

# ENGAGEMENT DOCUMENT

## Future Relationship Conversations

## Context for Conversations



HOLYWELL  
TRUST



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# 1

## WELCOME

Holywell Trust will deliver the Future Relationship Conversations project to engage with the whole community – with a particular focus on those who identify, or have identified, as Protestant, unionist or loyalist – on attitudes to possible alternative future relationships and constitutional arrangements, including on which arrangements might be most acceptable and which might best hold people to this island. This will be done through a series of engagements, informed by this document, that will lead to focused research to be launched at a final conference. Holywell Trust is taking a facilitative role in the process and does not have a preferred outcome on the constitutional issue other than enhancing the discussion by providing accurate and informed information.

There is a need, and growing desire across communities, to have a conversation on the future constitutional status of Northern Ireland and Ireland. The conversation needs to be broad, encompassing all future possibilities. We want to engage with the community, to begin to remove uncertainty and move the discussion beyond the normal identity focused assumptions.

Brexit has added an extra dimension to the conversation and has made the possibility of a border poll more likely alongside the ongoing calls for independence from many in Scotland. The Brexit process has also clearly demonstrated the dangers in holding referendums with limited information on the outcome of decisions.

We are convinced that if people have been informed and engaged on issues, and have the opportunity to shape and inform debate, that the impact of the conversations will be less divisive in local communities.

We look forward to the positively focused conversations and engagement that will be held through the project.

**Holywell Trust, Future Relationship Conversations Team**

## 2

# POSSIBILITIES

There are a number of constitutional possibilities for this place that form part of the Future Relationship Conversations. These include, but are not limited to, those listed below:

- Status Quo - no change - constitutional position remains the same.
- United Ireland
- Independent Northern Ireland
- Break up of United Kingdom
- Federalised United Kingdom
- Renegotiated United Kingdom
- Joint sovereignty/authority of Northern Ireland - Dublin & London
- Consociational arrangement

For the specific options available and included in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement see page 5.

The following are links for further information on the context and future possibilities.

Background explainer:

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/irish-reunification>

Context: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/irish-studies/civic-space/>

Constitutional considerations: <https://blog-iacl-aidc.org/irish-unification/2020/3/12/irish-re-unification-perspectives-from-elsewhere>

Federations: <http://www.forumfed.org/countries/>

A federal UK?: <http://www.forumfed.org/publications/scottish-independence-referendum-towards-federal-moment-united-kingdom-number-39/>

Why federate?: [https://adambrown.info/p/notes/lijphart\\_patterns\\_of\\_democracy](https://adambrown.info/p/notes/lijphart_patterns_of_democracy)

## 2

What is meant by federalism?: [http://www.on-federalism.eu/attachments/169\\_download.pdf](http://www.on-federalism.eu/attachments/169_download.pdf)

What is meant by consociationalism?:  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/consociationalism>

Learning from German reunification: <https://blog-iacl-aidc.org/irish-unification/2020/3/17/ksili5aepm89kpx421dcveah72hx2>

How regional government went wrong in England:  
<https://labourlist.org/2018/12/john-denham-how-new-labour-failed-englands-deprived-regions/>

Independence for Ulster?: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/colm-t%C3%B3ib%C3%ADn-the-north-must-become-an-independent-eu-state-1.3010252> / <https://www.martenscentre.eu/blog/doesnt-independent-northern-ireland-deserve-chance/>

# 3

## FACTUAL CONTEXT

The following are extracts relevant to the conversation from the following documents:

- Belfast/Good Friday Agreement
- NI Act 1998
- Bunreacht na hÉireann (Irish Constitution)
- Ireland/N. Ireland Protocol

## Belfast/Good Friday Agreement

### CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1. The participants endorse the commitment made by the British and Irish Governments that, in a new British-Irish Agreement replacing the Anglo- Irish Agreement, they will:

(i) recognise the legitimacy of whatever choice is freely exercised by a majority of the people of Northern Ireland with regard to its status, whether they prefer to continue to support the Union with Great Britain or a sovereign united Ireland;

(ii) recognise that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively and without external impediment, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish, accepting that this right must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland;

# 3

## Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (Cont.)

