

VICTIMS' MINISTER'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Speaking recently at the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland's conference "Shaping the Future", Victims' Minister Des Browne underlined the Government's determination to deliver on its commitments to Victims of the Troubles.

The Minister said:

'Although we have recently seen change through the *suspension, for the time being, of the devolved administration, what has not changed is the Government's determination to honour the commitments it has made to Victims.'

He added:

'From a standing start four years ago we have made great progress. We have made a difference and I will continue to make the case, as clearly and as forcefully as I can, for Victims' needs to be met.'

However he warned that there are many competing demands when it comes to resources. He urged victims' groups to think hard and creatively about how they

can sustain their work in the future and he encouraged them to develop beneficial partnerships.

The Minister's remarks set the scene for the two-day conference during which other speakers raised the debate on funding, sustainability and other current key issues.

* Victims' Minister Des Browne now has responsibility for **all** policy initiatives on victims and for the work of the Victims' Unit, OFMDFM **and** the Victims' Liaison Unit, NIO. For the time being the two units will continue to do exactly the same work as before. This work will continue unaffected by recent changes in the political background.



Victims' Minister Des Browne and Avila Kilmurray of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland at the Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle.

The conference organised by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, was attended by 120 delegates, including representatives from 34 Victims'/Survivors' groups. CFNI plan to produce a report on the conference by the end of February 2003.

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New Round of Core Funding for Groups

Speaking at the launch of the new core funding scheme, Des Browne paid tribute to all those working in support of victims and survivors.

The Minister said: "This latest allocation of funding endorses the need for this work to be carried forward and demonstrates the Government's commitment to recognise and respond to the needs of victims and survivors.

"The emphasis will be on the benefits for individual victims and survivors, so in deciding how to allocate this money priority will be given to groups that are providing services that are not available elsewhere – services that are unique."

The launch, held in the Odyssey on 3rd December, was hosted by the Community Relations Council (CRC) which has been appointed to administer the £3m scheme.

Duncan Morrow, CRC Chief Executive, said: "We are very conscious of both the privilege and the challenge that this scheme brings."

"While the Scheme won't bring back lost friends, relatives or years, it will promote self-help and support victims and survivors of violence and their families as they look for and find ways to recover and grow."

He added that in the week following the launch the CRC would hold a series of information seminars in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Omagh and Craigavon for those groups and organisations seeking funding from the scheme.

The closing date for applications to the scheme is 17th January 2003 and it

is hoped the first payments will be made in April 2003.

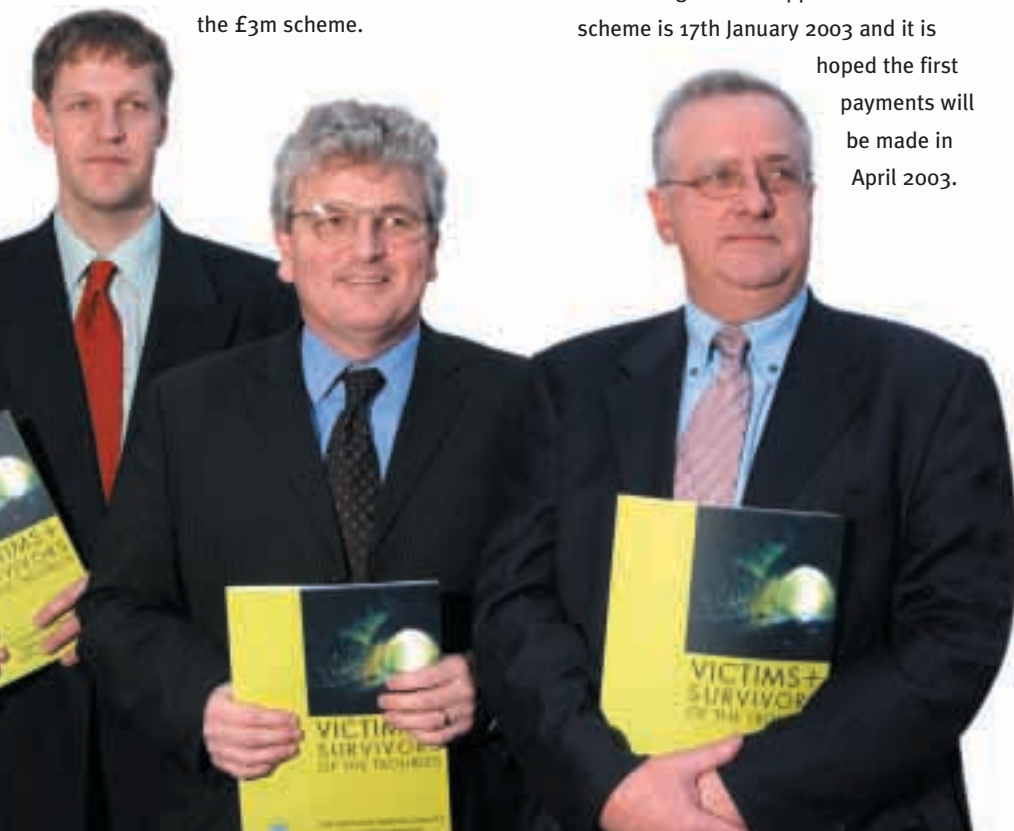
The previous scheme has been extended to sustain those groups for whom funding will stop in the intervening period.

