

Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Reconciliation, HC 185

Wednesday 1 July 2026

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Tonia Antoniazzi (Chair); Chris Bloore; Simon Hoare; Mike Kane; Katrina Murray; Sir Alec Shelbrooke; Robin Swann.

Questions 1 - 30

Witnesses

I: Martin McDonald MBE, Chair, NI Community Relations Council; Dr Jacqueline Irwin, CEO, NI Community Relations Council; Tim Attwood, Foundation Secretary of the John and Pat Hume Foundation, Peace Summit Partnership; and Dympna McGlade, Co-lead, Peace Summit Partnership.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- Northern Ireland Community Relations Council [[RIN0034](#)]
- The Peace Summit Partnership [[RIN0030](#)]
- Dympna McGlade [[RIN008](#)]

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Martin McDonald MBE, Dr Jacqueline Irwin, Tim Attwood and Dympna McGlade.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee for our first session on reconciliation. I would like to welcome the panel and ask you to introduce yourselves and your organisations.

Martin McDonald: Good morning, Chair, and thank you for the invitation to come and speak to the Committee; we are really pleased to be here. The Community Relations Council was established way back in 1990, about 36 years ago. It was set up to lead and support change towards reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust. That was before the Good Friday agreement, so it was breaking clear water—at that stage there was no other organisation in Northern Ireland tackling the issues around sectarianism and community relations. The organisation attempted to be a catalyst for good inter-community and intercultural relationships in the region. It advocated for the acknowledgment of our interconnectedness



HOUSE OF COMMONS

and challenged sectarianism and racism. That was 36 years ago, and by and large the same problems confront us today.

The structure of the organisation has changed: we are a formal arm's length body of the Executive Office in Northern Ireland, so we are not independent. Unlike previously, we do not develop policy—that is the job of the Department and the politicians—but we can advise the Department on whatever evidence base we get for the grants we give and the engagement we have as to how the policy does or does not work on the ground. It is a different type of organisation now, being a formal arm's length body of the Department.

We work at regional, institutional, local and community levels. We distribute grants that we receive from the Executive Office. It is all done under what is known as the T:BUC—Together: Building a United Community—which was the policy set up by Ministers 10 years ago. The policy is currently under review, and then we will have to fit into whatever new measures and programmes come out of that new T:BUC strategy.

We also provide development support. We identify and share best practice and facilitate wide community engagement on effective approaches to peacebuilding and community relations. That is essentially what we are about.

Tim Attwood: Thank you, Chair and Committee members, for welcoming us today. I think it is a very timely moment, given what is happening in the north, to talk in this broader sense about reconciliation. I am Tim Attwood, and I am the secretary of the John and Pat Hume Foundation. I was fortunate enough to be here with Mark Durkan—many of you know him as a former MP—who is a member of the foundation's board. We were set up in 2020 to honour John and Pat Hume, their legacy and contribution to peace and reconciliation over six decades. We are living their principles of peace and reconciliation.

We have done a lot of work around that aspect, but primarily we lead the Peace Summit Partnership—Dympna McGlade is part of that through Community Dialogue originally—which is a number of networks involved in peace and reconciliation: Glencree, YouthAction NI, Northern Ireland Youth Forum, Integrated Education Fund, Ulster University, INCORE and the Holywell Trust in Derry. We were established at the time of the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday agreement, when there was a lot of reflection on the success of the Good Friday agreement in 1998.

We recognise, as all organisations recognise, that we have the unfinished business of reconciliation, so we set up a series of peace summits and focus groups engaging young people and peacemakers—this was before the Executive came back—to try to map out how we fill the gaps in terms of the unfinished business of reconciliation. We have continued that work with young people through the youth peace summit and a range of other activities relating to peace and reconciliation. We then did a response to the Programme for Government. Along with many other organisations on the ground, we were pleased that peace was in the Programme for



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Government with a cross-departmental approach. I am sure we will touch on that later.

We continue that work today. We think it is important that we reflect on John and Pat's principles and continue them. John Hume Jr is the chair, and Dawn Purvis, the previous leader of the PUP, is vice-chair, so it is a cross-community charity. The Peace Summit Partnership is a range of peace organisations and a network for peace and reconciliation across the north and the island.

Q2 Chair: We are approaching the 30th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. How would you assess the progress of reconciliation in practice? Where has the progress been the most limited?

Dr Irwin: Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your inquiry. I will start by briefly explaining what we understand reconciliation to be, because it is used interchangeably with peace, good relations and community relations. Although they are all connected to each other, they are not exactly the same thing. We understand reconciliation to be both a process and an outcome, whereby relationships are restored or established for the first time after a conflict. That can be between individuals, communities, institutions or countries.

The most important thing about that is that it is an entirely voluntary action. It cannot be caused to occur by either law or policy, but both can have an influence on the context in which it might flourish. It is a whole-society process at all levels. Importantly, it only moves at the pace at which people feel comfortable to move and by using methods that they find to be authentic. One size does not fit all, and that introduces complexity into the work of reconciliation. The outcomes of reconciliation are also annoyingly non-linear, so you can have quite big interventions that have almost no impact at all, and you can have smaller interventions that turn out to be really meaningful and move things on for some people.

All of that means that, because it is voluntary, complex and non-linear, Governments often face challenges in designing policies and establishing how well they are working or not working when it comes to reconciliation in particular. As a result of that, quite often, Governments will set aside the issue of reconciliation in the hope that it might emerge from other policies that are being introduced, be that good relations or others, and by dealing with the ordinary everyday business of Government, which can be extremely tricky, whether that is to do with the economy or whatever.

Q3 Chair: Do you think it should be viewed as a long-term process of social change?

Dr Irwin: Absolutely. In that respect, I pay tribute to the thousands of people who have been involved in reconciliation work at local community level, local government level and central Government level over the years, some of whom are no longer with us any more. We build on the work that they have already been involved in doing, but it is long-term work. That is partly because some of the issues related to the legacy of the past are unresolved at this stage, but also because reconciliation work, by its very



HOUSE OF COMMONS

nature, takes place in the current context, whatever that context happens to be. It is connected to all the other social issues that might be affecting communities at that moment in time. We covered that in our response to you.

Unfortunately, we are dealing with very familiar issues related to sectarianism and so on, and some of the root causes of the original conflict, be they the constitutional position, equality or safety. On the other hand, we are also dealing with newer issues related to the change and dynamics within the make-up of our society. Unfortunately, you will have seen examples of poor relations in recent weeks. It is a very complicated picture at the moment.

While we want to pay tribute to everything that has gone along so far, as we reach the point we are at now—especially as we come up to the next round of anniversaries in relation to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, and so on—it is time to take stock and consider where we want things to go for the future. I do not think it will be enough for us to continue as we are going.

A whole range of very important, very valuable projects have been delivered through money that has come from the United Kingdom, Ireland, the European Union and elsewhere. The issue now is making sure that we have managed to build reconciliation and good relations for the future into the DNA of how people live their everyday lives. I do not think we have quite got there yet.

We may need to think about some new approaches as we move forward into the next phase—and it is a next phase—of peacebuilding. The character of that is yet to be defined. It will need to involve all sections of society. The nature of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement is that it also involves the UK Government, the Irish Government and our own local Government deciding in a joint way what they feel the vision for the future might be—I am not sure that is all that well articulated at the moment—and what the contribution of each will be. That would help some of the interventions being made now in relation to legacy, and so on, to fit into a broader frame of reference.

Q4 Chair: You are touching on my next question, so I will come back to Tim and Dymphna. Jacqueline and Martin, with reference to the peace monitoring framework, how effectively is reconciliation currently being measured in Northern Ireland? You have touched on Governments. What changes would you like to see in how the UK Government assesses and responds to progress or regress?

Martin McDonald: I would use an analogy with the health service. That is something Robin will be aware of. The Government's approach to reconciliation reminds me of when you went on holiday when the children were young and they said, "Are we there yet?" Of course, we were not there yet. I get asked questions about the Community Relations Council like, "You've been in existence for 30 years. Have you not got the problem

solved yet?" I do not think it is a journey that is going to end for Northern Ireland. It is a continuum.

There is an analogy with the health service in that we will always need the health service. People become sick for different reasons and we need different treatments. The health service has a model of primary, secondary and emergency care. Reconciliation needs primary care from the communities and organisations like us that are close to those communities. The secondary care needs to come within a composite framework of Government Departments that all accept that their actions can impact reconciliation either positively or negatively. Then there is the emergency care. When crisis breaks out, as it has over the last few weeks, people wonder, "Who do I go to? Where are the resources?" We spent some of our small grants to enable communities to get away from the trouble.

The health service model is a continuum. I think we will always need reconciliation interventions, but they will vary over time. We are clearly at a point now where we do not have the tools to deal with the racism, the asylum seekers and all those issues that have arisen from the particular problems over the last few weeks. We need to identify the mechanisms to deal with the current reconciliation issues because they are distinctly different to the orange and green issues. It is no longer a binary issue. It is orange and green plus the whole core of ethnic minorities.

Q5 **Chair:** Do you see the UK Government having a role in that?

Martin McDonald: I think they should have a role in that. They need to set out their vision for reconciliation in Northern Ireland. We who are working on the ground would then fit within that framework. There is a clear role for the UK Government. There is also a role for our Executive to decide where we want to go collectively. That is easier to say than do because we are in a multi-party coalition. Politicians come from different perspectives and different views and they have to compromise across the board. For the sake of the future peace and reconciliation of Northern Ireland, there are bound to be a range of things we could get collective agreement on. We need to move towards that framework. Don't deal with a solution that means it will be there in five years; we will not be, because the problems will change, just like in health. We need to have the mechanisms to deal with whatever arises on the ground.