(iii) acknowledge that while a substantial section of the people in Northern Ireland share the legitimate wish of a majority of the people of the island of Ireland for a united Ireland, the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, freely exercised and legitimate, is to maintain the Union and, accordingly, that Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom reflects and relies upon that wish; and that it would be wrong to make any change in the status of Northern Ireland save with the consent of a majority of its people;

(iv) affirm that if, in the future, the people of the island of Ireland exercise their right of self-determination on the basis set out in sections (i) and (ii) above to bring about a united Ireland, it will be a binding obligation on both Governments to introduce and support in their respective Parliaments legislation to give effect to that wish;

(v) affirm that whatever choice is freely exercised by a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, the power of the sovereign government with jurisdiction there shall be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions and shall be founded on the principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities;

(vi) recognise the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland.

# 3

## NI Act (1998)

### 1 Status of Northern Ireland.

(1) It is hereby declared that Northern Ireland in its entirety remains part of the United Kingdom and shall not cease to be so without the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland voting in a poll held for the purposes of this section in accordance with Schedule 1.

(2) But if the wish expressed by a majority in such a poll is that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland, the Secretary of State shall lay before Parliament such proposals to give effect to that wish as may be agreed between Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of Ireland.

### Schedule 1

1 The Secretary of State may by order direct the holding of a poll for the purposes of section 1 on a date specified in the order.

2 Subject to paragraph 3, the Secretary of State shall exercise the power under paragraph 1 if at any time it appears likely to him that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland.

3 The Secretary of State shall not make an order under paragraph 1 earlier than seven years after the holding of a previous poll under this Schedule.

4(1) An order under this Schedule directing the holding of a poll shall specify—

- (a) the persons entitled to vote; and
- (b) the question or questions to be asked.

(2) An order—

- (a) may include any other provision about the poll which the Secretary of State thinks expedient (including the creation of criminal offences); and
- (b) may apply (with or without modification) any provision of, or made under, any enactment.



# 3

## Bunreacht na hÉireann (Irish Constitution)

### ARTICLE 2

It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish Nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland. Furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.

### ARTICLE 3

1 It is the firm will of the Irish nation, in harmony and friendship, to unite all the people who share the territory of the island of Ireland, in all the diversity of their identities and traditions, recognising that a united Ireland shall be brought about only by peaceful means with the consent of a majority of the people, democratically expressed, in both jurisdictions in the island. Until then, the laws enacted by the Parliament established by this Constitution shall have the like area and extent of application as the laws enacted by the Parliament that existed immediately before the coming into operation of this Constitution.

2 Institutions with executive powers and functions that are shared between those jurisdictions may be established by their respective responsible authorities for stated purposes and may exercise powers and functions in respect of all or any part of the island.

# 3

## Ireland/N. Ireland Protocol

### Article 1 Objectives

1. This Protocol is without prejudice to the provisions of the 1998 Agreement in respect of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland and the principle of consent, which provides that any change in that status can only be made with the consent of a majority of its people.
2. This Protocol respects the essential State functions and territorial integrity of the United Kingdom.
3. This Protocol sets out arrangements necessary to address the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland, to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation, to avoid a hard border and to protect the 1998 Agreement in all its dimensions.

# 4

## FAQS

### (1) What is the Future Relationship Conversations project?

Holywell Trust will deliver the Future Relationship Conversations project which will engage with the whole community, with a particular focus on those who identify, or have identified, as Protestant, unionist or loyalist', on what future relationships and constitutional arrangements might be for people on this island.