Groups and organisations established after 17th January 2003 may make applications up to 16th January 2004. Application forms and information packs can be obtained from the Community Relations Council, 6 Murray Street, Belfast BT1 6DN. Tele: 028 9022 7551/2



Above – After the formal proceedings, Des Browne took the opportunity to chat to representatives of victims' groups and organisations.

Left – Launching the Scheme were Dr Duncan Morrow CRC Chief Executive, Des Browne and John Cousins CRC Member.



Interview with Derrick Mathews

Almost 6 months since the launch of the Victim/Survivor Groups Development Grant Scheme VLU talks to Derrick Mathews of the Community Relations Council, who is responsible for the day to day running of the scheme.

VLU - First Derrick, perhaps you could tell us a bit about yourself and your current role.

Derrick Mathews (DM) - I have been working in the voluntary/community sector for over 15 years so I think I have an understanding of the difficulties that groups face.

In my current job I manage the Victim/Survivor Groups Development Grant Scheme, which has a budget of £750k over two years. I carry out assessment visits to groups applying to this scheme and then submit a recommendation for consideration.

VLU - What is the aim of the Victim/Survivor Groups Development Grant Scheme and who can apply?

DM - The principal aim of the scheme is to support victims and survivors to become active members of society. The scheme is targeted at supporting groups, made up of victims, or working with victims locally. Priority is given to groups who work with those who lost close relatives in the Troubles, had close relatives injured, or were themselves injured or traumatised as a result of the community conflict.

VLU - What things are not covered under the scheme?

DM - The important thing to remember is that the scheme is for groups, not for individuals and is aimed at project costs. So it does not cover costs such as salaries or large items of equipment or capital. Fundraising, competitions, political lobbying and party political activities are also excluded.

So are memorials and travel outside of Britain and Ireland except where a bursary is involved.

VLU - What's the difference between this grant scheme and the Core Funding Scheme?

DM - This scheme is aimed at the programmes and projects that groups deliver rather than the core costs they incur, like salaries and rent for example.

VLU - What is the maximum amount a group can apply for?

DM - The maximum is £10,000 but very few projects attract this level of funding. Most range from a few hundred pounds to a couple of thousand pounds. While we are only a short way into the life of the scheme we have already provided support for conferences, seminars, residentials, strategic planning processes, training for staff and volunteers, the purchase of small items of equipment and some seeding support costs.

VLU - How do people apply and how long do they have to wait until they hear the outcome?