Q6 **Chair:** Dympna, how would you assess the progress?

Dympna McGlade: We must acknowledge progress on the reduction in violence, and that is brilliant. It leaves the path open to actually making inroads to reconciliation.

The focus has been on political structures in the north. Reconciliation was named in the Good Friday agreement—they keep talking about what the definition is, but it has been in every document about peace, reconciliation and moving forward—so it is acknowledged as a key issue. We do not actually need reconciliation as defined in the Oxford Dictionary. It is a



HOUSE OF COMMONS

concept, and people understand the concept, rather than needing it to be narrowed down to A, B or C.

What is outstanding is that the political structures were set up—albeit that they have been dysfunctional—but reconciliation has not moved at the pace it should. We still have the same structures and systems that we had 50 or 60 years ago. You have interfaces, and within those interfaces you have the communities that were worst affected by the conflict. Those communities are still the same.

In preparation for this, I was going back over some of the indices of deprivation. The same areas throughout the north are in those indices. They are called different things over different decades, but they remain the same. They are segregated. Schooling and housing are segregated. You have murals and different cultural disputes. All those things remain, and we have had billions put into the north to achieve peace and reconciliation.

As for the appetite on the ground within the communities, the upside is that, and I will say some positive things, generally speaking, when you talk to people within those areas—I come from one of them in north Belfast that was heavily impacted by the conflict, and when I go back there it is still the same—older people like myself may feel that this is really difficult, and say, “How do we move forward? We’re afraid. There is not the opportunity,” or whatever, but when you ask them one key thing, “What about future generations and current generations of young people?”, they want something entirely different. But for me, the biggest loss so far, which could be changed quite easily, is that those people are not given a say. They are the silent majority. All the research and the work that I have done on the ground with those communities shows that they want change.

You will find, when you research integrated education, that the majority supports bringing down the walls, in the right conditions. It is about creating those conditions to move forward. That is what you have on the ground. The critical thing for reconciliation is getting to those people. For me, they should be the top priority group. Give them a voice to give them safety from paramilitaries and give them services.

Generally speaking, throughout the conflict, services were withdrawn for lots of different reasons from those areas. They have not quite overcome the fractured relationships between social services, policing, et cetera. and those communities. That needs to be brought back in, so that people have the services and support they need. They are economically disadvantaged, and that needs to be addressed. They are being further disadvantaged because they are segregated, there are flags up and there is inter-fighting.

That disadvantages them in terms of inward investment. Educational attainment is low in those areas and health issues are high. Everything on the negative side is highest in those areas, and everything positive is at the lowest. That is what you have on the ground. Reaching into those



HOUSE OF COMMONS

communities can be done, and people want it, but they need to get beyond the gatekeepers. That is a key thing.

The gatekeepers can be several different things, paramilitaries being one of the key ones. Politicians can also be gatekeepers, and what we sometimes refer to as community leaders or community voices can be gatekeepers. We need to be able to get to people and say to them, "Here are all the facts. Here is what has been said on your behalf. This is what will happen if you stay as you are"—because it has only got worse over the decades—"but here is the opportunity for a way forward. This is what society looks like today, and this is how we have to move forward." It is about giving a voice to the people who, throughout the conflict and the peace process, have not had a voice. They include all our section 75 groups: LGBT, disabled, young people, older people and so on, who all need to be included, and particularly minority ethnic citizens. We need to move forward collectively; it should be a peace and reconciliation process for everyone.

There is a great opportunity. On the negative side, you have division, but on the positive side, this is the first time we have had no paramilitary beatings and nobody killed. There have been no bombings in 2025-26. That says, "We're ready, if the will is right." Then we move to where the will is. Quite frankly, Tim and I have been up and down the committees and have done submissions over the years—I worked for the Community Relations Council as a policy director. It was the same thing over and over again: things are received with a "thank you", and there is never any action. I have been involved in this work for over 43 years. For me, it is very straightforward and simple if there is a will. People on the ground could do it and want to do it. They are hungry for it. They are disillusioned with politics—in, out, in, out. Young people, in particular, want things to be different. As older people, we have the responsibility not to let them inherit what we created in the north.

We have that at the political level. At the structural level, you have all these different Departments that work as independent Governments. People keep saying to us—not just recently, but over 43 years—"There is no money." There is never money for peace and reconciliation: "We can't afford it." It is way down the list of priorities. But within that, loads of money is sometimes going to the same paramilitaries—millions upon millions are still going to paramilitary groups. The different Departments take different responsibilities, and I cannot see how the joining up of that works, including to enable communities to deal with things and take back their communities. It is not joined up. There is a huge amount of that. It is very important to link the cross-departmental policy, strategy and funding into funding on the ground.

At the end of all this, what is missing—I am labouring the point—is a co-ordinated way forward. If you are asking what the Westminster Government can do, it is linking in with the Irish Government and having a peace and reconciliation panel, collectively, in partnership with the Executive. It needs to be broader than the Executive.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tim Attwood: You mentioned at the start, Chair, that we are coming up to the 30th anniversary of the Good Friday agreement. In the next couple of years, as we reach that 30th anniversary, this will be the moment when we look back, but we have to look forward. It is also the 60th anniversary of civil rights, which some people say was the start of the troubles. In 2028, we will for the first time have been living longer at peace than in conflict. All of us, collectively and politically—civic leaders and everybody in society, on the island and between these islands—have to work together on a long-term strategy, so that by 2028 we have something we can agree on.

In the lead-up to the Programme for Government, some good political representatives in Northern Ireland were very supportive of reconciliation, but that was the first 25 years. That was peace. Now we need prosperity. John Hume always talked about peace and prosperity. As well as dealing with division and sectarianism, you have to give people hope. That is the longer-term social equity strategy. There is a unique moment for the British and Irish Governments, as signatories to the Good Friday agreement, along with the Northern Ireland Executive. There is a just a great moment.

I am sure we will touch on the shared island funding and the amount of investment coming from the Irish Government. That is protecting some of the peace organisations that lost their funding from the Executive. They get it from the Irish Government, which is welcome. There is more we can be doing to assist.

Q7 **Simon Hoare:** There has clearly been enormous and significant betterment—thank you to you and your organisations for the parts you have played in helping to deliver that, alongside others. This is a quick question to which you may not have the answers, so you may need to go and do a bit of calculation and write back to the Committee.

In this process, there has always been a group of people who readily engage in all this stuff. We always trumpet their successes and then forget the really marginalised and the stubborn. My very simple question is this: in terms of your usual round of engagements, meetings and reaching out, do you have a guesstimate for the percentage of new people you see from those hard-to-reach groups, set against those who turn up, get involved and take part in things regularly, to the extent that one is almost—forgive the phrase—preaching to the choir? How are you getting new people in? I take your point about the gatekeepers, but what is the percentage of new people from the stubbornly hard-to-reach groups?

Dr Irwin: I think we will write back to you, because I would like to give you accurate information on that. At a more superficial level, I would say that we are obviously not a frontline organisation; we fund the frontline organisations. That is why I want to go back to get you the accurate information.

In respect of the meetings that we convene on behalf of the Executive Office on current policy, one thing I find very striking and heartening is



HOUSE OF COMMONS

that I used to be able to walk into a room and know more or less every face there. That is not the case any more. I would say that the majority of the people when I go into the room are relatively new faces.

Tim has touched on the reason for that. We had a long conflict, but we have also had a long peace process. There are many people who played a very significant role in the peace process who have either retired or who are no longer with us, and there are new faces coming into the work. It is very heartening for me, especially in relation to youth work, to see the number of people who have come through youth programmes and are now involved in their delivery. There is another generation of people coming through.

Our difficulty is that we are largely operating on one-year budgets—particularly with the money that comes from the Executive Office. It is enormously difficult for organisations to sustain work programmes and keep people employed. It is not a career of choice for young people; it is a commitment of young people, but you would not go into this work to set your career. It just would not be possible to plan. That is unfortunate, because we need the next generation to be involved.

On your point about the hard-to-reach, in our own strategy we are pointing in two related directions. I have already mentioned one: the movement of good relations work into everyday life. On the other hand, there are still hotspots, which can be thematic or geographical. There certainly are areas of people who never were convinced about peace. It is unfortunate to say this, but in any generation you will not get the same opinion across that whole generation of people, so it is not possible to say that all young people are looking to the future. We can see on the streets that there are some young people who are only too keen—without sufficient information about the harm that violence does—to be involved in street violence, and paramilitary organisations are still recruiting. We know that from security reports and so on.

The picture is very mixed, and the work most definitely will need to continue. The balance of who we know and who we don't is changing. That may be to do with this generational thing. We hope it is also to do with the reach-out of the work, because we are always looking to see new groups engaged with, in the funds that we make available. Some of our grants in our small grant programmes are really very, very small. There, we are looking geographically to get out as far as we can go. Very often, we use word of mouth from other people. We do a lot of peer-learning work so that those who are based in community, and who know that they want to move forward but are not very clear on how they want to go about doing that, can be involved in talking to other people who have already travelled that journey. It is an authentic conversation with people who have the same issues that they have. We are certainly doing our best on the issue that you are raising. We agree with you on the underpinning point that you are making, and we will write back to you with details on that.