### (2) Can you tell me more about Holywell Trust?

Holywell Trust is a community relations organisation based at the heart of Derry/Londonderry. Holywell Trust was established in Derry/Londonderry in 1988. Since that time we have been working to support local people to have a voice and influence on decisions affecting their lives. Holywell is a community relations/community development organisation committed to positively transforming the lives of local people through addressing interpersonal and societal challenges.

Some aims of Holywell Trust include:

- To facilitate the process of healing within and between people so that we may move forward as whole, interdependent individuals.
- To initiate projects in the community which reflect the synergy of community and personal development.
- To provide forums for discussion and to focus on action arising from these discussions.
- To encourage individual and civic transformation through partnership, innovation and the development of a new enabling vision for the North West.

## 4

### (3) What is Holywell Trust's position on the constitutional question - why is the organisation delivering this project?

Holywell Trust is taking a facilitative role in the process and does not have a preferred outcome on the constitutional issue other than enhancing the discussion and debate by providing accurate and informed information. Holywell is not about pushing a particular political agenda OR developing a rationale for a 'shared island' or a 'united Ireland'.

### (4) Who is involved in the project?

The project has an Advisory Group:

- Eamonn Deane
- Brian Dougherty
- Seamus Farrell
- Colin Harvey
- Helen Henderson
- Maureen Hetherington
- Charmain Jones

The team that will lead on the engagement are:

- Craig Barr
- Gerard Deane
- Paul Gosling

Additional support will be provided by Lisa Clements.

# 4

## (5) What will the Future Relationship Conversations Project do?

The Future Relationship Conversations project will have a number of interconnected elements:

**Advisory Group** - this group will oversee the development and delivery of the project. Their primary role will be to develop a discussion/engagement document - a short piece written in accessible language that will outline all possible future arrangements for this island.

**Engagement** - a number of groups will be invited to participate in the project through direct engagement. There will also be a number of public sessions held.

Each session, which will attract 10-20 people, will be held under the Chatham House rule to allow for an open conversation. Meetings to be held in community venues adhering to all social distancing requirements or online through the Zoom platform. In advance of each session groups the discussion/engagement document will be shared to allow people to gather their thoughts. It is our intention to commission research on a number of the themes arising from the discussions.

**Research** - we will engage researchers to carry out independent, robust research into 4 themes arising from the engagement sessions.

**Research Publication & Conference** - the four research papers will be presented at a final conference in Derry/Londonderry in September 2021. This conference will be open for all to attend and will be targeted at those who have taken part in the engagement sessions and decision makers.

## 4

### **(6) How can I be involved in the project?**

You can get involved through:

- Involvement with any of the range of organisations invited to take part in the project.
- Attendance at public engagement sessions.
- Participation in research elements of the project (to be determined based on methodologies to be proposed by prospective researchers).
- Conference attendance and active participation.

### **(7) What is the commitment being asked of project participants?**

The commitment will vary by participants. We are keen to hear from a wide range of people. The activities of the project are detailed in the answer to Q. 6.

### **(8) What will happen with the information or opinions that I share through the project?**

The information shared by participants in the project will be used in a number of ways:

- To help to commission research.
- To inform the research commissioned.
- To form part of the overall report of the project.

The project will be operated under The Chatham House rule so no information will be directly attributed to any individual.

### **(9) Who will be carrying out the research elements of the project?**

The researchers for the project have yet to be appointed. This will be done following the engagement element of the project through an open tender process.

## 4

### **(10) What happens at the end of this project?**

At the end of the project an overall project report will be produced. This will outline the work of the project, the research carried out etc.

This in turn will be shared with government departments, political parties, community organisations etc. to share the learning gathered through the project.

### **(11) Who is this project for - what is the target audience?**

The project hopes to engage with the wider community and hear from anyone who is interested in the topic. We are particularly keen to hear from members of the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community whose voice on these issues is not often heard or articulated.

### **(12) Our commitments to participants beyond this project - outputs, outcomes and timescales.**

Holywell Trust has made no commitments beyond the delivery of this project that we hope to have completed by the end of September 2021. Obviously the constitutional future of this place is a key peacebuilding and community relations issue that we will no doubt continue to examine.