DM - Groups can obtain application forms from our office at the Community Relations Council 6 Murray Street Belfast BT1 6DN Phone 02890 227500 or download them from our Website www.community-relations.org.uk Once the application form is registered it is passed to me and I will set-up an assessment visit.

The normal processing time is 8 -12 weeks from the receipt of application to letter of



Des Browne meets Derrick Mathews (left) and Michaela Mackin, Director of CRC at the launch.

offer but this can vary slightly depending on the volume of work.

VLU - Is there a deadline for application forms?

DM - No but groups should apply well in advance of their project taking place. If groups only apply a week before their project takes place they run the risk of bearing the costs if the application is not supported by the Council or is only partly supported. The scheme runs to April 2004 by which time we expect the money will have been fully committed.

VLU - Can a group make more than one application to the scheme?

DM - Yes, in fact groups could have a number of applications being processed at the one time for different projects or programmes. We will of course need to see that there is an identified need, that all applications are in line with the group's aims and objectives and that they meet the scheme's criteria. The primary consideration will be how they contribute to supporting victims to become survivors and support healing and recovery work.

Multiple applications also need to demonstrate some level of progression or development.

Finally, I should just say that, as with all schemes, there are limited funds available, so even if applications meet the criteria, we can't guarantee being able to say 'yes' to them all!

VLU - Derrick, thanks very much for speaking to VLU.

Healing Through Remembering

“There is no single treatment for the healing process,” says Kate Turner Project Director for The Healing Through Remembering Project.

Following seven months of public consultation the Report of the Healing Through Remembering Project was launched in June 2002.

The Report is being widely distributed to interested groups and individuals. The Project Board welcomes comments and suggestions on the report and the recommendations.

The Healing Through Remembering Project is a wholly independent project. It arose following the visits to Northern Ireland by Dr Alex Boraine, which were arranged by Victim Support NI, NIACRO and the Community Relations Council.

The Healing Through Remembering project mission was:

...to identify and document possible mechanisms and realisable options for healing through remembering for those people affected by the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

Following the public consultation the Board members considered the views and opinions they had received, and from these they formed a number of recommendations. These recommendations are presented as a package - they should be seen as an ensemble rather than as isolated activities. The realisation of the recommendations will take time, and each option can only be developed when the time is right for that option and following inclusive discussion.

In summary they are:

- **A Network** – to link together the diverse forms of commemoration and remembering work, learn from past and present initiatives, facilitate information

exchange, and improve access and activity between those involved in this work and society at large.

- **A Story Telling Process** – the collection of stories and narratives from all those who wish to tell of their experiences of the conflict. These stories – collected by those already undertaking this type of work and by community groups through a flexible but standard method – would form part of an archive housing the stories of the past and serving as a vehicle to learn lessons for the future.
- **An Annual Day of Reflection** – to serve as a universal gesture of reconciliation, reflection, acknowledgement and a recognition of the suffering of so many arising from the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.
- **A permanent living memorial museum** – to serve as a dynamic memorial to all those affected by the conflict and keep memories of the past alive. It will provide a diverse chronicle of the history of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, increase public awareness of the impact of the conflict, disseminate information and provide educational opportunities ensuring lessons are learnt for the future.
- **Acknowledgement** – by all organisations and institutions that have been engaged in the conflict, including the British and Irish States, political parties and Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries. To honestly and publicly acknowledge their responsibility for past political violence due to their acts of omission and commission. This could be the first and necessary step towards the

potentiality of a larger process of truth recovery. If acknowledgment is forthcoming, inclusive and in depth consideration should be given to the establishment of an appropriate and unique truth recovery process.

- **A Healing through Remembering Initiative** – managed by a representative Committee that will be a visible expression of society’s commitment to move forward while remembering and learning from our violent past.

The report concludes by saying:

“Our society as a whole will need to grasp the opportunity of remembering in a constructive way, to enable us to move into a new future built on a shared acknowledgement of our conflicted past.”