Tim Attwood: Very briefly, Simon, as part of our youth peace summit, we engaged over 450 young people, and what was positive about that is that



they were engaged around good relations and reconciliation. I thought that young people would say, "We've moved on," but they were very engaged. We had a focus group in Shankill Road among loyalist 14 to 15-year-olds, and some of them said, "We want the guns back." In those loyalist areas, they still see the gatekeepers or the paramilitaries as their heroes because they still have the bling, the cars and the holidays; they do not have role models that give them hope. Next time you are in Belfast, Chair, you should reach out to Stephen Hughes, who is a youth worker at St Peter's Immaculata in Lower Falls—he is a big guy; he is a great, great guy. They are engaging young people in the interfaces, and that is always new people; there is Divis Hoods—

Simon Hoare: A previous Committee met him and heard that.

Tim Attwood: He is brilliant. He was in the papers last week or two weeks ago, because of funding cuts to all the youth outreach projects in the north—I think it is about half a million pounds; not big money. That is interface and peer-to-peer work in the Creggan, which is a dissident area, and in Falls and Shankill and across the north. For the first year, the police were delighted because they could go in and talk to them, but all that funding was cut. Three weeks ago, there were some problems on Shankill Road that they wanted to avoid, but Stephen Hughes and St Peter's Immaculata still went out on the street. They had no money for it, and the workers we would have co-ordinated were gone, but still they found an onus to go out to do it.

This is part of the problem: short-term thinking will lead to further problems. If you talk to ACC Ryan Henderson, who led on the response to the race riots, he said that that was one of the biggest mistakes, because now they have to park cars in the area with the motorway and Balls on the Falls, between two interfaces, every night of the week, all year round. It is not all sectarian; sometimes it is just organised kids fighting. The resources put into it will outrun the half a million pounds. He was really annoyed, as a police officer, that they did away with those outreach projects. This is where there is a disconnect.

Q8 Robin Swann: Thanks, folks, for coming this morning. Listening to your opening statements and answers to the Chair, is there a disconnect between the two organisations? I am getting from CRC that, "T:BUC is there. We are working with the Executive. The Executive is working well," but that—not to paraphrase you, Dympna—most of the problems in Stormont are because they are not listening. Can I have your thoughts or input on that?

Martin McDonald: I will respond on behalf of CRC. You are very shrewd to pick that deviation up. I think your question relates to the heart of what CRC is about: it is an arm's length body, and that comes with constraints. Our job is to implement the policy as agreed by the politicians. That is not to say that that policy or T:BUC needs to change. We have done a response to T:BUC. Our response would be that T:BUC 1, as it stands, is out of date—it is 10 years old. T:BUC 2, when it comes and Ministers finally agree on it, needs to have a much more holistic approach to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

reconciliation and include the whole issue around racism and ethnic minorities, not just programmes in north Belfast between the orange and the green or wherever else we do those.

It is not perfect, but it is not our job to intervene and criticise Government or policy. Independent organisations have their freedom to do that, and we welcome that, because somebody needs to be making the noise out on the ground. The feedback we get from our groups will enable us to feed that back to Ministers and the Executive Office.

In terms of Simon's question about what percentage of people we do not get to, every year, we open a core programme to give support to core groups. It is a small amount of money—it is maybe £60,000 or £70,000 per group—but it covers the salary of a good relations officer. Nobody else would cover that, but that enables them to pull in and attract grants from a range of other sources. Every year when we put the application out, we have perhaps 10 applications that are above the quality threshold and above the financial threshold, but we might have 20 below that which are of equal quality or from groups that have never had an opportunity to get into the system. It is not just about money, but about seeing the opportunities that exist for the groups that apply to get into the system and simply can't.

Dr Irwin: The other thing I would add, beyond the institutional constraints, is that if we look at conflict across the world and where we are in relation to our own post-conflict situation, it is important to get beyond simply describing what the problem is, because you will find problems with any peace process anywhere in the world. You will find, at a political level, disagreement about how things should move forward. In that respect, there is nothing unusual about how we are.

The issues are really about what helps us to move forward and how far we have got. It is important to bring hope into the picture. It is also important to bring positivity for the people who are working on the ground, because they can see the change they are making at a programmatic level; the wider societal change—the population change, if you like—is the bigger struggle. How we are going to make that part of, as I said, the DNA of the place we live is a new challenge for us as we move forward.

We were up to the challenges that came before. I absolutely believe that those who are working on the ground now are up to the challenge of shaping how things will look in the next 25 years. They need to be supported, as has already been said. They need to have consistency in funding, and there needs to be an understanding that that work is crucial to everything else that happens in the region. We will not have economic progress or social stability, and we will continue to have security issues if we cannot manage to do this.

It is written into the Programme for Government, as you will know. We need to see the drop-down from that. In every Government Department, what issues can we be working on to help sustain peace and reconciliation for the future? We need to move from a programmatic, project-related



HOUSE OF COMMONS

approach to a much more joined-up, systemic change. That is where we are now.

Actually, in global terms, we are looked on as one of the bigger success stories—again, as you will know. We need to live up to that reputation. We need to recognise that we have more work to do. We need to think about what would be significantly different from what we have done before, and how we would go about doing that. That is where we need a whole-system approach across Northern Ireland, but we also need a joined-up approach across strands 1, 2 and 3 of the original agreement.

Hopefully, as Tim said, there is an opportunity to review as we come towards the anniversary, and we will think better again about how we make those strands relevant for the period we are moving into now. I would argue that that is not only in relation to peace and reconciliation, vital as that is. We also have shared and joint concerns around climate and a whole range of other issues, as two relatively small islands on a global basis. There is a reason for us to be thinking and working together more collaboratively, and there is a reason for us to try to establish a shared vision of who we will be in the future. Quite apart from whatever the constitutional arrangements are, that gives stability for everybody.

Dympna McGlade: I take your point. I worked with the Community Relations Council for 16 years as a policy director. At that stage, we had a challenge function—not going out protesting, but challenge in terms of responding to Government policy—and we were able to have a say and be listened to. That was taken away. The Government said, “No, you don’t do policy. We do.” I always thought that we assisted because we were working on the ground, and we were the middle organisation that would feed in from the ground up. When they took away policy, I left as well. I had to go—I was made redundant, in a way.

We had the luxury of setting up the independent Peace Summit Partnership, and it is a luxury. I understand that an arm’s length body can sometimes feel like a stranglehold rather than arm’s length, but we are independent. We have a group that works famously—the peace summit guardians. It is made up of people like me who have been through and retired, and who are no longer affiliated with or accountable to any political party, religious organisation or employer. They are well known in the field.

First, when we talk to Government officials, it is not that it impresses them; it scares the wits out of them, the type of people who are involved. We have journalists, academics who have done loads of research, and activists, all well renowned. They can come out, they will make statements and they will support us in our submissions and our policy responses. That is really powerful. For the groups on the ground, funded by CRC or the Government directly, it is very difficult to have a say, because you can be punished—it’ll look like you are anti. To be quite honest, over the years I have come to learn that you can be punished. You have relevant concerns, and comments and constructive criticism to make, but it is sometimes taken as your being the enemy, or that you are there to criticise, rather



HOUSE OF COMMONS

than assist, by pointing out what needs to be rectified and offering to help to rectify it. So I understand that groups on the ground are reluctant to speak. I know they have engagement with Government and the T:BUC conversations that go on, but they are funded. I have been there, done that; I know what it is like. We have the luxury; we are thankful for it and we will continue, hence today.

Q9 **Robin Swann:** Dympna, I suppose, sitting around this table, I know what you mean by groups being punished or fearing being punished. Do you want to unpack that for the rest of the Committee? What do you see? Give an example of what you are talking about.

Dympna McGlade: I have seen occasions where groups have not been funded the following year, or their funding has been reduced, because they have been outspoken.

Q10 **Robin Swann:** Is that a political decision or a civil service decision?

Dympna McGlade: Personally, my view would be it is probably political—some pressure politically. That can go both ways. It can go for non-funding or funding, and not necessarily on need.

Q11 **Chair:** Does that come from the Department?

Dympna McGlade: The funding would be through the Department, but there is political influence along the line.

Martin McDonald: I can categorically say that the decisions on the groups we fund and the groups we do not fund are taken within an agreed framework for assessing grant aid. There is no political influence. In terms of my role as chair, I would not permit political influence. That is not to say that I cannot be taken to task by and explain to politicians, but it certainly does not feed into our scoring mechanism. I think we need to put a marker down on that one.

Q12 **Katrina Murray:** Being a Scottish MP representing a Scottish constituency and having difficult funding relationships within public services in Scotland, particularly looking at arm's length organisations, I get the arguments that you are making and the perspective that Martin is coming out with. Is it perception, where people might be concerned about speaking out or worried about rocking the boat, because they are concerned about what will happen to the funding, so people or organisations are probably self-censoring what they are saying because they have that first concern about how they are going to manage to continue their work?

Tim Attwood: As Dympna was saying, recently, we have had race riots now and in '94, '95, '96. Those groups are very cautious about saying anything public, so sometimes it is self-control, because they are worried about being open, but equally they are worried about the relationship they have politically as well. Obviously on that particular issue some of the commentary, politically, has not been very helpful or best informed, and some of those groups have shied away. We have done work on that issue so we can actually assist in presenting—with a small p—their case, the facts and the problems that they are facing. So there is some self-



HOUSE OF COMMONS

censorship. But I was a political representative in West Belfast for 15 or 20 years and there was a concern—put it that way—that some of the decisions over those years assisted certain groups rather than others.

Dympna McGlade: It is very difficult. You could never prove it, put it like that, but we are speaking on behalf of the thousands we have engaged with who tell us these things, and tell us, off the record, about pressure on people. Personally, I would love political interference. For example, I would have loved politicians to come out and say, “See all those groups funded in Ballymena and the surrounding areas, and those community leaders that have been funded—? What are you doing about this? What are you doing about racism, sectarianism and community cohesion?”

