

To: Consultative Group on the Past
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Issue: Submission to the Consultative Group on the Past

Introduction

The Community Relations Council (CRC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Consultative Group on the Past.

The violence in our past and its legacy cannot be sidelined as secondary issues – they are compelling aspects of our journey forward as a society and deserve special attention. How we¹ tackle the many manifestations of the legacy of violence, trauma and injury will determine how our society develops. A successful economy will depend on a society at peace with itself. In the light of the establishment of inter-community devolved government, this is of particular significance at this moment. For regeneration and investment to be successful, we must be able to face each other and work and live together without fear, discrimination or inequality.

CRC hopes this consultative process will help to build a bridge towards reconciliation for our entire society. There is no single step which can free us from the burden of violence and exclusion. In our view, the task of the group is to identify key issues and recommend practical steps which we might take to a future in which political violence is unthinkable and in which partnership, equality and the vindication of the value and rights of every person are the basis of our life together.

CRC and Wider Society

In spite of huge political progress, the shadow of the past continues to haunt the future here. Individuals, communities, towns, villages, the workplace and service delivery continue to experience the daily consequences of the legacy of the past – sectarianism and division has not yet disappeared. There are different legacies of the past – social, economic, physical and emotional. Too often, fear and a tradition of suspicion still determine where we live, socialise and work. For many parts of society this has become a normal and acceptable feature of life in

Northern Ireland. For too long public policy accepted the principle that we are a divided society without acknowledgement or comment. Much of this has to do with a common sense based on fear and hostility, which may have had some validity in the past but which now prevents the emergence of a society truly at peace.

Dealing with the past means setting a new course in the future. The fear which lies behind the requirement for this consultative body, is that our past and its influence will make the vision a shared and equal future for all impossible. Because sustainable prosperity requires acknowledgement of our difficult past, examination of its impact and exploration of how it can be addressed. Building real relationships and an attention to the weakest and most vulnerable is paramount in this work. For CRC the objective of separate but equal is neither acceptable nor achievable without ruthless exclusion and potential violence. A common commitment to equal treatment for all is vital, particularly in relation to the inequalities of the past. Section 75 (1) and (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (NI Act)² recognise both the legislative requirements of equality and the more complex requirements of good relations. But for these to be fully effective, partnership must be at the heart of politics and society.

CRC is committed to the concept of a future for all, based on fairness, and the acceptance of all in variety and diversity. The task of this consultative group is crucial if we are to have a shared, peaceful and prosperous future. Facing the past is part of removing its capacity to destroy us in the future. It is hard work, allowing for no cheap answers - but we regard the work of this group as among the most important being undertaken in Northern Ireland, with implications for the whole of society and not merely for a targeted section. We believe passionately that the recommendations of this group should be directly and specifically framed to allow a society of partners, friends and colleagues to grow from a history of enemies, foes and combatants. This is truly vital work for us all.

CRC and the Victims & Survivors of the Troubles

In approaching the issue of the past, CRC has, however, been particularly mindful of our specific commitments to the future of those who suffered most directly from politically-related violence in Ireland. CRC core funds 47 groups and in addition also supports up to 100 groups in their project/programme work. Since 2002, CRC has acted as the Intermediate Funding Body for groups working with victims and survivors, this role, in particular, has made CRC acutely aware of the sensitivities and extreme difficulties associated with addressing the legacy of the past.

We also recognise the numerous individual victims and survivors that are not catered for by existing groups, community and voluntary organisations, and statutory services, etc. There are still many isolated people that do not receive

care, support or assistance and who find the current structure of attaining individual support demeaning and undignified.

We are conscious that there are many victims and survivors that have only recently come forward requiring support. There is a growth in the number of voluntary self-help groups being set up particularly to undertake befriending work (most noticeable in the West). In addition, ex-service groups (UDR, RUC, etc.) have increased in number over the past 2 years, requesting support for respite, befriending and welfare assistance. It is clear that as many groups have been recently established there remains a great need for support and resources to meet the needs of our community.

