVLIN • NIALL MURPHY • PROFESSOR COLIN HARVEY • PATRICIA MACBRIDE
DR SEAMUS MCGUINNESS • SENATOR FRANCES BLACK • AILBHE SMYTH • PADDY CULLIVAN

A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF IRELAND

IRELAND'S FUTURE

What is the background of Ireland's Future?

Ireland's Future is a national rights based advocacy group which has emerged from a series of initiatives to highlight the denial of rights in the north of Ireland and the anti-democratic imposition of Brexit.

In the last 12 months & since our 'Beyond Brexit: Ireland's Future' convention at the Waterfront centre in Belfast last January, we have developed into a network across Ireland & the Irish diaspora.

What was the context to the recent letter to an Taoiseach?

This open letter to an Taoiseach has been signed by almost 1100 Irish citizens from across Ireland & the Diaspora who are giving expression to their deeply held concerns about the negative repercussions Brexit will have for our country, the Good Friday Agreement, & the peace process.

They reflect a deeper discussion already happening in Ireland about future constitutional change & Irish unity.

Letter Overview

More than 1,000 prominent citizens from across Ireland and abroad have signed a petition urging the Taoiseach to establish a Citizens' Assembly to discuss the potential for new constitutional arrangements for Ireland.

They include actor Adrian Dunbar, director Jim Sheridan, Mayor of Boston Marty Walsh, writer Eoin Colfer, poets Paula Meehan and Theo Dorgan, musicians Christy Moore, Frances Black and Sharon Shannon, and commentators Fintan O'Toole and Martina Devlin.

Other signatories include 'Game of Thrones' actor Art Parkinson and 'Love Hate' actor

John Connors, economist David McWilliams, book festival curator Sian Smyth, GAA figures Peter Canavan, DJ Carey and Davy Fitzgerald, former Titanic Quarter chief executive David Gavaghan, Dublin Airport Operations Manager David Finn, 'Together for Yes' campaigner Ailbhe Smyth and concert promoter Peter Aiken.

Those supporting the initiative are drawn from all 32 counties of Ireland and represent a range of professions.

The debate has been triggered by Brexit, but other factors include demographic trends in the North, changing attitudes to social reforms and rights, and recognition that an agreed Ireland can offer people from every tradition an enhanced future.

A Citizens' Assembly?

Our letter asks the Taoiseach to convene a citizens' assembly to enable a structured discussion about managing future constitutional and political change in our country.

We think the Irish Government should take the lead in that work. A Citizens' Assembly is a trusted mechanism to assess public attitudes towards proposals.

That's the view of many prominent people in Irish civic life.

The significance of the diversity of these signatories should not be missed. They demonstrate a public mood north & south, & further afield.

We are living through extraordinary times of political upheaval and economic flux. Consider the chaos in Britain. We in Ireland can be better than that.

It's time for a new national discussion about our shared future in Ireland.

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THURSDAY 28TH NOVEMBER 7PM

Clár

19:00 Tea and Coffee

19:15 Introduction and Welcome
Senator Frances Black

19:30 Paddy Cullivan
Audio-visual presentation

19:45 **Panel and Discussion**

Chair Martina Devlin

Panel Professor Colin Harvey
(QUB School of Law)

Dr Seamus McGuinness
(Economic and Social Research Institute)

Ailbhe Smyth
*(Effecting a campaign for
constitutional change)*

Patricia MacBride
*(Former Victims Commissioner,
lawyer and commentator)*

20:45 **Closing Remarks**

Niall Murphy
(Solicitor and Ireland's Future co-ordinator)



Martina Devlin



Niall Murphy



Professor Colin Harvey



Senator Frances Black



Ailbhe Smyth



Paddy Cullivan



Dr Seamus McGuinness



Patricia MacBride

IRELAND'S FUTURE

Dialogue on reunification of Ireland now 'centre stage'



Freya McClements Background

Brexit 'changed everything' and dialogue on reunification of Ireland now 'centre stage'

In 2017, Niall Murphy found himself having the same conversation over and over again.

There was a "recurring theme" around the denial of rights in the North – "the very explicit frustrations within the nationalist community in terms of how politics was being conducted".

"It was what I was hearing in the school car park when I was dropping my children at school, it was what I was hearing in court before the judge came out, it was what I was hearing at the sideline of a football pitch."

One of Belfast's best-known solicitors, he did what

solicitors do – he wrote a letter. That first communication, in December 2017, was an open letter in the Irish News from 200 Northern nationalists to the Taoiseach urging him to "give voice" to concerns around Brexit, the collapse of powersharing at Stormont and the undermining of rights.

The group, Ireland's Future, write again in today's Irish Times. In a letter signed by more than 1,000 people – two-thirds in the Republic of Ireland – they appeal to Taoiseach Leo Varadkar to begin a conversation "about our shared future on the island of Ireland".

"The Government needs to plan for this," they write.

Irish diaspora

The signatures are drawn from all sections of civic society, North and South, and among the Irish diaspora. Deliberately, there are no elected political representatives. Murphy stresses that the

group is not party political, nor nationalist, and instead is a coalition of individuals who share a concern about rights – not least those of Irish citizens in the North post-Brexit – and the conversation around constitutional change on this island.

About 20 people are at the core of Ireland's Future; while Murphy is the spokesman, they include Gerry Carlile, Conor Patterson, Anna McHugh, Brian Feeney, Fachtna Ó Ceallaigh, Martina Devlin, Niall Keenan, Brian Loughran, Louise Clarke, Prof Colin Harvey, Tony Shivers, Frances Black, Paddy Cullivan, Patricia Mac Bride, Maighr ad N  Chonghaile, Chris Donnelly, Lorc an Collins and Brendan Mulgrew.

"We think, respectfully," says Murphy, "that this correspondence and the signatories to it represent a holistic overview of an island's view that we need to talk.

