

Thursday 29th January 2009

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## Media Centre

### Report must be carefully considered - Woodward

Wednesday 28 January 2009

Northern Ireland must deal with the complex and sensitive issues of the past if it is to enjoy long term success, Secretary of State Shaun Woodward MP has said.

Speaking after a meeting in Dublin with Irish Foreign Minister Micheal Martin, the Secretary of State said that people should consider carefully the report published today by the Consultative Group on the Past.



Shaun Woodward thanked the Group, led by Lord Eames and Denis Bradley for their work, and commended them for the integrity and commitment with which they took this forward.

Shaun Woodward said: **“The long term success of Northern Ireland will depend not only on stability and prosperity, but on finding a way to deal with the complex and sensitive issues which arise from the decades of the Troubles.**

**“The very essence of the peace process has been that there is no issue that the people of Northern Ireland will not bravely deal with when the time is right. Northern Ireland has constantly demonstrated how it is possible to resolve issues which may seem impossible.**

**“The report by the Consultative Group on the Past puts these complex issues firmly into the public arena and encourages all of us to seek ways to find a consensus on how to deal with the past.**

**“The report makes a number of recommendations which we need to give very detailed and careful consideration.**

**“These are important issues and we all need to reflect carefully on the proposals but we must never forget the thousands of families who have lost loved ones during the many years when violence cast a dark shadow over Northern Ireland.**

**“Each tragedy is an intensely personal one and can scar families for generations and while we must never forget the past, we all want to find a way to help the people of Northern Ireland continue to build a better future for everyone.**

**“I would like to pay tribute to the different political parties, community and victims groups who have worked and still work to overcome differences to help shape a more hopeful and stable future for Northern Ireland.”**

#### [Note to Editors](#)

The Consultative Group on the Past was established in June 2007 to:

*“consult across the community on how Northern Ireland society can best approach the legacy of the events of the past 40 years; and to make recommendations, as appropriate, on any steps that might be taken to support Northern Ireland society in building a shared future that is not overshadowed by the past.”*

The Group is co-chaired by [Lord Eames](#), the former Archbishop of Armagh and [Denis Bradley](#), the first vice-chairman of the Policing Board. The Group have worked with two international advisers Brian Currin and Martti Ahtisaari.

The other six members of the Group are:

**David Porter** – Director of the International Centre for Reconciliation and Canon Director of Reconciliation Ministries at Coventry Cathedral, **Jarlath Burns** – former GAA captain of Armagh and GAA analyst, **Willie John McBride** – former captain of the British and Irish Lions rugby team, **Rev Lesley Carroll** – Presbyterian Minister, **James Mackey** – former lecturer in philosophy at Queens University Belfast and visiting professor at Trinity College Dublin, and **Elaine Moore** – alcohol and drugs counsellor at Northlands based at Magilligan Prison.



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