I did not hear that from some of them that I would—well, I did not expect to, but they should have. They call themselves community leaders and community champions, and they are constantly on the news giving their opinions, but there was no sign of them coming in and saying, “All right, we need to go in there and support our minority ethnic residents. We need to work with the communities to get better understanding, re-engage and heal relationships.” There was none of that.

If the politicians interfered and said, “Well, you are getting funded, so what are you doing about it?” that would be one thing. But no, the interference is the other way—quietly. It is not interference for a constructive, positive way forward. That has been par for the course in the north over the history of our troubles. I think it boils down to the differences politically. If you are seen to have a particular opinion—if you support the Irish language, for example—then you are seen to be pro one symbol, or if it is a bonfire or a march, you are seen to be pro another. You are still very under the microscope.

Chair: I want to bring in either Jacqueline or Martin, but can I just say politely that we are in danger of running out of time? Please keep your answers short so that we can get the coverage that we need. Thank you.

Martin McDonald: I have been in this game since the 1990s. I remember being sent out into South Armagh, and I was the first senior civil servant anybody had seen. Likewise, I was sent down the Ards peninsula to Portavogie on a Friday night and the fishermen came in and said to me, “Martin, we don’t see too many Catholics from Newry here on a Friday night.” There were two diametrically opposed communities.

The one thing I have never witnessed is the inability of Northern Ireland communities to speak out. I would counter that we certainly have not hidden our light under a bushel, before or after the troubles. People do speak out. I cannot counter what has been said about the groups that Dympna has engaged with; all I can say is that, in my personal experience, if I had reported back as a civil servant half of what I heard, it would have been a catastrophe. You need to have a filter around what you do and do not report back. But yes, there is a voice out there, and there is criticism, but there is also a lot of support for what we do.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dr Irwin: If I could just add something briefly, I think you may be right, Ms Murray, about perception and self-governing around that—that is quite possible—but there are a couple of other points to make. I do not think that it is only about that.

First of all, as someone from an arm's length body, I can absolutely attest to the fact that politicians are constantly asking about what is going on at the local level, both within their own constituency and across the whole region. We deal with lots of those questions as part of our input for Assembly questions; that goes on routinely, all the time. So there is an interest in what is being done with the resource that is being made available, and we have an evidential base that can show you that.

It is difficult for groups that are operating on the ground, because money is very challenging at the moment. We are operating on one-year budgets—we sit here today and we still do not have a budget for this year—so groups are very often concerned with their day-to-day existence just as much as they are about their comments for the future.

The other issue is that expectations around policy and Government intervention are quite low, and that is having an influence as well. Even when there are consultations, at community level, quite often people will say, "Well, we've talked about this before and tried to comment before. We're not sure how much of a difference it is actually making."

The other factual point is that over the last 10 years, we had two extended periods in which there was no Government at all, so no policy was being made. Even now, when we have Government and the Assembly back in place, getting policy through the various processes that are part of the design of our governance structures is tricky and difficult to achieve—you can see that. The peace monitoring report looks at those very questions: what is the political progress, how many policies have been enacted and what law has changed—it can be very slow. That is also having an impact on what groups on the ground feel is likely to change, at the top-down level.

Q13 Mike Kane: My question is about the world as it is, and the world as it should be in the future. Thirty years after the peace agreement and 40 years after the Berlin wall fell, we still have barriers. We have walls in Portadown, Lurgan, Derry and, mainly in Belfast, we still have segregated housing. When will the walls go—in five, 10, 15, 20 or 25 years?

Dr Irwin: The pace of change has been slower than many of us would have wanted it to be. In the unfrozen moment that came after the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, we maybe did not do as much as we ought to have done on structural reform—both physical structure and other mechanisms in our region. If we think about peace walls now, for my generation, those walls are an anomaly and something that should not be there, but a whole generation came after me. For a growing number of people in the community, the walls are absolutely normal, so we are trying to take them from the normal that they know to the abnormal of a place without the walls.

Q14 **Mike Kane:** Churchill famously said, “We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us.”

Dr Irwin: I agree with that, absolutely. This is where unconscious separation occurs: people no longer see the walls. In the work to transform walls, a lot of the preliminary work is on minds and attitudes, and even people being able to envisage what it might be like if the walls were not there any more. The organisations that work on that on the ground talk about the difficulty of moving forward in relation to people’s sense of safety. We are seeing that the ghost of violence outlives the actual violence by a long way.

Q15 **Mike Kane:** The question was whether we think it will be five, 10, 15 or 20 years—or never?

Dr Irwin: The current policy estimated that the walls would be down by 2023, and they are not, so I imagine that the next policy will be more hesitant on setting a timeframe for that. It is not only a question of what the community wants to see. The walls are made up of lots of different walls, some of which are on public land and some of which are privately owned, so there are lots of structural issues associated with bringing the walls down. A lot of work is being done at community level to get that process going.

I don’t know whether it could be argued that it would be better to just take the walls down, put something else in their place and then live with whatever emerged after that. If we go at the pace of the final agreement, it will be very slow—we can already see that. The issues will be practical ones around who has the say: the people designing the city, the people driving through or past the walls, or the people who live at the walls? Whose say counts most when it comes to taking a wall down? We have learned lots of things about peace processes as a result of looking at structural reform, but I agree that it has not gone at the pace that we would want it to. There is more work to be done—there is no doubt about that.

Q16 **Mike Kane:** On reconciliation, what are the perceived differences between those who live in urban areas and those who live in rural areas?

Martin McDonald: I worked for a considerable time with rural communities across Northern Ireland. The walls are visible in Belfast and Derry, or Londonderry, but they are not visible in rural areas. The issues are centred around land ownership. Many of the community projects that I attempted to bring European funding into got to a stage where the community that owned the land would not give it to the other community, so projects worth £1 million or £1.5 million fell away and the money was lost.

There are invisible walls where people go for recreation and in segregated education. Those are not as visible. I think the key thing is not solely about bringing down the walls—I admit we have failed in terms of the T:BUC policy to bring the walls down in the agreed timeframe. The walls and barriers will not be removed until people feel better off. Dymphna made



HOUSE OF COMMONS

a very good point earlier about the deprivation indicators. Those have not changed over the last 20 years, and until we get to grips with improving education and employment opportunities and giving people a sense that their community is moving forward, the walls will not come down. That is a personal view; it is not necessarily the view of the Community Relations Council.

Q17 Mike Kane: While I have the John and Pat Hume Foundation here, let me pick up my particular hobby horse, if that is all right. When organising a dinner for my Member of Parliament in the mid-1980s—my goodness me—the guest of honour, who I spent the evening with, was a certain John Hume. He was talking about a peace process, which we thought was ridiculous at that time, but he talked to me about other things that night. I have said 30 or 40 years, but it is obviously 61 years since the Lockwood report, which was a big pork barrel—a university went east of the Bann rather than west of it. He ran a joint cross-community campaign in the north-west to bring an independent University of Derry. That was one of his dreams that has never been fulfilled and was probably one of the seminal motivators for the troubles breaking out—there was never any excuse for violence over this, but it was one of the seminal reports that probably led to civil rights breaking down and turning into violence three or four years later. Do you think we will ever revisit the campaign that John started?

Tim Attwood: What John said, in relation to your previous question, is that the barriers are not necessarily physical; they are in people's minds. That is still the case today—north, south, east, west and within our communities. There is a strategy in place at the moment that says Magee will get to 10,000 students in the next 10 years.

Mike Kane: We have heard it before.

Tim Attwood: Already, within a year or year and a half and because of funding difficulties, the vice-chancellor of UU has downgraded that. Again, John always understood the power of hope and education, and that is why he was so supportive of a university in the north-west. At the John and Pat Hume Foundation, we are working on a global peace centre, which will have education at the heart, and we will have partnerships with higher education institutions and others in Derry. But the goal of a really significant investment in student numbers in Derry and the north-west is still some time off. The 10,000 figure seems to have been reduced and reduced. There is a huge responsibility because it is an economic factor. Looking at Limerick, the university there transformed it. Again, Magee has done well, but 10,000 students should be the least target, and we are some way off that yet.

It is a bit like the peace walls: we need a long-term collective strategy in Government to make that happen. Interestingly, the shared island fund put money into the new medical school that is being built at the moment—that is Irish Government money. As you know, in terms of European affairs, John was a big man about regional imbalance, whether it was Scotland or any part of Europe, and he said that the north-west of Ireland



HOUSE OF COMMONS

needed investment. That is why the medical school is being built with Irish Government money—some £41 million, I think it is; student accommodation is part of that as well. It is a collective responsibility. Yes, the Northern Ireland Executive needs to do more—the Irish Government are down there—but generally there is much more that all Governments can do collectively to support that development.

Q18 **Mike Kane:** Does the foundation pursue that goal?

Tim Attwood: We will do our bit if we get the centre open. That will play a significant role in terms of global peacemaking and educational responsibility—I am sure there will be a question about that later. That would be one of our goals, yes.

Dympna McGlade: In relation to the interface areas, there have been I don't know how many reports done over many, many years through peace funding. There have been enough reports that we could build another peace wall with them, probably the whole way around Belfast. All the answers are in them, and they were done by very renowned academic institutions and researchers, so we know what the answers are.