"What's wrong with conversation, what's wrong with planning, what's

wrong with having a plan? The most appropriate way to do that is through a Citizens' Assembly."

Brexit

The context to this is, of course, Brexit. It has "changed everything", the letter states; among the consequences are that the "discussion about the reunification of Ireland has moved centre stage".

Any Border poll should not be the "knee jerk that was the Brexit referendum", stresses Murphy. Instead they want "mature,

reasoned debate informed by the leaders of the State".

"We want to avoid the madness that has convulsed Britain's body politic. Britain did not prepare, Britain put a flippant notion to an unprepared society and we feel that there are demographic and economic imperatives which are going to arise which should be planned and prepared for rather than responded to on an ad hoc fashion."

Within this, says Murphy, it is important that unionist concerns are heard. Privately, conversations are

happening, "and whereas there might not be the confidence to articulate that out loud yet, we need to create a space where that can be done sensitively and constructively".

"Ultimately, in a new Ireland unionism is going to be there, they're our neighbours, they own this place too, and they need to be accommodated," he says.

"I would like to hear a warm embrace for the unionist tradition in an all-island constitutional entity."



Prof Colin Harvey is one of more than 1,000 signatures on an open letter to Taoiseach Leo Varadkar. Photograph: Laura Davison/Pacemaker Press

A new Ireland? 1,000 leading people call on Varadkar to lead change

Representatives of civic society seek dialogue on constitutional future of island of Ireland

More than 1,000 representatives of civic society across Ireland and among the diaspora have signed an open letter to Taoiseach Leo Varadkar calling for a "new conversation" about the constitutional future of the island of Ireland.

The letter also asks for the formation of a Citizens' Assembly to reflect "the views of citizens North and South", and welcomes the discussions it says are taking place among unionists about their future place on the island.

The letter, written by the Ireland's Future group, and the full list of signatories are published in today's Irish Times.

In the context of the "flux" created by Brexit and subsequent conversations about the reunification of Ireland, they point out that a majority in Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU.

"It is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that the democratic wishes and rights of Irish citizens are respected and protected, regardless of where they live on the island," the letter states.

Democratic change

"Let's have a discussion on how this can be achieved. We would urge you to start this process, based on the vision of democratic change set out in the Good Friday [Belfast] agreement. Start planning now."

The same group organised the Beyond Brexit – The Future of Ireland conference which was attended by more than 1,500 people in Belfast in January.

Citizens assemble plan for united Ireland

JOHN MANLEY
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT
J.MANLEY@IRISHNEWS.COM

LEO Varadkar has been urged to establish a citizens assembly to look at ways of building broad support for a united Ireland.

The call comes today from civic nationalist group Ireland's Future in an open letter to the taoiseach, signed by 1,000 leading figures from across the island and beyond.

Those endorsing the letter's message, which is published in *The Irish News*, include commentator Fintan O'Toole, Boston mayor Marty Walsh, economist David McWilliams, concert promoter Peter Aiken, and businessman David Gavaghan, the former head of Stormont's Strategic Investment Board.

It has also been signed by well-known names from the worlds of sport, entertainment, academia and media, including former Kilkenny All-Ireland-winning hurling captain DJ Carey, Republic of Ireland soccer international James McClean, and Fermanagh-born actor Adrian Dunbar.

Previous letters the group has sent to Mr Varadkar have called on



SIGNATORIES: From left, economics commentator David McWilliams, Belfast lawyer and culture co-ordinator Niall Dunbar, and actor Adrian Dunbar

the taoiseach to ensure the rights of Irish citizens in the north are maintained in the face of Brexit and the absence of devolved institutions.

However, the latest letter, which will also appear in today's *Irish Times*, has a wider selection of signatories from the Republic and the diaspora than previous incarnations.

Today's letter again stresses the need for Dublin to "ensure the democratic wishes and rights of Irish citizens are respected and protected, regardless of where they live on the island".

But it is coupled with a direct appeal to the taoiseach to "start planning for a united Ireland."

"Let's have a discussion on how this can be achieved. We would urge you to start this process based on the vision of democratic change set out in the Good Friday Agreement. Start planning now."

Over to you, taoiseach

IT HAS been two years since a broad range of people from across civic nationalism in the north first came together amid concern that their rights as Irish and European citizens were being eroded by Brexit – a process being imposed against their will. Initially, 200 people wrote to Leo Varadkar, urging him to protect their interests. Since that initial letter in late 2017, the conversation among civic nationalists has broadened, reflecting a context of continued instability and a growing belief that Irish unity is now an achievable goal.

There's been input into the conversation from academics, politicians, campaigners and trades unionists, among others. The momentum has been maintained with a further letter, signed by 1,000 people, coinciding with last January's hugely successful

ANALYSIS
John Manley



"The breadth of support for the latest letter demonstrates that Irish unity is increasingly part of the mainstream political agenda, not just in the north but across Ireland"

Beyond Brexit event at Belfast's Waterfront Hall, plus a similar gathering in Newry in May.

The letter to the taoiseach published today is the latest step for the groundswell movement known as Ireland's Future. It signals a switch in emphasis and ambition for the campaign, taking its message across the island and into the diaspora. The breadth of

support for the latest letter demonstrates that Irish unity is increasingly part of the mainstream political agenda, not just in the north but across Ireland.

As well as reminding the taoiseach of his continued responsibilities to Irish citizens north of the border, it urges the Dublin government to take an active role in the conversation about how unity can be achieved and what a unified Ireland might look like.

Signatories such as commentator Fintan O'Toole, economist David McWilliams and businessman David Gavaghan bring gravitas to the debate and show that discussions about a new Ireland are no longer peripheral.

Acknowledging how the issues of abortion reform and same-sex marriage took huge steps forward on the back of discussions in the Republic's Citizens Assembly, the letter urges the Dublin government to initiate a similar forum to address the issue of creating a new, agreed Ireland.

Given Leo Varadkar and his deputy Simon Coveney's professed desire to see Ireland united, it's difficult to see how they could resist such a reasonable and sensible approach. Over to you, Dublin.