Current and Future Work

Representatives of the Project are available to help groups to hold informed discussions of the issues raised in the report. For further details please contact the office at: Unit 4 River’s Edge, 15 Ravenhill Road, Belfast BT6 8DN.

The project is now in the process of considering how best to bring together a wider group of interests and individuals to advance the totality of recommendations of the report. Plans are underway for the establishment of the Healing Through Remembering Initiative.

Copies of the Report

The full report includes details of the history project and the methodology of the consultation. It also includes a summary of the submissions received under 14 different forms of remembering.

Copies are available for download in pdf format on the website:

www.healingthroughremembering.org

Or can be ordered via the order form on the website or by contacting the office:

E: **info@healingthroughremembering.org**

Tel: 028-9073-9601

Fax: 028-9073-9602

OUT AND ABOUT WITH THE MINISTER



1st July 2002 – Des Browne with Marian Walsh and Ciss Carabine of VAST at the CRC launch of the Victim/Survivor Group Development Grant Scheme.



20th August 2002 – Des Browne meets staff and volunteers during a visit to WAVE in Belfast.



29th August 2002 – Des Browne meets relatives of the victims of the Teebane atrocity.



10th September 2002 – Des Browne visits South Down Action for Healing Wounds in Rathfriland.



1st November 2002 – WAVE Director, Sandra Peake welcomes Des Browne and BBC's Wendy Austin to the WAVE Gala Dinner at the Templeton Hotel.



The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund

Peace – Reconciliation – Support

Memorial Fund News – In Brief

FIRST FUNDRAISING GALA DINNER IN DUBLIN

The Memorial Fund held its first fundraising gala dinner in the Burlington Hotel, Dublin on 24 October which was tremendously successful and raised approximately €100,000.

The event was supported mainly by the Dublin business community who were treated to a great night's entertainment from singer Brian Kennedy and guest speaker the Very Reverend Dr John Dunlop. Generous sponsorship on the night means that the money raised will go directly towards funding the Memorial Fund's schemes.

Right – Daphne Trimble (left) and Pat Hume (right) current directors of the NIMF along with Brian Kennedy and Dr Patrick Haren (former director).



DESIGN A CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

The Memorial Fund recently held a competition to design the Fund's Christmas card and asked the Groups who are actively involved in youth work to participate.

The competition was judged on 13 November by the Fund's chairman, Dennis Licence who chose a card designed by Davina Whiteside from SAVER/NAVER. As a prize, Davina and five other runners up and their families will



be off to see the Belfast Giants at the Odyssey Arena on 29 December. The Board of Directors would like to say a special thanks to all those who participated.

Left – The winning design by Davina Whiteside – SAVER/NAVER.

INFORMATION DAY: ARMAGH

The next Memorial Fund information day will take place in the Armagh City Hotel, Armagh on Thursday 19 December 2002.

Grants Office staff will be available from 10.30am – 2.30pm to provide information and help with the completion of application forms.

Directors will also make a presentation on the work from 12.30pm – 1.30pm. You are all welcome to attend.

SURVIVING SPOUSES & PARTNERS OF THOSE WHO DIED BEFORE 1 APRIL 1991.

Many readers will have noticed in the last edition of the VLU Newsletter, reference to the announcement made by Victims'

Minister Des Browne about the allocation of a further £1.3million to the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund. The Fund has helped many individuals & families since it was set up in 1999 but realises that there are many others who have never received help or recognition from the Fund.

In light of this further generous contribution from the Government the Fund is now concentrating on trying to reach those who lost a spouse or partner before April 1991, as compensation arrangements and bereavement awards were much less favourable up until that date.



The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund

Peace – Reconciliation – Support

Memorial Fund News – continued

continued...

The Fund would welcome applications to the Small Grants scheme from those who have not received assistance from the scheme in the past. Applications from the surviving spouses or partners of those who died before 1 April 1991 will now qualify for the maximum grant of £500.00.