An example of the work we did is Northumberland Street between the Falls Road and Shankill Road. The community wanted the gates opened on a Sunday, because there is a lot of small business, training and childcare. They wanted the gates opened because both Catholics and Protestants crossed the line, and the gatekeepers said, "No, no, no, no; too much, too much." We said we wanted to engage with people, and we wanted to engage beyond the gatekeepers. We got all the businesses in and everything else, and the gatekeepers came along, determined: "We can't open it. People don't want it. We are afraid. Blah, blah, blah."

We brought along the services that were needed. The police came, the people responsible for the gates came, the people who were going to put in lighting came and so on. Every time someone said, "We're afraid," we said, "Right, the police will do extra for the first couple of weeks on Sundays." We were only asking for them to be open until 7 o'clock; they had been closed on a Sunday. The police did the rounds. They said, "It's too dark, with the walkway and the two big gates." We said, "We'll put lighting in," and they did. On safety, we said, "We'll talk to the community workers and make sure we're working with young people. Blah, blah, blah," and it happened.

My point is that if you did that on a bigger scale, that is how you get them down. You start that process. That process has not been started. There are still 100. They said, as Jacqueline said, that they would all come down by 2023 in the T:BUC strategy, which was launched in 2013. There is not a new T:BUC strategy. The consultation on it closed two years ago, and we still haven't got one. Where is the commitment? There is none. They didn't get them down, and there has been no urgency to look at that. That is a disgrace—a Government saying, "We'll have them down," and not even getting a quarter of them down.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

But if there is a will and you get the services together, like I said at the beginning—if you join up the services and collectively go in—you can easily address these. It will take time. Like everything, it takes time—regeneration, safety, building relations. I just want to say this: we do not want to be going forward in 2028 with divided communities that have minority ethnic groups that are not welcome, or that have young people being subsumed into a single identity, learning that narrative and going to a single-identity school. That is not the way forward in 2028, but we are actually growing it, embedding it and using the same structures to get rid of people to keep our own. It has to stop.

Housing is a key issue. There needs to be a statement from the Executive to say, “Everybody’s entitled to housing and to be safe in their housing.” It is a human right, and we need a new language around that. And it is not just new shared housing; the existing areas that are segregated need to be shared. Keep sending that message. That will take a long time, but the message has not even started. Nobody is saying, “Definitely, you are allowed to go there; go there and we will make sure you’re safe.” It is not happening. If they don’t do that, I don’t know how long it will take. Never. They will never come down.

Whenever we consulted them, people said, “We have consultation fatigue.” They are kind of no longer interested in talking about it unless there will be answers, and unless you can come in and say, “Look, we have a package here; we can regenerate this area. The long-term move is to this, and we need you on board.” Everybody must be on board.

In terms of urban and rural, we engage with young people. The stark reality of the difference is that the urban young people in the Short Strand area, which is a very small enclave, said, “It’s like living in a goldfish bowl, being moved round and round.” The young people in the rural area, which was open field, said, “It’s like living in an open prison: you can go so far, but you can’t cross over that bridge.” That was the difference. One was very physical and the other was the known—the turn in the road, a bus stop, a bridge or the centre of a village and who’s on the outside. We worked with the Belfast Interface Project and what we call Beyond Belfast. What they call the interfaces was contested space—that is how they referred to it—and it was the same approach to community relations, reconciliation and building relationships.

Mike Kane: I would prefer to see some of those peace walls as active travel routes, but I am sure we all would.

Q19 **Chair:** I want to pick up on the recent horrific events in Northern Ireland, which you have touched on. They raise serious questions about social cohesion and the role of reconciliation in addressing underlying divisions. What should be done to confront this problem?

Martin McDonald: Maybe I can kick off.

Chair: I was drawn to Tim, but I will go to you first, Martin.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Martin McDonald: I referred earlier to the temperature test we did about a fortnight ago under the T:BUC strategy. We had information provided by Professor Peter Shirlow of Liverpool University, who was at the conference via Zoom. He put up on the screen some simple statistics on the birth rate and death rate for Catholics and Protestants, and there is no difference—on both sides, we have an increasing death rate and a reducing birth rate. Then he put up the same stats for ethnic minorities, and there we have quite the opposite: an increased birth rate and a reduced death rate.

He put it to the audience, “If you think there is a problem—I do not personally see this as a problem, as it gives us a diverse society—you have to accept that you will have a growing migrant population simply on the basis of birth rates and death rates, even beyond whatever the Government does in terms of migration policy.” The conference clearly demonstrated an absolute outpouring of objections and abhorrence at what had happened.

People were moving on to ask, “Now what do we do?” We had a deputy secretary from the Executive Office, and the issues around the age of T:BUC had heavy criticism from the audience, rightly so, and there was the question of when Ministers are going to agree on the next one. I think it is on the table and is due shortly, but we have heard that quite a few times. The message to them was that, whatever shape T:BUC takes in future, the strategy needs to include race relations.

At the same time, the Executive Office had put out a consultation on a new race relations framework, as they call it. Ethnic minorities have complained that it should be racial equality not just race relations. This Committee might have some scope to look at that, because I think it is so closely interrelated with, and such a complex part of, a future reconciliation policy that it just cannot be ignored.

Our recommendation to the Executive Office was that it needs to include both things together—they are not two isolated instruments. The future policy is not just about orange and green, as I said earlier, but about a more diverse society where ethnic minorities bring whatever they bring in terms of employment and opportunities to Northern Ireland.

Dr Irwin: Both policies are under consideration at the moment, and there is absolutely a need to bring the cohesion element together into one place. They are all people living in the region, so cohesion affects them all and should be addressed equally across all those different identities. There remain developmental needs related to language and so on, which are currently being dealt with to some extent under the current policy, arguably, and that work will need to continue. For us, it is not either/or but both/and when it comes to the design of policy.

The other issue I would pick up on is that we have had incidents not only in relation to race but in relation to violence against women and girls—the statistics on that are horrendous. Our peace monitoring report has reflected on domestic abuse all the way through, and I suppose it would have been one of the metrics. People might ask, “What does that directly



HOUSE OF COMMONS

have to do with peace?" However, it is very often the case that in a post-violent situation, if we can describe it as that, women and girls are then seen to be under attack, and the statistics bear that out. A violent society takes a long time to recover from violence. It may be expressed in different ways, but it is still to be found. We have two areas that we need to be looking at.

Q20 **Chair:** I think we will talk about social cohesion, Jacqueline. It is about everybody.

Dr Irwin: Yes, exactly.

Q21 **Chair:** It is about everybody. It is not necessarily about just ethnicity, just being female or just religion. It is about everything. From your experience, Dymphna and Tim, what can be done?

Tim Attwood: I agree with a lot of what has been said, but there is an urgency about this. Obviously, this is an all-island, global problem, but we have particular difficulties in the north. That is because, whether in south Belfast in '24, in Ballymena in '25 or more recently, unfortunately most of the incidents were in more loyalist areas. And it has been devastating for those communities.

We did quite a bit of work after Ballymena. A wonderful woman from Ballymena, Ivy Goddard, addressed the forum. She spent 20 years on the ground there, and things changed overnight.

The reality is that those individuals came in because of Wrightbus, which is the "Boris bus", in Ballymena. They could not get the workers, so they went out to India and around Europe to get the workers. These people were working in companies in Ballymena because they were needed. They went out again last September to recruit more people.

However, there is now this ongoing target on these individuals. This has gone on from '24, '25, '26—it is the same in other parts of the UK as well—and there is no urgency from the Government on that.

I was obviously a councillor. When there was frost, we had an immediate emergency plan. All the agencies came together in Belfast city council's emergency planning group. We respond like that. The climate has changed in the last few years, and we prepare for it. If it happens again, it will be like that.

We are on our third serious incident in three years, and there is no urgency at central Government level. There is no emergency planning and limited funding, no doubt. There is no long-term thinking and no campaign about tackling misinformation.

There is collective responsibility, as we all have a responsibility to look after our neighbours. Again, we need central Government and local government to assist. It is very, very frustrating, because we could all predict what was going to happen, and it did happen. Again, individuals,

faith communities and community groups came to the fore to support those individuals—

Q22 Chair: It was a huge effort, and it was very heartwarming to see everybody supporting the community. Keeping this in line with reconciliation, is social media having an influence on this? Are you seeing that at first hand?

Tim Attwood: I mentioned Ryan Henderson, the assistant chief constable who has responsibility for this. We met him before the recent riots. For Ballymena, a third of the social media traffic came from the US. It is very difficult to compete, but that is having a huge impact. Elon Musk was all over the recent riots, and that has an impact in Northern Ireland and beyond. It is a huge issue.

We have done work with the Jo Cox Foundation and the Hume Foundation on respectful political discourse. It is 10 years since Jo Cox's death, and obviously 10 years since Brexit as well. There is more and more need for conversations at school level to teach people how to use social media responsibly, and about how you have respectful conversations and discussions, whether that is about orange and green or about the new communities that have come in. There is not enough being done around that. I think the Jo Cox Foundation has done some really good work, and we have worked and collaborated with them to try to support that work, because it is all part of the reconciliation process.

Martin McDonald: On social media, Professor Peter Shirlow gave us his very considered view. He said, "Listen, when you were dealing with the orange and green problem, that was contained within Northern Ireland, but the impact of social media and the whole issue around racism and sectarianism is much wider. It's not only at a UK level." He went a step further, which astounded me and many people in the audience, by saying that he believed there was social media interference by foreign countries to destabilise democratic countries with this tactic of racism. That was really worrying to me and the audience who were there and heard it that day.

There is no doubt that there are algorithms out there that are targeting young people and getting them out on to the street. We also had an event about social media. And my view at that stage was, "Well, listen, do we not fight fire with fire? Can we not put out our own algorithms about the good news stories?" There are a lot of good news stories that we are all involved with, in terms of good community relations, but they are never picked up. I think this is a real issue that we need to come to terms with.