Assembly call to reunited Ireland



David McWilliams, Republic of Ireland international footballer



LETTER AND SIGNATORIES P10,11

orated modern nationalism, a cause spurred by the UK's departure from the EU.

"Brexiteer has changed everything," the letter to the taoiseach says.

"The constitutional, political, social and economic status quo on the island of Ireland is now in flux. Discussion about the reunification of Ireland has moved centre stage."

The letter describes as a "welcome development", discussions about a united Ireland that include debates around "the place of unionists in it".

"We ask the government to establish a citizens assembly reflecting the views of citizens North and South, or a forum to discuss the future and achieve maximum consensus on a way forward."

Other signatories include Cork hurling coach Diarmuid O'Sullivan, actor Ciarán McMenamin, author Carlo Gébler, singer Christy Moore and film director Jim Sheridan.

led with a much more to the Fine Gael gov- art planning now" for 1. i discussion on how achieved," the letter uld urge you to start ased on the vision of ange set out in the greement."

"We can't replicate the ill-prepared recklessness of the Brexit referendum. We need to consult, converse, plan, and prepare for Ireland's future."

In January his year, thousands gathered at the Ireland's Future Beyond Brexit conference at Belfast's Waterfront Hall.

Attended by representatives from Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, alongside the Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald and her SDLP counterpart Colum Eastwood, the event is seen as a watershed moment for a reinvig-

It has also written twice to the Taoiseach, the first in December 2017, when more than 200 representatives of "civic nationalism" signed an open letter to Mr Varadkar urging him to "give voice" to concerns around Brexit, the collapse of power-sharing at Stormont and the undermining of rights.

Today's letter is signed by 1,088 Irish citizens from across the academic, arts, business, community, education, health, labour, law, media and sports sectors on the island of Ireland and among Irish diaspora in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Two-thirds of the signatories are based in the Republic of Ireland, and one-third in Northern Ireland or abroad.

Among the high-profile supporters are actor Adrian Dunbar, singers Frances and Mary Black and Christy Moore, Ireland soccer player James McClean and former Cork hurling star Donal Óg Cusack.



Signatory:
Fintan O'Toole



Signatory:
David McWilliams



Signatory: Singer and Politician Frances Black

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IRELAND'S FUTURE

A letter to An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar

An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD
Oifig an Taoisigh
Tithe an Rialtais
Baile Átha Cliath 2

1st November 2019

A Thaoisigh,

We write to you as citizens to record our deep concerns about the negative repercussions which Brexit will have for our country, for the Good Friday Agreement and for the peace process.

Brexit has changed everything. The constitutional, political, social and economic status quo on the island of Ireland is now in flux.

Discussion about the reunification of Ireland has moved centre stage. Many citizens are already involved in formal and informal discussions about this. We believe that a new conversation is now required about our shared future on the island of Ireland. The Government needs to plan for this.

A clear majority of people in Ireland, both in this state and in the North, want to remain in the European Union. The majority of citizens in the North voted to remain in the 2016 referendum. This includes many Unionists. In recent years a conversation about Ireland's future, and the place of Unionists in it, is publicly taking place among Unionists. This is a welcome development.

Irish citizens should continue to enjoy the rights which accrue from membership of the European Union, as well as the full protection of the European Court of Justice. It is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that the democratic wishes and rights of Irish citizens are respected and protected, regardless of where they live on the island.

Let's have a discussion on how this can be achieved. We would urge you to start this process, based on the vision of democratic change set out in the Good Friday Agreement. Start planning now.

We ask the Government to establish a Citizens Assembly reflecting the views of citizens North and South, or a Forum to discuss the future and achieve maximum consensus on a way forward.

Is sinne le mórmheas

1 Samhain 2019

A Thaoisigh,

Táimid ag scríobh chugat mar shaoránaigh lenár n-ínní ollmhór a léiriú faoi na himpleachtaí diúltacha atá i ndán dár dtír, do Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus don phróiseas síochána mar gheall ar an Bhreathimeacht.

Tá gach rud athraithe de dheasca an Bhreathimeachta. Tá an status quo in Éirinn ar féithbhogadh maidir le cúrsaí bunreachtúla, polaitiúla, sóisialta agus geilleagair.

Tá an plé faoi athaontú na hÉireann anois i lár an aois. Tá cuid mhór saoránach páirteach cheana féin i ndiospóireachtaí foirmeálta agus neamhfoirmeálta i dtaca leis an ábhar. Creidimid féin go bhfuil comhrá nua anois de dhíth maidir lenár dtodhchaí chomhroinnte ar oileán na hÉireann. Is gá don Rialtas pleanáil a dhéanamh mar gheall air sin.

Tá tromlach de mhuintir na hÉireann, sa stát seo agus ó thuaidh, ag iarraidh fanacht san Aontas Eorpach. Sa reifreann in 2016 chaith formhór na ndaoine a vóta chun fanacht. Ina measc siúd bhí roinnt mhaith aontachtóirí. Le blianta beaga anuas, tá plé ar bun i measc aontachtóirí faoi thodhchaí na hÉireann agus faoina ról féin sa todhchaí sin. Cuirtear fáilte roimhe sin.

Ba chóir go leanfar leis go mbeidh na cearta a bhaineann le ballraíocht an Aontais Eorpaigh, go mbeidh na cearta sin ag saoránaigh Éireannacha feasta, chomh maith leis na cosaint a bhaineann leis an Chúirt Bheithiúnais Eorpach a bheith acu. Tá sé de dhuilgias ar an Rialtas a chinntiú go mbeidh meas ar mhianta daonlathacha saoránach Éireannach agus ar a gcearta; agus go ndéanfar sin a chosaint beag beann ar an áit ar an oileán a bhfuil cónaí orthu.