We remain concerned about continued delays in the emergence of a victims strategy (involving services, funding/resources and support for victims), delays in the appointment of a Commissioner for Victims and for 3 years the recurring extensions to group funding schemes. This has made it difficult for groups working with victims to plan ahead, retain staff, develop programmes, etc. for the well being, health and quality of life of individual victims and survivors.

In 2006, CRC commissioned research entitled “Who Cares for the Carers?”³ as a result of an awareness of the isolation and loneliness felt by carers, which was identified by groups working with victims and survivors. The findings of this report showed that the carers involved in the study displayed:

- High levels of burn out and stress.
- Levels of emotional exhaustion were found to be 43% higher than the threshold for high burn out.
- Financial difficulties for both carer and victim and physical difficulties regarding mobility for those caring for injured/disabled.

The Victims Unit (OFMDFM) provided further resources to develop befriending and volunteering across the victims sector using CRC’s development grant scheme. CRC’s Victims Team have been working with victims and survivors groups to identify where support can be provided within the scheme to support and assist carers, those injured/bereaved and those lonely and feeling isolated and/or forgotten.

Arising from our work with many people who have suffered directly from violence, we believe strongly in the need to minimise re-traumatisation. Victims and survivors should not be passive observers and it is therefore crucial that mechanisms are put in place to protect and support their diverse range of needs in coming forward. Support and resources are central.

Remembering and Forgetting our Violent Relationships and their Consequences

Facing the past and not facing the past both carry serious risks. The very act of systematically engaging with violent and/or unjust events in the past will undoubtedly reveal aspects of reality of which we were previously ignorant or which we understandably may not wish to acknowledge. This will be very disturbing, and it is to be anticipated that many will prefer to avoid these revelations altogether. Because behind the euphemism of 'conflict', 'troubles' or even 'war' lies fear, injury and trauma as well as courage, resilience and heroism. Furthermore, the consultative group is asked to revisit events to which society as a whole does not have a simple relationship. Even where we experienced conflict at a distance, we often found ourselves sympathising, applauding or even acting in support of actions which would be considered crimes in any normal civic context or outside the universal norms which prevented violence in the post war period in Europe. A process which brings us face to face with such past, may raise as many questions of 'us' as it answers about 'them'.

By its nature, conflict is also an experience characterised by different 'sides' and by differing experiences in different local and political communities. After conflicts between states, people usually experience and remember apart under separate jurisdictions. After wars where there is a clear winner, the winner can dictate the shape and form of public memory. The particular challenge of our situation is that we find ourselves together, in shared government, without a means for any 'side' to determine what should be acknowledged and remembered.

It is to be anticipated, that our parties and sides to conflict will wish to remember, above all, the heroism, courage and sacrifice of our/their own; the deaths of those close to us and the cause which generated and justified the violence. We will also have a tendency to underplay the atrocities of conflict stemming from those with whom we identify, preferring to offer explanations or to regret rather than to acknowledge damage, harm and injury, accept responsibility for our actions or even to seek forgiveness.

In our context where people from many backgrounds are seeking to live together in a peaceful shared future, these 'normal' desires and tendencies pose serious challenges. Dealing with the past carries with it the real risk of a descent into mutual recrimination. Indeed without thought it could be literally merciless. An unwillingness to acknowledge that acts committed were wrong and an inability to acknowledge any responsibility for actions may also leave a sense of many being embittered, resentful and angry and without any assurance that it cannot happen again.

The decision to address the past can therefore only be taken having acknowledged that there are also good reasons for not doing so. But for those who participated directly, and especially for those who lost loved ones or were physically and/or psychologically injured, these are not experiences which can be forgotten. Television and modern technology have robbed us of the possibility of forgetting. Too many of us know too much to pretend. Denial and avoidance will not solve our predicament: instead they represent a choice to seethe and resent in private. In the view of CRC, an open society, where so much is already known and where there is no mechanism to control the flow of information, cannot hope to avoid the journey towards self-knowledge. Our predicament is not whether we remember this past, but how we remember and acknowledge it, so that our complex story is used as a platform from which to build a common, shared and better future for all. Precisely because the story will be told, CRC believes that a steadfast determination to acknowledge injury and suffering is preferable to attempted denial of the experience of so many or a pretence that the past had no consequences, or is of no relevance to our relations into the future. We must prepare to face and look at unpalatable aspects of the past rather than make the disastrous mistake of turning truth-tellers into a danger to public stability.