Q23 Chair: I don't think it is just among young people—

Martin McDonald: No, you're right.

Chair: It is also among vulnerable people and older adults who may not have the experience to be able to navigate—



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Martin McDonald: It just happened to be that many of the people involved in our recent event were young people, but it is cross-generational.

Dympna McGlade: I want to bring this back to single-identity areas, where people have shared narratives—

Chair: That is where I wanted to go.

Dympna McGlade: Social media has a big impact. I see some of the sites. They are horrendous, and they are allowed. Also, within the communities, it wasn't just one-off riots—it's ongoing. We hear stories every day. Recently, I was down seeing a woman in an area. She has an illness that has her bedbound, and she needs carers three times a day. Two of the carers who came in the evening were black, and they were put out of the area and told not to come back. She was left until the next day, until the next set of carers came in. Nobody had any care for her. Within the area, there are notices going up: "Locals only." You are finding it here as well. It's ongoing and constant.

There are people of different colour going to the school gates and being shunned. They are picking up their children, and their children are being shunned in school. They are pulling their children out of school, which is a big difficulty for the schools in terms of their numbers and sustainability. It is just constant and ongoing. Delivery drivers are being harassed at the door, et cetera. It is not just social media on the web; you have social media within the communities. And while it is contained and quite often controlled by paramilitaries, it is going to continue. Every time something happens that they don't like, or when they want to cause trouble, they just pull up the drawbridge—the structures are there—and they revert to violence. It is very serious. It is embedding itself now. It turned from sectarianism and now it is racism. Sectarianism is still there, but racism has come.

Q24 **Chair:** Women played a central role in the peace process and, as you all know, continue to lead so much of the community-based reconciliation work, yet their voices seem to be under-represented. What can and should be done to ensure that women's experiences and perspectives are reflected in efforts to address the past and the future?

Dympna McGlade: We have a very vibrant women's sector. They are really good and very co-ordinated. They lobby and sit with the Executive on different committees and subgroups. Their frustration is that, again, although there is a lot of talk, a lot of reports and a huge number of recommendations, the follow-through is where it falls down. The same issues have been talked about for many, many years, and the follow-through is frustrating. It worries me that it is going to lead to people saying, "Oh, there's no point. We'll just not engage." The Executive talk about co-design, but the sector is saying that there's no such thing, or they don't understand it. They feel like they have a voice, but how successful that is will be told by what it achieves. What is the output?



Martin McDonald: I think we have very vibrant female involvement in politics generally, and particularly in community relations. The Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network is a very vibrant organisation with a focus on—the title says it—rural areas. We have another group, Rural Action, which is predominantly driven by women. They have attracted funding, and they are going out into rural communities. The new strategy on violence against women and girls is also attracting people to come forward and have their voices heard. Part of that strategy is to work with men. It is not just about empowering women; it is also about ensuring that men understand what they should not be doing.

I think the sector is very vibrant. It has a clear role to play in peacebuilding. It always has, going right back to the start of the troubles, and I think that whatever comes out of this framework has to have a clear pillar for women's involvement.

Q25 **Chair:** We have been talking about age and gender, and young people are the future custodians of the peace, aren't they? But they still face segregation, racism and limited opportunity. For me, it is about prosperity and opportunity. How is policy engaging with younger generations? What is needed to move this forward?

Dr Irwin: First of all, as I think I said earlier, no section of society all thinks the same thing about everything, and the same thing is true for youth. We could take you to groups of young people who understand or feel themselves to be relatively unaffected by the past, and who see the conflict as history and somebody else's business. They are moving on with their lives and are quite interconnected, particularly once they have moved out of the school system—I agree with what was said earlier in relation to the level of segregation that still goes on in schools, despite programmes like Shared Education. There is a group of young people who feel they are moving on and it is history.

There is another group of young people who want to be in that position but are also held by the trauma that went on in their families, and the stories that are passed on through the generations in their families or their communities, and they feel they owe a loyalty to everything that went before. There is another group of young people who are actively engaged in conflict when the opportunity arises—we have looked at some examples in this hearing.

In general terms, we can say that not enough has been done at the school level. If people are living together in a learning environment, they get to know each other as people before they necessarily get to think about each other as separated identities. That is an important, organic way of humanising each other, and there is not enough of that yet. Good work has been done in the Shared Education programmes but, not only for reasons of good relations but for financial reasons, it is time that we take that step forward on education.

During the period of the cuts, youth work was decimated. Lots of youth work programmes were doing vital work at the local community level, not



HOUSE OF COMMONS

only on long-term change and informal education, but by being there when things did happen at street level, and being able to bring people back in and move them into diverted activities and so on. It was such vital work. I think you can see and feel the cuts that were made there when it comes to making emergency interventions when something does happen at street level. That needs to be re-supported, and we need to revisit the importance of youth work in those vital years from early adulthood through to wherever you define adult, and recognise the importance of that work, if we are to try to build a cradle-to-grave sense of interconnection, as opposed to a piecemeal opportunity through projects to do that work.

When it comes to leadership, I mentioned earlier that it is so great to see young people go through the programmes that we and others have funded and then come through to be leaders in those roles. There are not enough of them, because there are really no strong career opportunities in this field. That relates back to the funding point that we made earlier.

A vision for the future matters to young people so that they can have a sense of where and who we are; otherwise, we lose lots of people. They go to third-level education and to university somewhere else, and they never come back again. We feel the weight of that when we are looking to recruit people, as Tim alluded to. There are many issues that relate to the economy as much as to education and to social cohesion more generally, and we need a real focus on that. I hope we will see that emerge in the next iteration of the Together: Building a United Community strategy. It remains to be seen. The importance of young people to where we will be in the future is raised time beyond number in consultations.

Tim Attwood: The Integrated Education Fund is a member of the Peace Summit Partnership, as are YouthAction and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum. There is some amazing work going on. The engagement with young people that they do, and that we have done with them, around support for reconciliation is quite encouraging. They do say they feel that they lack a political voice. One thing that keeps dominating with young people is the intergenerational issues around mental health, and young people dealing with that sort of trauma. There needs to be investment in that.

I agree with Jacqueline on education. I have a personal comment that I always use when I speak at events for the Peace Summit Partnership. I speak as somebody who likes to think of themselves as progressive on these issues. I have an 18-year-old and 15-year-old twins. We live in West Belfast, and they went to a Catholic primary school and a Catholic secondary school, and they play Gaelic. When I was 18, the first time I had Protestant friends was at university. A generation later, they have met every colour of the rainbow in primary and secondary school—there is a multicultural society at school level—but, from my experience, there is just very little engagement between communities at primary or secondary level. It needs to be challenged. Hopefully I have taught them good principles, but you need that greater engagement.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

There is something missing in the education system that would create the opportunities. There are false opportunities sometimes—you bring them together and say, “Let’s go to the cinema.” It has to be something much more substantial where all the communities—the new communities as well as faiths—can learn and enrich ourselves. We need that badly, because it is terrible that for my 18-year-old, if he is lucky enough to get to university, that will be the first time he will have Protestant friends.

Chair: I get that.

Q26 **Katrina Murray:** One of the things we have already talked about is political will and political polarisation. How does political polarisation and instability impact efforts to build a peaceful, inclusive and resilient society? I appreciate that that is probably an essay question with an answer best delivered in about 3,000 words.

Martin McDonald: I will have a shot at that. Clearly, there needs to be political will. My experience, having been a civil servant and then gone out to work for non-governmental organisations, is that it has always been more difficult during periods when we do not have an agreed political Assembly or whatever. One of the key things in our last peace monitoring report, which covered up to 2019, was a table of how many days the Assembly met—when it was up, when it was down and what the issues were. That clearly has a profound impact on the confidence within the communities we work with.

I think we have to accept that we are a divided society. As I said earlier, we are in a coalition, and we have parties with directly opposite political viewpoints and visions as to where they want to go. That is how it is. If I was asking all of you to coalesce across your parties to agree a future, it would not be as easy as it sounds. I accept the practical difficulties that our politicians face but, given that we have been at this so long, there is an expectation among communities that they will do this.

The proof of the pudding will be in the eating, when it comes to it. Confidence certainly rose—whenever we have events, and Ministers managed to attend, given their busy schedule, you can feel their presence in the room, and they have a direct impact on what the communities do or think about. Political will is extremely important.

Dr Irwin: Political will sets the context when things are going wrong. The good thing is that during the periods when we did not have a Government, you might have anticipated that that would rumble right down to community level and things would fall apart, but they did not. I made a point earlier about the sinister thing that is simply low expectations for what Government will achieve. That is corrosive. The good side of that means that when things are going wrong politically, it does not go all the way to ground level, and we continue to operate at a community and local government level, but on the bad side it leaves very low expectations around where we might go for the future.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I think the idea of having a shared vision for the future could be achieved outside of the constitutional question. The constitutional question tends to dominate, whereas there is a lot that we have in common and could work together on. That would not only have an impact on the general mood, but give young people a sense of what might be there for them in the future. It also gives international investors a sense of, "This is a place where you can come, you can feel secure, you can work," and so on, so there are other self-interested—if you want to put it that way—reasons why we need to be more thoughtful about developing as much of a shared vision as we can create in the political context that Martin just set out.

Tim Attwood: As a former politician, I understand how difficult it would be to get unity around some of these things, even when you think you have moved forward. On the Programme for Government, all the organisations around this table and others succeeded in getting a cross-departmental commitment to peace—obviously with no budget, people might argue. There is so much more we can do together.