Bíodh an comhrá againn faoin dóigh leis sin a bhaint amach. Molaimid duit tús a chur leis an phróiseas sin, bunaithe ar an fhís atá i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta maidir le hathrú daonlathach. Cuirtear tús leis an phleanáil anois.

Iarraimid ar an Rialtas Tionól Saoránach a bhunú chun tuairimí saoránach thuaidh agus theas a léiriú; sin nó Fóram a bhunú inár féidir an todhchaí a phlé chomh maith leis an dóigh chun an chomhthoil is mó a bhaint amach faoin bhealach chun cinn.

Is sinne le mórmheas,

ACADEMIA

Phill Scraton, Antrim
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Michael Pieterse, Antrim
Johanna Devlin Trew, Antrim
Dr Margaret Ward, Antrim
Prof Paddy Hilliard, Antrim
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Eoin Walsh, Kilkenny
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Barry Farmer, Canada
Dr Martin Meagher, Carlow
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Colm Finn, Clare
Sheila Finn, Clare
Emma O'Sullivan, Clare
Helga Marsella, Clare
Lou Marsella, Clare
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Angela Kennedy, Cork
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Sinead Ní Mhairtín, Cork
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Louise Clarke, Derry
Pat McVey, Derry
Patrick Gildea, Donegal
Jack Britton, Donegal
Liam Fullerton, Donegal
Tom Murray, Donegal
Gerald Roarty, Donegal
Sean Begley, Donegal
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Dermot McClean, Donegal
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Ciaran Mackel, Donegal
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Peter McEvoy, Donegal
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John Martin, Donegal
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Sean Duffy, Donegal
Martin McCrystal, Donegal
Eugene Hughes, Donegal
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John Mayo, Donegal
Noel McPhillips, Donegal
Gerard Mulligan, Donegal
John Sherry, Donegal
Declan Mulligan, Donegal
Fergal Brady, Donegal
Jimmy Murray, Donegal
Liam McCooey, Donegal
Christopher Conwell, Donegal
Fergal McGurgan, Donegal
Stephen O'Hagan, Donegal
Brendan O'Hagan, Donegal

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Padraig O'Ceallaigh, Antrim
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Kevin Gamble, Antrim
Frank Liddy, Antrim
Pol Deeds, Antrim
Liam Maskey, Antrim
Jake Mac Stacais, Antrim
Mark Thompson, Antrim
Daoglan O'Doibhlin, Antrim
Ciaran Mac Giolla Bheinn, Antrim
Brigid MacMahon, Antrim
Annie Armstrong, Antrim
John Gormley, Antrim
John Duffy, Antrim
Dr Aidan Donaldson, Antrim
Christine McKeown, Antrim
Fionnuala Black, Antrim
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Daihi Mac Uait, Antrim
Dr Fearghal Mac Ionnachtaigh, Antrim
Tomas Ó Néill, Antrim
Philip McTaggart, Antrim
Conchúr Ó Muadaigh, Antrim
Padraig O'Ceallaigh, Antrim
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John Kelly, Derry
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Marie Quiry, Down
Páilín Ó Ruanaí, Down
Grainne Healy, Dublin
Kieran Rose, Dublin
Margaret Urwin, Dublin
Seamus Ó Donnghaile, Dublin
Bridín Ní Dhonnghaile, Dublin
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Diarmuid Ua Bruadair, Dublin
Damian Coyle, Antrim
John McManus, Antrim
Adrian Walsh, Antrim
Cathal O'Doherty, Antrim
Margaret Neeson, Antrim
Kevin McCreavey, Antrim
Bronagh Farrimond, Antrim
Martin McCaughan, Antrim
Justin McCormick, Antrim
Jarlath Burns, Antrim
Anthony McMoraw, Antrim
Padai de Bléine, Antrim
Brid Bradley, Antrim
Sinead Ní Chaoiláin, Antrim
Louise Uí Chiuinn, Antrim
Finnian Moriarty, Antrim
Oliver Short, Antrim
Kathleen Conlan, Chicago, USA
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Adrian Breathnach, Cork
Tom O'Connor, Cork
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Sally McCallion, Derry
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Malachai Ó hAigéin, Derry
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Fiacra O'Donnghaile, Derry
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Eileen Arthur, Down
Orlaith Ní an Iscair, Down
Kevin O'Neill, Down
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Margaret Daly, Dublin
Maggie Feeley, Dublin
Ann Hegarty, Dublin
Amy Moran, Dublin
Kim Moran, Dublin
Daithí Mac An Bhaire, Donegal
Aideen Dermody, Donegal
Shane Curtin, Donegal
Thomas Sharkey, Donegal
Nuala Mhic Sabhann, Donegal
Elaine BÍ Uí Mhaolabhaill, Donegal
Edel Uí Dhálaigh, Donegal
Bean Uí Lallaigh, Donegal
Clár Ní Dhálaigh, Donegal
Idé Uí Bheig, Donegal
Kathy McManus, Donegal
Bernie Grant, Donegal
Trianam McConnell, Donegal
Orla King, Donegal
Stephanie Donohoe, Donegal
Karen Mo Clare, Donegal

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Damian Mór Ó Neill, Tyrone
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Ciarán Ó Prionnhaigh, Tyrone
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Proinsias O'Raghallaigh, Dublin
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Rosa Mylonas, Donegal
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Marian Clarke, Louth
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Claibh Ní Ghibhne, Louth
Seán Ó Murchadha, Louth
Garry Kelly, Louth
Kayleigh Mhic an Bhaire, Louth
Kevin Meenan, Louth
Gerry Bradley, Louth
Susan O'Neill, Louth
Cathy Keane, Wexford
Rosemarie Byrne, Louth
Martin Collins, Dublin
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Darragh Mac Giolla Phádraigh, Galway
Shauna Reilly, Monaghan
Kevin O'Hagan, Monaghan
Mary O'Hagan, Monaghan