All of this will require leadership, courage and honesty from our politicians, civic leaders and the British and Irish Governments and a context of an assured shared future. The violence in our past is not a model for the future but an experience to avoid repeating. The NI conflict shook the very foundation of our society and its impact will be felt for many years to come. The ultimate overarching principle of any investigation into the past must be 'Never Again', and as part of this commitment it is important that the process itself does not itself create further conflict or division. Progress on dealing with the past can only be made in this context, where a decision has been reached by all political parties that what happened in the past, is indeed, in the past. The purpose of facing the past is not to fuel recrimination but to find a justice which restores. No investigation of the past will be possible, if it is a cover for blame and counter blame. The atmosphere and purpose of any investigation into the past should be one of sadness and tragedy, not one of recrimination and vengeance. Above all our explorations must place the suffering of those caught in the middle at its centre rather than seek primarily to vindicate the actions of any party or person. Via admission and acknowledgement our society collectively commits itself to never allowing these atrocities to happen again and commits itself to shared goals of mutual understanding and justice. A refusal to engage in this process because of worries that truth telling will create greater resentment may be well-founded, but it leaves the future of this society at serious risk.

Facing the past in Northern Ireland will be profoundly painful. It is the experience of CRC that many acts of violence and injustice are regarded by those who committed them as acts forced on them by the actions of others. The cause of conflict and injustice remains absolutely contested, although there is a strong tendency to blame 'our opponents'. Thus many republicans find the cause of

conflict in British actions going back many centuries and repeated in more recent decades while many unionists blame republican willingness to act violently outside the law in pursuit of political ends. Others blame discrimination, partition, the glorification of violence in Irish history or the introduction of harsh security measures in response to civil rights. CRC's work with groups on the ground provides it with the opportunity to hear these views first hand - there is never any consensus.

CRC believes that it is unlikely that any investigation of the past will be able to finally reach consensus on these matters, although it may be possible to identify where ongoing issues, arising from any or all of these explanations, could be addressed to ensure that they do not continue to act on future generations with the bitter force of the past.

Whatever the cause, acts of violence, atrocities and injustice were perpetrated and justified in Northern Ireland and do not count as acceptable or normal in any western democracy or moral system. A serious investigation of our past must wrestle with murder, torture, mass slaughter of the unarmed, the killing of civilians by the security forces, death and injury of emergency service personnel, abduction, 'ethnic cleansing', the effects of paramilitarism, collusion of the state with terrorism, disappearance, robbery, extortion and routine assault and terror, internment, and impact and costs for communities and statutory agencies. Any serious investigation of the past must also expose how the legacy still affects Northern Ireland and its conflict transformation process – costs for the injured, for the families of the bereaved, for the next generation brought up in the shadow of fear and injustice, for communities, for the institutions of law, and for bystanders who quietly took sides in the justice of this or that killing or atrocity or abuse of power and batted down the hatches in the hope that it would all go away. There should be an admission that the whole society, at its different levels, has participated in both the hatreds and injuries of the past.

Definitions

There are many discussions and difficulties around defining who is a 'real', 'perceived' or 'legitimate' victim. This was evident at CRC's recent conference for groups working with victims and survivors where there were differences of opinion between both the political representative panel and participants about 'innocent' victims and the hierarchy of victims. CRC understands the sensitivities and anxieties many people have around the issue of defining 'legitimate' victims but we strongly believe that the process cannot be delayed because of lack of consensus around definitions without putting on hold the healing of our society. Indeed the nub of the dispute about causes of conflict is reflected in our difficulties in acknowledging certain people as victims, because to do so would appear to justify their cause. CRC is convinced that a delay justified by an absence of consensus will only further alienate communities and prolong bad community relations.