All the Departments had a responsibility for peace and reconciliation. When we wrote to the Department of Finance last year, it wrote back, "That is not our responsibility; that is the Executive Office's responsibility." When we met the First, Deputy First and junior Ministers, with people in the Peace Summit, it was all very general, with no commitment, even though it is in the Programme for Government. Yes, when you talk to officials they say, "Well, the budget is not great," but there are things you could do within it.

It is the same on the race issues: there are things that can be done on co-ordination, and on bringing together emergency planning and building resilience around the issue with communities. It happens without them. There have been some social cohesion meetings, but the groups on the ground, who have been in the thick of things, from the ethnic communities, are not involved. There are things that could be done if there was the political will, but the disconnect means that even when something is agreed that does not actually need money, they still do not do the right thing.

Dympna McGrade: Quite a lot has been done on the ground, within the community, on civic assemblies or citizens assemblies, which I suppose was inspired by the south of Ireland, where they had civic assemblies and overcame very difficult issues that the politicians could not address, around abortion and single-sex marriage.

On the ground, we are working away on that. We talked earlier about reaching into the communities, and that was a really good way of reaching into the communities. We worked with the Holywell Trust and brought together 25 people—it was around the 25th anniversary—who were not necessarily involved in community relations, to talk about community relations issues, including good relations, racism and sectarianism. It was very interesting. To go back to my point about giving people the correct information and giving them options—"What if you do? What if you



HOUSE OF COMMONS

don't?"—it worked really well. I think a bottom-up approach to influence politicians is a good model. If it was adopted, it would help.

Q27 Katrina Murray: We have talked a lot about communities feeling quite disengaged, probably because of political inertia rather than necessarily a lack of political will. How would you use that to make sure that the political parties start to take a consistent and shared approach to reconciliation?

Dympna McGlade: Frankly, with the opportunity now, coming up to 2028, and given the lack of violence reduction, and so on, the Westminster Government and the Irish Government should collectively put some pressure on—not pressure, but provide support to the Executive.

The other opportunity is that T:BUC has not been released, so perhaps they could influence it to become something much stronger. We are into what I like to view as the final phase of the peace process, which might take quite a while, but it has to be different from just managing violence and managing division and segregation. It has to be about moving forward to say, "Here's what we want to get to, and here's how." The famous quote from the community is, "We're creating the conditions to get there," and putting their shoulders to the wheel, but unfortunately sectarianism and division at all levels—including political levels in the Executive—are still key issues for our legacy.

Assistance from the bottom up through civic assemblies would be really helpful, and from the two Governments top down, and of course, we all work together towards a collective decision. Then I believe they would be more accountable to a broader base. At the moment, I do not feel they are very accountable, given the number of outstanding policies and budgets that have not been agreed.

Katrina Murray: Does anybody want to add anything—quickly, because the Chair is glaring at me?

Chair: I don't glare!

Martin McDonald: In our submission, we covered this point about how you get politicians to engage and what our expectation is of what politicians should do. We framed it through three things. One was that politicians should facilitate, which would be about creating the conditions in which communities can engage safely around issues like legacy, identity and racism. That direct facilitation by politicians will create a sound knowledge base and a relationship with politicians. Leaders also need to convene things and bring communities, Departments, funders and local government together.

Finally, as a member of the public, one of the most important things that affects my view of a politician is how you behave symbolically—in a very general sense, the public image, the gestures, what you respond to. That sends out a very powerful signal. Sometimes it can be misinterpreted, but I think it is extremely important.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tim Attwood: One other thing I should mention is the role of local government. We had an event last year around ethical remembering. In the decade of centenaries project, some amazing work was done by the Community Relations Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund on the principles for remembering—I know that in Belfast city council they saved us from a lot of drama—but I think things slipped backwards.

We had the Causeway Coast and Glens borough council in, and the staff did not particularly want to have a review of their memorial policy because it can be so difficult. But in a very mixed council, with the support of somebody from the Holywell Trust in Derry, they brought in a new memorial strategy. That means that things now go through a process, rather than coming in out of left field. Obviously, there were some difficulties in the last couple of years in terms of certain anniversaries. Again, the council has played a great role in managing a very difficult issue, because the anniversaries of this, that and the other can create a lot of tensions.

Local government can play a big role, and good relations partnerships—I was the vice-chair of the good relations partnership in Belfast city council—can play a significant role as well, because they are local; they understand the particularities of an area or region. That sort of synergy between central and local government in developing good relations and reconciliation building is really important.

Q28 Chair: I want to turn to the legacy commission and part 4 of the 2023 Troubles Act. The Government have not progressed part 4 of the 2023 Act, with the Secretary of State telling us this is because they have been busy fixing the Act. What message does this send about the place of the provisions within the wider legacy framework? What, if any, are the risks of further delay to the Bill?

Dr Irwin: It has been very unfortunate, and I would characterise the areas of damage as follows. First of all, it creates a very strong impression that the issues are too challenging—too difficult—to deal with. While everybody accepts that they are challenging, from the point of view of leadership on this matter, it starts to look as if the responses are not thought through enough before they are brought forward. It means there is a sense of, “Stop, go back, talk it through, see what more can be done.” If some of that work was done in advance of bringing forward ideas, I think we would not end up in quite the same situation that we are in now.

The other issue that is perfectly obvious is that there is no really solid agreement in anything beyond broad statements across the British Government, Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive about what should be done in this space and how. That, in itself, is really important because, first of all, you bring forward a much more agreed set of actions. Secondly, at levels below Government, that creates a sense of assurance for everybody else who is operating in that space. It feels less well thought through if it is done in the way that it is, and that is despite a lot of thinking having been done. I am not underestimating the challenges that are before Government, but it has left a damaging impression that



HOUSE OF COMMONS

there isn't agreement at all, or it is poorly thought through. That undermines faith and trust in where we are going.

It very much goes back to the point I made in my opening remarks. Time spent on setting out the vision in overall terms as it relates to reconciliation in all its forms, not just part 4 of the Bill, would save a lot of time as each individual element comes forward. What tends to happen is that, as we are seeing in relation to part 4, you find that those who have an interest in the issues under consideration find that any intervention falls short, because it does not cover everything in a holistic way. They then start to raise, rightly, all the other issues that relate to reconciliation. There is no joined-up sense of what we are doing, despite a lot of really important, helpful, heartfelt work going on in this space.

This can be done. It will need more work to get us to where we can safely be, and a lot of honesty around what can be achieved. Even in that regard, because trust is an iterative thing, personally I feel that it may as well be said out loud: "Here's what we can do now. If this goes well, we will move on to do more later." To describe this process of reconciliation as being iterative, as being about trust building, as doing what you can in the moment you are in and building a foundation for what might be achieved later, is a much more honest way to talk about the matters in hand.

It is also really important to say that, as we said earlier, no piece of legislation will deliver reconciliation, or even strong elements of it. It can create the conditions. People who are affected by this at all levels need to be involved in the process because, as I said earlier, one size does not fit all. People are looking for different things out of processes of reconciliation, and some people are not looking for reconciliation at all, and it will not be achieved for them on that basis.

This is a complicated area and an iterative area. It is far better for Governments—be they British, Irish or in Northern Ireland—to say that out loud and to describe the fact that they are doing what they can in the space they are in now, and that they will return to it again when confidence has been built to move further into reconciliation processes.

Dympna McGlade: Victims and survivors are critical because it is not just about the person who has been affected. It is the whole legacy and intergenerational pass-down, and the communities within and between. I knew a lot of people who lost their lives or were injured in north Belfast, and I have relatives and friends who have been affected.

There is one case I can tell you about, which has been going on for far too long. It has become almost a bureaucratic exercise rather than being the right thing to do with a bit of heart and compassion—I feel that is missing. A friend of mine was shot two doors down from his own house. He went down to pick his children up, who were playing with other children. They came in to get the person who lived in the house, but he got shot in his place. He was shot five times and survived, but physically he was badly affected and mentally even worse.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Many years later—it must be about 20 or 25 years later—the Historical Enquiries Team came to his door. His wife answered and said, “Take yourselves off, because you’ll retraumatise him. It’s far too late.” They had not come early; they were coming back to dig this whole thing up. In the end he agreed to talk to them and they said, “We can’t help you. We just needed the information.” And only recently—I think it was last year—he got a pension through the new scheme.

Why has he had to wait all this time—he is over 70 now; he is 71—for those two things, or any kind of Government response that would wrap their arms around him and say, “You’ve been a victim”? At the very least they could say, “We care for you, we acknowledge you, we recognise what happened to you. We recognise it as damage and we’re doing our level best to ensure it never happens again.” All those things before you even get the money, you know? But he never experienced that, and most people I know that have gone through, and their families, never experienced it.

Other groups do it. The Commission for Victims and other groups such as WAVE do it. Why aren’t the Government doing it? They represent us. They are from our community. They are the politicians. It should have been much more straightforward. It should not always be a legislative process with things taking forever to go through this route and that committee.

That has to happen too, but everything else should happen alongside it. That is sadly lacking, and victims feel neglected and abandoned. A lot of them have died or are elderly now. There has been none of that happening alongside the legislative process, so victims’ families and communities will carry that burden forward because it is part of their history. That compassion has been missing.

Tim Attwood: We cannot afford another missed opportunity for all those reasons that people have mentioned. People are gone. They are dying and traumatised. It goes beyond the legacy of the past because it shapes our politics. It shapes community relations and reconciliation.