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Páidie Shivers, Antrim
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Joanne Smyth, Antrim
Raymond Hunter, Antrim
Kieran Austin, Antrim
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Rón Ó Ruanaidh, Antrim
Maighread Ní Chonghaile, Antrim
Seamus Ó Donnghaile, Antrim
Bridín Ní Dhonnghaile, Antrim
Ciarán Mhic Giolla Bhríde, Antrim
Diarmuid Ua Bruadair, Antrim
Damian Coyle, Antrim
John McManus, Antrim
Adrian Walsh, Antrim
Cathal O'Doherty, Antrim
Margaret Neeson, Antrim
Kevin McCreavey, Antrim
Bronagh Farrimond, Antrim
Martin McCaughan, Antrim
Justin McCormick, Antrim
Jarlath Burns, Antrim
Anthony McMoraw, Antrim
Padai de Bléine, Antrim
Brid Bradley, Antrim
Sinead Ní Chaoiláin, Antrim
Louise Uí Chiuinn, Antrim
Finnian Moriarty, Antrim
Oliver Short, Antrim
Kathleen Conlan, Chicago, USA
Cathal Kerrigan, Cork
Adrian Breathnach, Cork
Tom O'Connor, Cork
Anne Scullion, Derry
Mary Nic Ailin, Derry
Sally McCallion, Derry
Nicola Mí Láimhbheartaín, Derry
Malachai Ó hAigéin, Derry
Deirdre Ní Súibhne, Derry
Fiacra O'Donnghaile, Derry
Tiarna Matthews, Down
Eileen Arthur, Down
Orlaith Ní an Iscair, Down
Kevin O'Neill, Down
Anthony Daly, Dublin
Margaret Daly, Dublin
Maggie Feeley, Dublin
Ann Hegarty, Dublin
Amy Moran, Dublin
Kim Moran, Dublin
Daithí Mac An Bhaire, Donegal
Aideen Dermody, Donegal
Shane Curtin, Donegal
Thomas Sharkey, Donegal
Nuala Mhic Sabhann, Donegal
Elaine BÍ Uí Mhaolabhaill, Donegal
Edel Uí Dhálaigh, Donegal
Bean Uí Lallaigh, Donegal
Clár Ní Dhálaigh, Donegal
Idé Uí Bheig, Donegal
Kathy McManus, Donegal
Bernie Grant, Donegal
Trianam McConnell, Donegal
Orla King, Donegal
Stephanie Donohoe, Donegal
Karen Mo Clare, Donegal

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Des Henry, Dublin
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Marian Clarke, Louth
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Claibh Ní Ghibhne, Louth
Seán Ó Murchadha, Louth
Garry Kelly, Louth
Kayleigh Mhic an Bhaire, Louth
Kevin Meenan, Louth
Gerry Bradley, Louth
Susan O'Neill, Louth
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Dave Gibney, Donegal
William Mooney, Donegal
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John Regan, Meath
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Gerry O'Brien, Meath
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Eddie McCloskey, Antrim
Terry Reilly, Antrim
Joe Gormley, Antrim
Aileen McManus, Antrim
Terence McLaughlin, Antrim
Dominic McKinley, Antrim
Cathal Short, Antrim
Garry McConville, Antrim
Banjo Bannon, Antrim
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Davy Fitzgerald, Donegal
Patrick Horgan, Donegal
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Donal Óg Cusack, Donegal
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Briege Corry, Donegal
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Kieran McKeever, Derry
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Gerard Brennan, Donegal
Janey Hayes, Donegal
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Martin McNamara, Donegal
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Bridget Leen, Donegal
Donie O'Sullivan, Donegal
Phil Healy, Donegal
John Breen, Donegal
John Carey, Donegal
Mickey Moriarty, Donegal
DJ Carey, Donegal
Richie Hagan, Donegal
David Herity, Donegal
Martina McMahon, Donegal
Aidan Fee, Donegal
Eddie Laverty, Donegal
Jim O'Neill, Donegal
Hugh Armstrong, Mayo
Dessie Keegan, Mayo
Conor Ferguson, Donegal
Des Donnelly, Donegal
Jonathan Douglas, Donegal
Joe Dooley, Donegal
Pat McEntaggart, Donegal
Pat Uí Uí, Donegal
Timmy Hammersley, Donegal
Sean Harra, Donegal
Peter Canavan, Donegal
Micky Donnelly, Donegal
Kieran McGeary, Donegal
Derek McGrath, Donegal
Dave Guiney, Donegal
Malachi Doyle, Donegal
Seamus McKeeney, Donegal
Donnchall Gallan, Donegal
Taddy McCarthy, Donegal
Des Fergusson, Donegal
Terry Scullion, Donegal
Declan Lynch, Donegal
Conor McCann, Donegal
Patrick McBride, Donegal
Michael McCann, Donegal
John Keenan, Donegal
Brian Smith, Donegal
Paddy Bradley, Donegal

Stella O'Malley

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Sarah Carey

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The Week



Election fought on policy rather than identity in the North shows things are changing – and it's time we started talking about this shared new reality on our island

Martina Devlin



WHEN voters in the North go to the polls next month, the question facing them won't be the subliminal one which harks to the past of 'which tribe do you belong to?' Instead, it will be a question about the future: 'do you want to be in the EU or not?'

The wind is blowing in a new direction. Nationalism versus unionism is not the default in this general election to Westminster; that default has been refined to something non-traditional – to whether a voter identifies as Remain or Leave.

Barriers between parties are being dismantled, with common cause made on their Brexit position. Loose pan-Remain arrangements are evident between Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the Greens, while Alliance – although not party to any pact – is unequivocally within the Remain family and will benefit from those parties announcing their decision to step aside in certain constituencies.

The 'Ulster Fry' website satirises the current outbreak of political co-operation in its headline, 'Celebrations as NI parties agree pact to not stand for election – anywhere' and raises a welcome smile. But it is a highly significant development and a sense of energy is evident in this campaign that's been missing for some time.