While the experiences of victims and survivors form the primary evidence of tragedy and are central to any discussion of compensation and support, CRC believes that an investigation of the past must link personal and family experience with organisational and institutional policies and actions and with the context of wider social and political support for antagonism and hostility. CRC believes that the stories and experiences of victims and survivors are vital if we are to create a truly human context in dealing with the past. However for the full picture about our past to be acknowledged there is a need to engage the whole of wider society. In coming to conclusions about practical steps to be taken, CRC believes that the consultative group should make recommendations for the whole of society as well as making specific recommendations for particular sections or institutions of our society.

Our past will continue to shape our future for a very long time. From our own work, we know that many of those classed as victims and survivors will not come forward in an orderly or preordained manner, but in accordance with their own journeys and decisions. We know from our own experience that new cases are continually coming before us, not only through trans-generational issues but victims who have suffered first hand. Some only now feel able to come forward to talk about their experiences and seek help and support. No time-limited mechanism can cope with the complexity of human reality. It is therefore crucial that the consultative group acknowledge the evolving reality of our present and recommend long-term actions. CRC believes that the steps recommended by the review group should include aspects with an organic timeframe rather than rely on a rigid organised process bound by dates and cut off points, which could prevent new opportunities for healing and assistance and produce barriers to reconciliation.

Commitment and Leadership

Without leadership in its true sense – people prepared to take action because it is necessary rather than because it is easy or popular – this process will fail. It would be a terrible outcome indeed if ideas presented in good faith by many vulnerable and honest people are dismissed or left hanging because of political wrangling.

The initiative to establish a consultative group on the past came from the Secretary of State under Direct Rule and we understand that the final report will be presented to the NIO for consideration. In the light of devolution and a new shared government committed to “a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland”, CRC believes that the origins of the task should not preclude the devolved Assembly engaging actively with the recommendations of the consultative group and committing to acting on them where possible. Noting and shelving, or even disowning a report will leave the process incomplete and discredit the work and commitment of those who contributed to the process. This includes an obligation to provide adequate resources.

The actions of public figures will set the tone in deciding how important the process of healing is for our society. We know that the Assembly will be involved in the consultation under a number of guises i.e. various party delegations are meeting with members of the group and contributing to the debate. The commitment of the Assembly to acknowledge and address the recommendations will set a course for the rest of society. We believe that elected members are duty bound to show leadership in this matter, to debate the issue fairly and with sensitivity and to show evidence that the violence and conflict in the past have indeed been confined to the past. Failure to undertake this task will convey its own message. Tackling this issue will be a crucial piece of the jigsaw of peace building.

Existing work

We in CRC do not want to replicate what already exists. The Consultative group already acknowledges the existence of a wide range of work already commenced. CRC is supportive of work already undertaken by groups, in particular the work of Healing Through Remembering (HTR). Their suggestions form a useful template of options, and while there are other aspects to be considered such work is based on long consideration and reflection.

CRC urge the consultative group to examine CRC's latest research 'Hearing the Voices – sharing perspectives in the Victim/survivor Sector'⁴. Within this report a number of important issues are explored with victims and survivors such as acknowledgement and society, relationships, commemoration, memorialisation, and the trans-generational dimension of the conflict.

We are also aware of good practice in facing the past in many groups across Northern Ireland. A number of groups have engaged in community enquiries. Others have established wide ranging research projects, to collect and collate personal victim narratives, to enable their stories to be heard, for the living memory to be put on record and to embrace such recollections in the advancement towards community healing, growth in confidence and the empowerment of victims and survivors. We have listed a number of these models of good practice in the Appendices for reference.

Some Suggestions for Progress

Not everything can be accomplished in one move. But some things can be started and others brought to a conclusion. CRC is of the view that those things that can be done, should be done, rather than waiting for a utopian moment of perfection.

We are aware that many in our society are interested in contributing to this consultation, however there is a legitimate fear that this will result in 'another' report with more recommendations that will never be implemented. People are

not so much consultation weary as 'inaction' weary. This report must be published and, as far as possible, its recommendations should be tangible and deliverable.

