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## Dealing with troubled past is difficult issue for society

(Lord Eames and Denis Bradley, [Irish News](#))

*Lord Eames and Denis Bradley, co-chairs of the Consultative Group on the Past, urge people to take part in public meetings across Northern Ireland this month*

Dealing with Northern Ireland's troubled past is one of the most difficult issues facing our society and it is important that as many people as possible make their voices heard.

In June last year the Consultative Group on the Past was set up to find the best way to deal with the legacy of the past.

Since then the group has met with dozens of organisations and individuals who have views on how we can begin to deal with the past.

The groups we have listened to have included political parties, the two governments, victims and survivors as well as experts and academics on this issue.

As part of our consultation we are now holding a series of public meetings across Northern Ireland, beginning in Belfast on Monday January 7.

Then we will hold meetings in Derry and Bangor on January 15, Enniskillen and Ballymena on January 16, with our final meetings in Omagh and Armagh on January 17.

This is your opportunity to tell us directly your views on the best way of dealing with the past and we would urge everyone with any ideas to tell us directly at the public meetings.

Working together we can help ensure that we move towards a society that has not forgotten the past but which learns from the past in a way that helps us all to shape a better future.

Much work has already been done in this area by a range of individuals, groups, non-governmental organisations, statutory bodies, and governments. Over the last three months we have met with them all.

Organisations such as Healing Through Remembering have

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already completed in-depth analysis across a range of issues on dealing with the past.

When you take this along with the efforts of local initiatives undertaken by community organisations it is clear that there is an opportunity for our group to build upon that work.

During our meetings with other groups, particularly victims and survivors, it is clear that finding a way to deal with the past will not be easy.

The hurt and pain that was caused over the last 40 years means there are many people living daily with the legacy of the past.

Our job is to listen to them and everyone else to see if a way can be found to allow our society to move forward without forgetting the past.

That is a huge challenge but one that this group is determined to take on.

Our public engagement will close at the end of January and only then will we begin working on our report which will be published next summer. This report will be available to everyone and will contain recommendations on ways to support society in the building of a shared future that can be enjoyed by everyone.

If you have a perspective on the past, the lessons to be learned, and importantly suggestions on the steps that might be taken to support our society in the future, we would urge you to make those views known to us.

- Submissions need to reach us by the closing date of Friday January 25. These can be sent to The Secretary to Consultative Group on the Past, 20 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8GD, by [e-mail](#) or through our [discussion forum](#).

January 6, 2008

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