The stance is on a seat-by-seat basis rather than taking the shape of a formal pact, but is nevertheless a highly unusual strategy because it is driven by policy – something which tends to matter less than identity at election time in the North.

Here's further evidence of change. Both Sinn Féin and the SDLP called on their supporters to back Sylvia Hermon, a lone Remain-supporting voice from the six counties in Westminster, before she

announced her decision to retire. Ms Hermon is an independent unionist and her late husband was head of the RUC.

Long-term trend or short-term pragmatism? That remains to be seen. But nationalism tends not to do pacts, unlike unionism. Ironically, it is the DUP and UUP's combined Leave position – out of step with a swathe of their electorates – which has delivered this pan-Remain grouping.

The alliance to maximise the Remain vote is constructive overall, despite a democratic negative whereby voters are offered less choice. (Unionism is doing the same to make the most of the Leave vote.) But Brexit was hardly an exercise in democracy because of the lies and use of dark money during the referendum.

Realistically, the first-past-the-post system makes tactical voting essential. The Green Party is on the up in the North but has bowed out of the Belfast constituencies. 'I'm prepared to put the need to have pro-Remain MPs returned ahead of party interest,' said its leader, Clare Bailey.

For the Greens, standing aside is a positive. It's the opposite with Steve Aiken, who announced the UUP would run contenders in all 18 constituencies but swiftly U-turned following loyalist paramilitary intimidation. Not a strong look for a leader – he's a busted flush before the ink is dry on his new business cards.

While unionism as a political entity is on the side of Brexit, its leaders ought to mull over the following fact: EU membership is what matters to younger voters. They are highly incentivised to vote outside their norms. Scottish nationalists have asked unionists for their votes to send a Remain message. How many Northern unionists, particularly from the business and farming communities, will do likewise?

When the votes are counted on December 13, some will look at the size of the Remain stack as a Border poll indicator.

It is too soon for one right now – insufficient cross-community outreach has taken place. Colin Harvey, professor of human rights law at Queen's University, suggests 2025 as an appropriate date, marking the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

However, a strong Remain vote would point up the need for discussions about future arrangements and how best to manage change. Both the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and Downing Street Declaration of 1993 have guaranteed about the right to peaceful and democratic pursuit of Irish unity.

Come what may, unionism faces a great many challenges, and Brexit – driven by English nationalism – is accelerating them. The election result will dictate whether or not the DUP makes way for a more moderate incarnation of unionism. The most likely upshot is that unionism

to Leo Varadkar in support of the initiative. Signatories included Adrian Dunbar, Jim Sheridan, Stephen Rea, Eoin Colfer, David McWilliams, Sian Smyth of the Dalkey Book Festival, Theo Dorgan, Paula Meehan, Fintan O'Toole, DJ Carey, James McClean, Tim Pat Coogan, Sharon Shannon, Christy Moore and Ailbhe Smyth of Together for Yes. They are drawn from business, sport, academia, arts, media and the trade union movement.

Coincidentally, representatives from a variety of trade unions are gathering in Dublin today at Mandate's head office to discuss Irish unity, under the TUNUI banner (Trade Unionists for a New and United Ireland). It's the first in a series of consultative roadshows and will lead to a policy document. Some of the unions have members from the North and are well placed to reflect the unionist perspective.

Clearly, change is coming, arising from Brexit, and needs to be managed. Ireland's Future's position is that we need to plan for the future rather than adopt a rear-view mirror approach. As with the forthcoming Northern election, different times must give rise to a different model.

I joined the group because it's high time people of goodwill outside politics played their part with a reasoned, factual conversation about what the future might hold. We need to find an amicable, constructive way to live together because even a soft Brexit threatens that. And unionism has a key role to play in transitioning towards new arrangements.

There are no road maps here. We have to find our own way forward as a people – and there's no better way to do that than by talking about it.

Finally, the Irish women's hockey team, which includes seven members from Ulster, is Tokyo-bound for the next Olympic Ga mes. It's a first for women's hockey – and a metaphor for how we're stronger together.

There are no road maps here. We have to find our own way forward as a people – and there's no better way to do that than by talking about it

will learn it needs to modify its positions, soften its language and engage in some outreach of its own.

There's another green shoot of hope to consider here, too. A constructive development made the news this week with civic society, north and south, coalescing to call for discussions about a new settlement on the island of Ireland. It was led by a non-aligned, grassroots movement called Ireland's Future, of which I'm a member. The group has petitioned the Taoiseach for a Citizens' Assembly to discuss new constitutional arrangements.

And we were joined by almost 1,100 people from across the island, two-thirds in the Republic, who signed a public letter



CHANGING TIMES: Political changes in the north began in 2016 when the people voted to Remain, with the north's political parties opting to back Remain or Leave

ON THIS DAY

NOVEMBER 6 1919

'Council of Ireland'

THE Conservative Daily Telegraph's parliamentary correspondent writes: It can be stated on good authority that the labours of the Committee of Ministers which, under the chairmanship of Mr Walter Long, is engaged in framing a scheme for the settlement of the Home Rule question, are progressing in a most satisfactory manner.

While substantial progress has been made, it is as yet impossible to say how soon the First Lord of the Admiralty [Long] and his colleagues will be in a position to submit their proposals to the Cabinet.

The Committee was appointed on the clear understanding that it should be free to explore every avenue likely to lead to a solution of the problem. Important decisions have been reached.

The stage at which the Committee has arrived is that it has agreed to the setting up of two Parliaments – one for the Ulster counties and one for the rest of Ireland.

There is an interesting further proposal on which the Committee is understood to be unanimous and that is that there should be a Council of Ireland, consisting probably of about forty members, to be nominated in equal numbers by the two Parliaments. The functions of this body will be comparatively limited in scope, but it would be a symbol of the unity of Ireland.