It also has a huge impact on policing today and the capacity of devolved institutions. It is absolutely vital we get it right and do not miss the opportunity because it can be cathartic, hopefully, for people to move forward if we get it right. Victims and survivors must be at the heart of it, but we cannot afford to miss it, because that will have a much wider impact across our politics in the north.

- Q29 **Chris Bloore:** Thanks to everyone for your evidence so far. It is pretty clear from the evidence that has been submitted that there is a frustration that the approach to reconciliation across the three Governments involved is perhaps not as co-ordinated as it could be. We are interested in how the absence of such a coherent strategy across the three Governments is impacting the way in which reconciliation is delivered. If we could start again and we had the power to build a coherent framework together, what would that look like compared with what it looks like in reality?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dr Irwin: It is an interesting question. The Belfast/Good Friday agreement set out some very clear actions to be undertaken. In other areas, it was more ambiguous, and I think it anticipated that actions would follow simply as a process of working together and building trust. Some of the actions were set aside to be dealt with later and some were not mentioned at all.

It took a while, as you will recall, for the Government to be established; realpolitik very quickly crept into the situation. The sheer busyness of Government, never mind whether there was a reticence in relation to some of these more difficult reconciliation issues, also came into play at that point.

If we were back there again, and I think some people said it at the time, it would have been prudent to put in place a reconciliation structure—a structure that would continue to work on the unfinished issues to agree how the three strands, if you like, of the agreement would take those elements forward. That would have allowed for the fact that once the Government was established, there would be less time, so you need to deliberately carve that out. That would have left us with a reconciliation plan, hopefully, and a vision of where we were to go.

One of the things that our very first peace monitoring report mentioned was the fact that there was not—and still is not—a reconciliation plan. There is a good relations plan and various other plans in relation to violence against women and girls, dealing with paramilitarism and so on, but there is no overarching reconciliation plan into which things like the Bill that we have just discussed would then have been slotted. That would have meant that, on an ongoing basis, that structure, whatever it would have ended up being, could have taken advice from the local community or from outside of the country in relation to other peace processes and so on.

There would have been a place to have all the discussions that go on daily in the work that we and others are involved in. Then, in structures like your own, you would have had a place to refer your very basic and appropriate question, “Where are we at with reconciliation?” You will not find—you cannot lift down—anything that gives you a clear picture of that. You have to search through all these different processes and ideas, and you see this very fragmented picture emerging. With the benefit of hindsight, a much more coherent approach would have been helpful.

Depending on how it was designed, it would also have taken some of the pressure off the political structures. We moved very quickly from a peace agreement to a political structure, and peace agreements, as you can hear from what we are saying, are so much more than that. They involve the whole of society. Everybody has a stake in this, and a structure could have been designed that reflected that.

Maybe it is not too late for something like that, if we were modest enough to realise, “We’ve done a lot and we’ve got to a certain point; why don’t we try this as a way to move forward into the next phase?” I think we



HOUSE OF COMMONS

have a responsibility to those across the world who look to us to see how we are getting on to come forward with ideas for what you should do when you are 20 or 30 years into a peace process. What is the next step that stops you falling back into some of the conflicts that we see going on around the world right now?

There is something there that is not yet shaped. It will take all of us to build that, as did everything that we did in the past. It is not as if any of us are sitting here with a ready-made solution; this will require everybody to be involved, and it is that “everybody” that is important. It is the joined-up, interconnected element of it that means that when we hit an issue like Brexit, or any of the other shocks that happen in any political system, it does not necessarily have to rock, and we have somewhere to put the discussion that we need to have to work out how we will get through it and come out the other side in as good a shape as we can be.

Q30 Chris Bloore: Do you think it lets Governments off the hook?

Dr Irwin: I think it is in the Governments’ power to put that structure in place right now. I do not know if I would characterise it, necessarily, as letting them off the hook. I think they would be doing themselves a favour if they were to put that structure in place, because they would have somewhere to put all this very difficult, complex work and bring it to a conclusion, and a coherent one—as coherent as it can be. I think it would be enlightened of them to think about that.

Tim Attwood: Peace and politics have worked best in these islands when everybody has worked together—the Irish, the British, political parties and civil society. I can understand that people often get weary of Northern Ireland, but you can never take your eye off the ball. We have seen in recent weeks, and in other stops and starts, that you have to work really hard at politics and peacemaking.

I think there are opportunities. Look at the Irish Government and what Micheál Martin has done as Taoiseach with the shared island fund. It is pretty incredible. Some people might criticise it and say there needs to be a unity debate as well, but what it has done practically, in support of groups who have maybe lost out on money, for example, is really significant. It is very nimble. It provides three years of funding. It provides capital funds, including for the new medical school in Derry. I remember the last time you went, Chair, you said, “How much is it?” and there was a “wow” moment. It is a really good model. The Irish and British Governments could work together on that.

The International Fund for Ireland with John Hume had a huge influence. It is 40 years old this year. John, Tip O’Neill and Ted Kennedy worked with Ronald Reagan, across the Chambers, to get that through. The moment that Donald Trump freezes money, the British Government stop their money to the International Fund for Ireland. I know they created the fund in the Northern Ireland Office, but the international fund has done such great work across the island—cross-border work especially—and they have taken the funding away. There is a collective responsibility and a strategy



HOUSE OF COMMONS

there at governmental level that could be very effective. I think the shared island fund is the exemplar of that.

Martin McDonald: If I may say a few words of qualification, as someone of a certain age who lived through the troubles in Northern Ireland—some of my girls are of an age where they were teenagers coming through it, and my grandchildren have no idea what it was about; I am glad of that, and their vision for the future is different—I would not want this Committee to be overcritical of where we have come from.

Back in those days when the violence was going on, I was a student at Queen's University, and when it stopped, the sense of relief that people had that the war was over was brilliant. That sense of euphoria should not be over-criticised in any review of where we have come from. Yes, we have to admit that we need to move forward, and that there was no framework, but there is an opportunity to put a framework in here now.

What the Committee might agree are the principles for that framework. Earlier, Tim referred to the principles we used for the decade of centenaries in Northern Ireland. At that stage, I was a committee member and interim chair of the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Those principles guided us—as well as Belfast city council, as Tim said—through some very contentious applications. The principle was to start off by saying, "Let's start from the historical facts." You cannot change the historical facts.

Likewise, with the reconciliation framework, we have to identify what the facts were. You have to recognise the implications of what has happened, and those implications will be different for different parts of the community in Northern Ireland. That needs to be recognised to get joint buy-in for any new reconciliation framework. There will be different perceptions and different interpretations. That was one of the principles we used. That should not be shunned, because we cannot change people's perceptions about what happened in the past. We want to get to an agreed perception about where we are moving to in the future.

If this Committee can come up with a set of principles that could be the building blocks for a future reconciliation framework, that would be a very positive outcome. But we must still recognise the euphoria, where we came from and how delighted we all were that we got through that.

Chair: And we will. Dympna?

Dympna McGlade: You asked what might go in it. One thing—to overcome this "We have no money" problem—is an economic assessment of the current cost of division in relation to housing, schools, ongoing violence, paramilitarism and so on; I will not rehearse them all. An economic assessment would allow Government to say, "This is costing us money, so how do we overcome this?" The next step should be looking at the policies to see which overlap and who can assist. We have found that every Department should be involved in this work—it is about having a holistic approach to society.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Then, we should look at the funding to see whether there is a way of using it better. For instance, lots of other things could be linked into the urban villages project to make it more cross-community. At the moment, it is urban villages cheek by jowl, rather than across the divide. But there are opportunities for businesses, shared housing and everything else.

We also need proofing across the Departments, so that every Department would have to say, "We will commit to this." That was done with "A Shared Future". When it came out, it had the plan and an implementation plan, and every Department wrote in what exactly it would do. Then that would need to be monitored independently by the British and Irish Governments and the voluntary sector. Within that, in addition to readjusting budgets, there needs to be additional funding if we are genuine about moving forward and looking at the economics and money to be saved. The Programme for Government says that paramilitarism costs £750 million a year. If they can cost that, they can cost other things, and we can look to see how we overcome those.

Ringfence the money, see it through to the end and make it long term. Fragmenting it is a waste of money: you get inexperienced people, they start the work and then it stops. It is more frustrating than anything, and at times, they are better off not starting. Within that, they need to look at the whole segregation issue. They need to look at the interface walls, housing, education and every other aspect. They also need to look at health, the different hospitals and so on. That needs to be included in a plan.

Martin is right that you need to build on what you have done. There has been a lot of good work, a huge amount of good research and a huge number of recommendations. It is a matter of looking at that and saying, "What's good here?" We need to stop where we are and say, "We've come this far in the peace process. We are now entirely different from what we were—coming up to 30 years later—but we are still hampered by legacy issues." It is about looking forward, looking back and being realistic—identifying the enabling and constraining factors in the peace process and how we are going to overcome them. I have great hope that they can be overcome, with the will. This Committee, of course, would push that, and a lot of good politicians want it to happen.

Finally, Jacqueline is right that victims and survivors need to be part and parcel of that. They have been kept as a separate part, as has paramilitarism. Everything is separate, but it needs to be one overall thing.

Here is the thing: it needs a proper name. We have had "A Shared Future". We have had CSI—cohesion, sharing and integration. We have had T:BUC: "Together: Building a United Community". It means absolutely nothing to people on the ground who are not engaged in this work. Call it a peace plan, and bring in new language about moving forward, having a multicultural society and inclusion. That is a key word, rather than "integration". Inclusion means including not just minority ethnic people but everybody who has not been included.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: Well—*[Interruption.]* That is the bell—very well timed. Thank you Dympna, Tim, Jacqueline and Martin.