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The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland



Northern Ireland's cross-community party

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

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Lunn says DUP should not fear Maze site as it presents massive opportunities

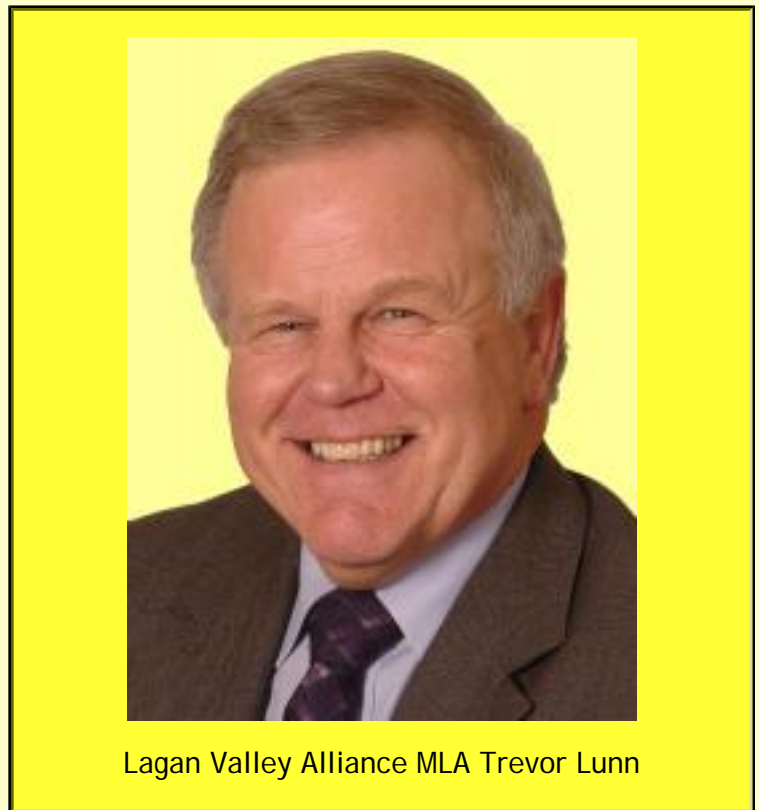
1.06.00pm UTC (GMT +0000) Wed 12th Mar 2008

Lagan Valley Alliance MLA Trevor Lunn has thrown down the gauntlet to the DUP over the all-sports stadium saying Northern Ireland might never get a new stadium if the DUP runs scared from the Maze. He said that those in the DUP who fear the Maze site must have no confidence in their own ability to ensure that Sinn Fein does not get their own way over the format of any conflict transformation centre.

Trevor Lunn MLA said: "As we move towards a final decision on the Maze as an all-sports stadium site and I watch the DUP squirming as their Belfast contingent mounts a last ditch attempt to stop it, I wonder how did we ever get to this position?"

"How can it be that the sporting bodies, the British and Irish government, the majority of the population, well-informed business experts can be so wrong and a small band of diehard unionists, be right?"

"If this project does not proceed, it will be the biggest example of looking a gift



Lagan Valley Alliance MLA Trevor Lunn

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horse in the mouth in the history of Northern Ireland. It will send a message round the world that we prefer to be seen as a sporting and cultural backwater. It will also make even more of a nonsense of the finance minister's claim that his programme for government and budget is designed to promote the economy.

"Why is this now liable to happen? Put simply, it has nothing to do with finance of viability. There is no more attractive alternative - how could there be when the Maze is based on 350 acres of prime land?

"No, this is raw politics, the type of which Northern Ireland is trying to leave behind. Even the DUP is now divided on it, as they look over their shoulders at Jim Allister and company.

"They have only one reason for their objections to the Maze site - they are not prepared to allow Sinn Fein to build a shrine to IRA terrorists. What is wrong with the DUP? Do they think that Sinn Fein will dictate 100% of what goes into the conflict transformation centre? Are they insecure about their own ability to ensure that this small part of a massive project can be made a neutral space, as has always been envisaged?

"The whole Maze project must be shared space, and that applies as much to the conflict transformation centre as it does to the stadium.

"It appears that some in the DUP cannot accept the principle of a conflict transformation centre, something which in other sites around the world, shows examples of a society that is moving forward away from its darkest days.

"I say to the DUP, 'you have come a long way, don't trip over this hurdle'. You are sitting in Government with Sinn Fein, test their bona-fides again. Nobody needs to win or lose on this one. It's a penalty kick and it's too good to miss."

ENDS

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