That this proposed Council of Ireland occupies an important place in the scheme is, however, perfectly obvious for it is believed to be the view of the Committee that, on the application of the two Parliaments, many of the powers reserved for the Imperial Parliament might subsequently be delegated to the Council. The procedure will enable self-government to be extended gradually as the state of opinion in Ireland was ready. (Included in the Partition Bill as 'a bond of union' between North and South, the Council of Ireland lacked real teeth and, to Craig's relief, was finally abolished as part of the Boundary Agreement of December 3 1925.)

Gerrymanders Lose in Tyrone

CONSIDERABLE excitement was caused in Dungannon yesterday when it became known that Mr John Skeffington, solicitor [Nationalist] had been notified by the Local Government Board that, in consequence of his memorial on behalf of the Nationalist members of Dungannon Urban Council, the Board had decided to reconstruct the Council representation.

Local Unionists expressed their indignation that the representation of the Unionist East Ward should be cut and that the Central Ward, which is about half in half, should have a seat added. On the other hand, the Nationalists are delighted at the change as it greatly improves their chances of a majority on the Council.

EDITED BY ÉAMON PHOENIX
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Idea of new Ireland appeals to more than just northern nationalists

THREE highly significant events occurred this week which reflect the fundamental changes that are taking place in Irish society in relation to a new and shared Ireland.

The first was the decision by the leader of the SDLP, Colum Eastwood, to withdraw his party's candidates from North Belfast, East Belfast and North Down; the second was the 1,000-strong letter from a range of influential figures in southern society calling on Taoiseach Leo Varadkar to set up a citizens assembly to plan for a new, agreed and independent Ireland; and the third was the decision by Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou MacDonald not to stand candidates in South Belfast, East Belfast and North Down.

The leaders of Sinn Féin and the SDLP need to be commended for their decisions. They are courageous and visionary.

The decisions reflect the political changes in the north which began in 2016 when the people voted to Remain and have continued through a series of significant developments.

The most significant of these following on from the 2016 Remain vote was the unionist parties losing their majority in the north's assembly.

This was replaced by a pro-Remain majority in the assembly made up of Sinn Féin, the SDLP, Alliance and the Green Party.

This majority has set the political agenda in opposing Brexit and the DUP's support for it, and it won a significant victory in the EU election when two pro-Remain MEPs, Martina Anderson and Naomi Long, were elected, to one Brexit MEP, Diane Dodds.

The pro-Remain sentiment from 2016 has been consistent in its opposition to Brexit and the beneficiaries of it have been the people of Ireland, north and south.

The Boris Johnson deal is the latest example of this sentiment securing progress, in limiting the worst aspects of Brexit, through the support of the Irish government and the EU.

Jim GIBNEY



Ireland without economic or political borders and remaining inside the customs union and single market is consistent with the aspirations of the pro-Remain constituency in the north.

If it can be done, and in politics there is always an 'if', the Sinn Féin and SDLP decisions could help elect John Finucane in North Belfast, Claire Hanna in South Belfast, Naomi Long in East Belfast and Sylvia Hermon in North Down.

The main objective in this Westminster election is similar to the EU election – to elect as many pro-Remain MPs and reduce the number of pro-Brexit MPs.

The 'Ireland's Future' letter is the product of the political winds of change blowing across Ireland over the last number of years

The Remain vote does not mean that those unionists who voted are united Irelanders but it does mean that unionists are seeking more control over affairs here on this island and know that Brexiteers care little about the people of Ireland whatever their political allegiance

which have impacted on nationally minded influential figures such as Fintan O Toole, Andree Murphy, David McWilliams, Frances Black, Jim Sheridan, Sharon Shannon, Christy Moore, Adrian Dunbar, Martina Devlin, James McClean and Ailbhe Smyth, who signed the letter.

The letter is also influenced by the growth of the northern nationalist population and the likelihood that nationalists will be a voting majority before 2030, the impact of Brexit and the chaos and fear it has created and the commitment from Leo Varadkar and minister for foreign affairs Simon Coveney that the people of the north will not again be left behind.

The huge number of people who signed the letter and their respected place in Irish society demonstrates that the issue of a new Ireland appeals to a well-placed and broad section of opinion and is not confined to the north.

The task of finding the way forward towards a new and shared Ireland is the responsibility of many people and organisations and not just those from a nationalist background.

Commenting on the letter, Ireland's Future spokesperson Niall Murphy said: "It's time for a new national discussion about our shared future in Ireland.

"So, let's have the discussion now. And I would urge everyone to get involved, especially our unionist brothers and sisters."

It is quite clear from the 2016 Remain vote that unionists are thinking differently about relationships between Ireland and Britain.

The Remain vote does not mean that those unionists who voted are united Irelanders but it does mean that unionists are seeking more control over affairs here on this island and know that Brexiteers care little about the people of Ireland whatever their political allegiance.

And that Ireland, in the face of Brexit north and south, needs protected by the people and politicians who live here.



Dr Seamus McGuinness

Economist and Research Professor and the Research Area Co-ordinator for labour market research at the Economic and Social Research Institute

The Political Economy of a Northern Ireland border poll: A non-technical summary

Building the evidence base to avoid the mistakes of Brexit in any future border poll detate

Research motivation and approach

Brexit has put the question of the constitutional future of the Northern Ireland (NI) at the centre of public debate. Even without Brexit, continued demographic change makes it look increasingly likely that a border poll will arise at some point in the future. Political or economic disruption as a result of Brexit may lead to this occurring sooner rather than later. Our research provides an initial indication of the breadth of detail and analysis required for any debate to proceed in a meaningful manner. The key research questions addressed are as follows:

How have income levels evolved over time in NI compared to other regions in both Great Britain (GB) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI)?

- There is no evidence to suggest that NI has benefited economically from any peace dividend.
- In terms of GDP per capita, NI ranked the 10th poorest from 12 UK regions in both 2000 and 2014, ahead only of the North East region and Wales.
- Relative to RoI, GDP per capita was approximately 50% lower than the Southern & Eastern region (which contains 75% of the Republic's population) but slightly above that of the Border Midlands & Western region.