- **Commission/Oversight Body**

We do not believe that the past will be 'dealt with' in a single step. CRC recommends the setting up of a small but widely cast standing Commission that will regularly report on the progress our society has made towards the goal of a society at peace. Such a body would make recommendations on new steps to be taken as society matures, ensuring that the process of dealing with the past is measured, appropriate and open ended and removing any fears that the truth can be buried for ever.

The Commission should be publicly supported but clearly independent of political interference and with its own resources and support. It would be accountable and recruited through an open appointment process.

- **Process**

CRC would like to see an open process shaped by many organisations and people. We have recently heard concerns voiced that the process and recommendations have already been pre-determined by government officials. CRC believes that the consultative group must be visibly independent and not subject to overtly political interference. Honesty, integrity and transparency are crucial values in a climate of suspicion. Honest differences earn greater respect rather than insincere compromises.

- **Principles**

Northern Ireland has its own unique circumstances and it is important that the final recommendations are not forced to be an inappropriate exact replica of any one particular model from another society in conflict. We need a tailored model. At the same time, CRC believes that it is absolutely vital that all recommendations are compliant with universal norms of democracy, human rights principles and the rule of law and that the recommendations contribute to building a society built on these principles into the future.

- **Options for Truth Recovery**

CRC believes the search for truth forms an important part of the reconciliation process and must be an integral part of how we as a society deal with the legacy of our past.

However, there is no easy road to recovering truth. Evidence is often incomplete. Many people and agencies need to form part of a truth recovery

process and the value of the process will change depending on participation. The role of the state remains a critical question, as well as the capacity of any independent inquiry to insist on co-operation from any party, including government. The role of non-state organisations and governments outside the jurisdiction also presents serious problems.

No existing model of truth recovery fits the specific circumstances of NI. Truth recovery options should not be confused or confined within the structures of truth commission(s). In examining this option, the Council came to the view that to proceed on a Truth Recovery Commission based process would suppress and restrict other valuable processes to be pursued.

However the opportunity to find out the facts about what happened to a loved one is profoundly important. We therefore view a truth recovery process as an opportunity to provide a voice to the many victims who need to be heard, and the chance to devise an independent version of the past separate from political interests.

We have heard differing reactions to current attempts to aid truth recovery. Some see the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) as the first time that some families have had the opportunity to find out the truth as to what happened their loved ones, while others complain that it re-opens the trauma of what happened to their family member/s without final resolution. We also note the Chief Constables recent concern that inquiries into past investigations etc. have the potential to constrain his officers and therefore impact negatively on police operational planning for the future. Clearly this is not a simple or clearcut process.

CRC also acknowledges the impact of some community-based narratives mostly based on public storytelling. While this has clearly been important for those participating, we have some concerns that 'single identity' projects, on their own, fail to bridge the gap between victims and those who victimised them and may even deepen the cleft. There is a potential, that outside a universal process of storytelling, that concentrated or isolated story telling processes serve to reinforce a locally persuasive interpretation of events outside of a wider context. At the same time, there is an opportunity to gather together some of these different processes and begin to place them into relationship with one another. CRC has always taken the long-term approach to reconciliation and healing, and local narratives provide an important base from which to start work towards a complex history big enough to allow the participation of all.

Having considered existing practice and drawing on the options presented by Healing Through Remembering (HTR)⁵, CRC came to the conclusion that no single model will provide an easy answer. The task is not to design a perfect process, but to suggest the best way to reconcile the requirements of truth, peace and justice for the future.

As a result, we are convinced that doing nothing is NOT an option. On the other hand, we believe that a South African-style truth commission would be ineffective, given the different political circumstances of Northern Ireland and the absence of any effective mechanism to compel or incentivise evidence—giving by people directly involved in violence. We do not believe that a process should assume a collective political will to tell the unvarnished truth about the past in Northern Ireland.