### **(13) Dissemination of results - how and where this will be presented? How will it be used?**

The research carried out through the project will be presented at a final project conference. The final report of the project will be shared as widely as possible.

### **(14) Will my name be attributed to my comments?**

The project will be delivered under The Chatham House Rule. Your name will not be attributed to your comments but may appear in project reports. There is also the option to remain anonymous.

## 4

### (15) How does this project connect to other initiatives and conversations?

Where possible our project will connect with other relevant initiatives and conversations. We are fully aware that our project must be aware of and have influence on other work that is underway or planned in this field.

### (16) My question hasn't been answered, how can I get in touch with the project?

Holywell Trust can be reached through:

**Email:** [hello@holywelltrust.com](mailto:hello@holywelltrust.com)

**Phone:** (028) 7126 1941

**Post:** Holywell DiverseCity Community Partnership, 10-12 Bishop Street,  
Derry/Londonderry, BT48 6PW

**Web:** [www.holywelltrust.com](http://www.holywelltrust.com)



# 5

## PROJECT PRINCIPLES

### About Holywell Trust

Holywell Trust is a community relations organisation based at the heart of Derry/Londonderry. Holywell Trust was established in Derry/Londonderry in 1988. Since that time we have been working to support local people to have a voice and influence on decisions affecting their lives. Holywell is a community relations/community development organisation committed to positively transforming the lives of local people through addressing interpersonal and societal challenges.

Some aims of Holywell Trust include:

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- To provide forums for discussion and to focus on action arising from these discussions.
- To encourage individual and civic transformation through partnership, innovation and the development of a new enabling vision for the North West.

Holywell is not about pushing a particular political agenda OR developing a rationale for a 'shared island' or a 'united Ireland'.

### Commitment on the part of Holywell:

- Holywell commits to working with integrity; honesty and transparency;
  - Holywell will be clear at all times about the aims and objectives of the project and the outcomes.
  - Openness as to what the project is about, what is involved, and who is involved.
  - Keeping participants informed throughout the duration of the project.
- Inform participants what will happen with any research, literature, papers, articles that may come about as a result of the project.
- Respect for anonymity and confidentiality.
- Encourage risk-taking but do no harm.

## 5

- Appreciation that trust needs to be built.
- Acknowledge that power relations that may exist between facilitators and participants and what steps will be taken to ensure balance.
- Respect the rights and dignity of each person involved in the project.
- Appreciate the right of the participant to withdraw at any given point.
- Actively pursue a culture of understanding and a strengthening of friendly relationships, while recognising and being sensitive in our approach towards past hurts.

### **Commitment on the part of Individuals who engage in the project:**

Holywell Trust asks the following of the people who chose to engage with the project.

- Come as an individual and not as the representative of a group or organisation.
- No political point-scoring.
- Respect the confidentiality of others in the group – all elements of the programme will be held under the Chatham House Rule.
- Respect different opinions and points of views.
- Take responsibility for what you say or don't say in the group.
- Engage in active listening skills.

### **Ethical Guidelines for both Holywell and Participants:**

- Be open and generous to other narratives/stories.
- Be flexible in the approach to our shared history – accepting there are multiple historical perspectives, viewpoints and interpretations of history that come from who we are and how we have been shaped (our culture and traditions).
- No blame and shame; rather a willingness to accept that everyone comes with a lived experience that has shaped and defined them.

# 6

## QUESTIONS WE ARE ASKING

1. What is your reaction to this engagement document?
2. What are your fears, hopes and expectations in relation to the conversations that are taking place around the constitutional arrangements for the island?
3. In the future, how can we collectively hold this conversation in an inclusive manner?
4. Do you feel that your views are well represented in the public debate already?
5. Is there any research that you would like to see carried out that would deepen your understanding of the issue?
6. Would you like to continue to be involved in this conversation?



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