- Disposable household income was \$3,184 higher per annum in RoI compared to NI in 2016.
- The proportion of individuals in households at risk of poverty is substantially higher in NI compared to RoI.
- Life expectancy at birth in 2017 was 82.2 years in RoI compared to 80.6 in NI.

What are the potential explanations for NI's poor productivity performance?

- Compared to GB regions, in 2015, NI had the highest share of people with the lowest level of educational attainment and the lowest share of graduates. The gap with the RoI is even more pronounced.
- NI much less export intensive compared to RoI.
- Foreign Direct Investment in NI is less intensive and of lower value compared to RoI.

What are is the likely cost of unification?

- Subvention refers to the gap between government spending allocated to NI and the amount raised in taxes paid to the UK government by NI residents and businesses.
- Subvention is estimated - we simply don't know how accurate the figures for it are. The 2017/18 estimate (ONS) is £9.2bn.

- When we subtract non-identifiable expenditure for contribution to UK defence spending, debt service and international services the figure falls by around 25%.
- Contribution based state pensions and those of retired public sector employees could remain a UK liability post-unification. Spending on old age pensions was £3.2bn in 2016/17 (HMRC).
- Other factors to consider are discussions around debt. Issues related to the NI's claim to total UK assets may also influence decisions here.

It is the NI's low productivity levels that create a need for subvention payments in the first place, and the ultimate cost (or benefit) to the Irish tax payer will depend on the success of policy reforms aimed at addressing these problems during any transition period in the run up to full unification.

How do the health systems in NI and Rol compare?

- The gap between Rol and UK health systems has narrowed, presumably as a consequence of much higher levels of per capita health expenditure by the Irish government and the impacts of austerity policies in the UK.
- According to OECD data, in 2017 per capita health spending (PPP adjusted) was €3,930 in Ireland and €3,045 in the UK. The EU average spend was €2,773.
- The Irish system does have more up-front charges compared to the NHS; however, it also contains balances to ensure that healthcare remains free at the point of use for the most vulnerable in society.

- Data from OECD Healthcare at a Glance report show hospital care coverage is superior in the UK, while Rol has somewhat higher rates of doctors, nurses, hospital beds and hospital discharges per 10,000 population.
- Both health systems appear to be outlying poor performers among OECD countries in terms of having acute care bed occupancy rates exceeding 90%.
- NI's NHS is a poor performer compared to GB in key metrics.

What factors will determine the success of any unification process?

- The length and nature of any adjustment or transition period.
- The relative role of both governments during any transition period in addressing low productivity levels through reforms in educational, industrial and regional policy.
- The relative success of such policies in raising the North's productivity levels
- The role and significance of both the EU and USA in potentially reintegrating a post-Brexit Northern Ireland into the EU and assisting in promoting FDI to the region.
- The outcome of discussion on the issue of debt obligations and assets.



Patricia Mac Bride

The Case for a Citizen's Assembly: "Do nothing" is not an option

Ireland's Future wrote to the Taoiseach at the start of November 2019. That letter was signed by 1,100 citizens from throughout this island and our diaspora. The request was simple: to ask the government to convene a citizens' assembly to examine future arrangements for how we continue to live together on this shared island.

It is not a surprise that many of those who lent their support to this letter do favour the reunification of Ireland. But as socially, culturally and geographically diverse as that group of people is, so too is the notion of what the Ireland of the future – north and south – might look like.

There is one area where there is consensus, however, which is that no-one is advocating a bolt-on of the six counties of the north to the 26 counties of the south with responsibility for health, education, the economy and the welfare of citizens becoming the responsibility of the Dublin government overnight.

A citizens' assembly is not a set of binary questions where people are brought in and asked to answer yes or no. It is a process that's focussed on ensuring that democracy is truly representative and that the citizen is at the heart of the debate around political or constitutional reform.

The most recent example in an Irish context was the Citizens' Assembly which operated from October 2016 until the spring of 2018. It considered five topics: the Eighth

Amendment to the constitution; climate change; fixed-term parliaments; the ageing population and the operation of future referendums.

The topic which created the most publicity was the recommendation that a referendum be held on whether or not to repeal the Eighth amendment. That referendum was held in May 2018 and was passed. The other four topics, which all resulted in a number of recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly to government, have not been advanced to anywhere near the same extent because, simply put, they are not presently at the top of the government's political agenda.

It is a brave move to call on the Irish government to establish a citizens' assembly because the outcome of that process cannot be certain. Nor is there any certainty that the recommendations of an assembly would be acted upon in a timely way.

It is technically possible to ensure that a stratified random sampling of the population of the island of Ireland is obtained so that there is representation across all strands of gender, geography, identity and opinion.

The agenda for debates should be sufficiently broad so that it allows for real, informed, facilitated discussion on the economy and inward investment, the health service, the education system, the protection of rights and many other important aspects of life and society. It is only at that point, where

the informed discussion has taken place on those areas that an informed answer to the binary question can be achieved. Is it in the best interests of the people of this island to remain partitioned or to begin a process of reunification?

The challenge, therefore to the government is this: if you cannot be bound by a Citizens' Assembly, what do you have to fear from it?

Brexit has changed the political landscape on this island. There is a genuine fear of the negative repercussions it may have across

many areas of Irish life, on the Good Friday Agreement and on the peace process.

The majority of people in Ireland, north and south, do not support Brexit. That does not mean we can ignore the ramifications we are already aware of, nor the potential future impact it may have. "Do nothing" is not a viable option. We need to have an honest national conversation about our shared future on this island and a citizen's assembly creates that space.



“

I would like to see a united Ireland in my lifetime - if possible, in my political lifetime.

”

Tánaiste Simon Coveney
The Oireachtas Good Friday Agreement Committee
23 November 2017

#IRELANDSFUTURE  @IRELANDSFUTURE  /IRELANDSFUTURE