Having said that, CRC believes that opportunities exist for a real process of storytelling in public. Such a victim-centred approach could use a number of different mechanisms to engage with individuals, groups and communities. It is important that barriers to engagement are minimised and encouragement is given to hear new voices that have previously felt unable to come forward. Audits should be carried out of what exists and gaps identified to assist a targeted approach to communities previously left unheard; it is important that all voices and stories are heard and an important task will be to find ways of encouraging people to come forward.

Appropriate counselling should be made available to reduce and minimise any re-traumatisation. Furthermore, an important aspect of this approach is to ensure there is a clear understanding of what this approach will achieve. It will be imperative to manage the expectations of all participants. It should be made clear before and during the process if any evidence comes forward which may have criminal consequences it will be passed to the appropriate authorities.

Alongside such a community led process, we are also convinced that a useful role could be played by 'a Commission of Historical Clarification'. The commission's aim would be to address the roles played by key actors and institutions in the conflict, in the context of universal norms of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This would support the view of ensuring that the past is never repeated and that a useable narrative is developed, including for the teaching of 'the troubles' as history, on which a shared future can be built. This would be a discrete project and the membership should include social scientists and historians, as well as reconciliation practitioners, so as to guarantee impartiality while bringing to bear expertise and experience.

This approach would complement the parallel process of community truth-telling, with the latter providing 'raw material' for the former and the former providing an overarching normative context for the latter.

Justice is not reserved for a few high profile cases but must be accessible to everyone. With this in mind we also support the continuation of current processes e.g. HET and investigations by the Police Ombudsman and the conclusion of existing enquires. In discussion, we came to the conclusion that prosecutions for particular crimes should remain an open option. The Good Friday Agreement has already set a limit of two years on the time to be served for acts committed

before 10 April 1998, and a further downward revision might reduce the possibility that trials become the focus of further recrimination. Ten years on, the purpose of such trials is no longer punishment, but a commitment to acknowledge wrong done and to ensure that the concept of justice is not set aside too easily.

- **Day of Reflection**

Rituals of remembrance are important if we are to establish a sense of common ownership of the past and to offer an opportunity for the whole of society to participate in an event that collectively remembers and reflects. We are mindful that there are mixed feelings towards a public day of reflection, particularly from victims and survivors - who are concerned that a public day of reflection would add to the trauma and hurt already experienced on a daily basis.

Earlier this year, CRC supported HTR's 'Private Day of Reflection'. We believe that this reflection event is an opportunity for the whole of society to reflect on the tragedies of our history but importantly it provides a public focus to work towards rebuilding our society and communities. CRC would envisage the development and strengthening of this reflection event over a period of time, with adequate resources. If this day were to take on a more official tone, care must be taken to ensure that it is inclusive and sensitive. The involvement of any particular person will have to be completely voluntary and non-coercive.

CRC would welcome a recommendation on the promotion and development of a public day of reflection.

- **Living Memory**

Much work has already been done in documenting the lost lives⁶ of Northern Ireland's violence. CRC has supported the work of Jane Leonard⁷ in the Ulster Museum on memorials and conflict in Ireland. Through the PEACE III programme, we will continue to advance this work.

Both national and local Museums should be actively encouraged and supported to tell the story of division, conflict and memory from many angles. Such projects could apply the hard rules of evidence and the importance of experience and memory. Public museums should be tasked to ensure that archiving and curation is comprehensive and, as far as possible, based on objective evidence. Differences should be seen as an opportunity for inquiry and debate not a reason for denial and avoidance. Only in this way can people be encouraged to engage with the past as a moving and dynamic reality for contest and question rather than as a heavy burden where only politically correct responses are encouraged.

CRC therefore urges the consultative group to make a recommendation that ensures current memories and experiences are recorded and held. The living

museum should constantly evolve as new information and stories become available. Outreach work with communities and stakeholders could form an important aspect of this initiative to ensure ownership and engagement across society.

- **Education**

CRC's vision of education is one where the opportunities for meeting, sharing and collaboration are maximised. It is vital that the work of the consultative group is not ignored or left without analysis but taken into account in devising curricula for schools and in training teachers. There is an immediate relevance in this work for History, Politics, Religious Education, Art, Citizenship and Sociology.