If you are a surviving spouse or partner of someone who died in the Troubles before 1 April 1991 and have never had a small grant from the Fund before, please contact the Memorial Fund on 028 9024 5965 or write to us at the address listed below:

The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund

Grants Administration Office

Albany House, 73-75 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7AF

Alternatively if you meet the qualifying condition but have received grants amounting in total to less than £500, you automatically qualify for a top up payment and should now have received it.

STAFF CHANGES

Clive Barbour, who was Secretary to the Fund moved on promotion to a new post within the civil service in November.

Clive was with the Fund for a year and worked closely with the Directors and others to provide help and support to victims and survivors. We send Clive our congratulations on his well deserved promotion and wish him further success in the future.

Carolyn McCormick is temporarily filling the post of Secretary and Donna McKee has moved from the Grants Office to temporarily fill the post of Administrator. We will let you know when a new Secretary has been appointed.

PROPOSALS FOR A NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON SERVICE VICTIMS SCHEME

On 22 August 2002 Prisons' Minister, Jane Kennedy publicly launched a consultation document on proposals for a statutory victims information scheme as provided within the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002. Under the proposals victims, or their representatives who wish to register would receive information on the permanent discharge and temporary release of adult offenders sentenced to terms of imprisonment of six months or more.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service will be responsible for the development, implementation and administration of the scheme, which will be managed by a dedicated unit based within Prison Service Headquarters.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation the scheme aims to:

- provide information to victims whose offender has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment for 6 months or more;
- provide victims with information on the permanent release of a prisoner.

A short explanation of the prison sentence (which will include details as to when a prisoner will become eligible for temporary release) and how the release date has been calculated.

- provide victims with the opportunity to inform the decision making process for releasing a prisoner on temporary release.
- inform the victims of any conditions of release which relate to them;
- inform victims of any breaches of release conditions.



The public consultation period officially closed on 15 November 2002. Comments received will be given full consideration before finalising the proposals, the outcome of which will be made available in due course. You can check the Prison Service website for details www.niprisonservice.gov.uk

VICTIMS' INPUT TO POLICY: GIVE US YOUR VIEWS

When it consulted on its victims' strategy, "Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve", launched on 11 April this year, the Victims Unit, OFMDFM, asked how victims could best link with and influence policymakers.

Several suggestions were received. A common theme that emerged was to do this on a regional basis with representatives from each region being selected to form a smaller advisory group.

The Victims Unit would welcome your further views on this.

Please write to:

Fergus Devitt
Office of the First Minister
and Deputy First Minister
Community Relations, Human
Rights and Victims Division
Block A5.1
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SR

or email: info@victimsni.gov.uk by
Friday 17 January 2003



In our last issue we invited applications to VLU Programme Funding. Anyone thinking of applying for this funding must have their applications in by **21 February 2003**.

Applications received after this date will not be considered. The funding is available for projects which will:

- benefit victims of the Troubles across NI and/or GB
- improve the capacity and professionalism of victims' organisations
- promote the sharing of best practice

For an application form and details of eligibility criteria please contact:
Gail Brashaw on **028 9052 7902**.

6TH GALA CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS PEACE

Belfast Waterfront Hall
Wednesday 18th December 2002
2.30pm and 7.30pm

also
The Millenium Theatre Londonderry
Tuesday 17 December at 7.30pm

Featuring

George Hamilton IV, Nashville

Huntley Brown, Chicago (piano)

Susannah Hart, London (Soprano)

Julia Falina, Moscow (piano)

County Sligo Golf Club Male Voice Choir

The Continentals- Choir and Musicians (2.30pm)

Belfast Sydenham Salvation Army Band (7.30pm)

Christmas Address: Rt. Rev. Dr. Russell Birney

Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Presented by Rev Alan Mitchell, Sligo

An occasion of joy and inspiration!
Why not make this your Christmas outing?

A number of complimentary tickets will be available to victims of the Troubles from Mrs Doreen Mitchell, The Old Coach House, College Road, Sligo, Republic of Ireland. Tel: 00353 71 62337