CRC also believes that material derived from a thorough examination of the past should be accessible to schools learning across traditional boundaries and alongside one another. While it is important to develop materials appropriate to different ages, we believe that this element of the consultative group's work could have significant long term impact and build significantly on work to engage different commemorative issues in history such as 1916 or the Plantation of Ulster.

- **The Consequences of Doing Nothing**

Doing nothing does not mean that nothing happens. Silence has been tried before in Ireland – and it was too often festering rather than golden. Communities and political communities will continue to harbour bitterness. The pervasive influence of 'them' and 'us' will remain. Politics will continue to be a tug of war between enemies not a partnership between equals. Above all, victims with their experiences of injury and hurt, are turned into a danger rather than honoured as those who suffered directly from our inability to make peace.

The task is no longer truce but transformation. Our society needs recommendations that continue the current conflict transformation process – if a vision of a better future is to be delivered then there must be an official, long-term regional peace plan for Northern Ireland.

- **A Regional Peace Plan**

CRC believes that the recommendations of this consultative group should be integrated into a wider peace and recovery programme, identifying a series of actions for society. Northern Ireland has benefited enormously from financial support from Europe in the form of Peace money, but also from wider international support. This financial support has targeted reconciliation and economic initiatives aimed at increasing trust building and developing economic prosperity. Northern Ireland is now about to benefit from the last round of Peace

money in Peace III and it is imperative that an exit strategy and sustainability strategy is in place to continue much of the good work undertaken.

Those who were most acutely affected by violence – victims and those at interfaces – have the most to gain. But unless we learn from our past, the habits of violence and exclusion threaten to spill over into new areas as new people from other backgrounds arrive here and racism appears to rise.

“A Shared Future”⁸, developed under Direct Rule, formed for the first time a central commitment from government to tackle the divisions in our community with key departmental commitments with corresponding action plans. It was an important starting point. This group, along with the critical arrival of devolved government make a better and more comprehensive regional plan achievable. It is important the principles and action plans of this strategy are continued – at government, community and voluntary and individual level. CRC urges the consultative group to examine the final Programme for Government upon its release and make recommendations to strengthen its commitment to improving societal relations on a cross-departmental basis - community and race relations principles and actions must be a central part of this overarching vision.

¹ CRC uses the term “we” to correspond to the collective responsibility for everyone living and working in NI including those in positions of authority within society including Government(s), Politicians, Police and all institutions, to deal with NI’s troubled past. Everyone in society has a responsibility that the horrors of the past should not happen again.

² Section 75 and Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 came into force on the 01 January 2000 and placed a statutory obligation on public authorities in carrying out their various functions relating to Northern Ireland.

³ “Who Cares for the Carers? – A study into issues affecting carers of victims of the NI conflict, published in March 2006 by CRC and undertaken by CRC, QE5 Consultancy and HRS Consultancy. (Included as an appendix to CRC’s Response)

⁴ Sara Templer and Dr Katy Radford were commissioned by CRC to undertake research into the opportunities and challenges victims and survivors face in the context of developing shared working in terms of policy and practice. Published: October 2007

⁵ Healing Through Remembering is a cross-community project **with a** range of individual members holding different political perspectives, views and opinions. HTR has worked over the last 7 years and have determined how should people remember and deal with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland to support individual and

collective contributions to the healing of the wounds of society. HTR has 5 areas of work: Day of Reflection, Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement, Network of Commemoration, Living Memorial Museum and Collective Storytelling.

⁶ Lost Lives –The Stories of the men, women and children who died as a result of the Northern Ireland troubles, David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney and Chris Thornton, Mainstream Publishing Company, 1999

⁷ Memorials to the Casualties of Conflict Northern Ireland 1969 to 1997 by Jane Leonard, published by CRC and Arts Council of NI, November 1997

⁸ A Shared Future – Policy & Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland, OFMDFM, published in March 2005, www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk/