

Blueprint for Ireland

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Foreword

This pamphlet is written without formal references or footnotes. There are few facts and figures to weigh down the reader. It is not an academic paper but it does draw on multiple sources in conventional print and online. The present pamphlet is based on observation of and response to political events and over the last 50 years, and on private discussions and interactions within groups and with individuals. Two recent publications, however, have been particularly pertinent and timely sources. Richard Humphreys (2018) *Beyond the Border: the Good Friday Agreement and Irish unity after Brexit*, Merrion Press, Kildare, deals with legal and constitutional issues. Paul Gosling (2018) *A new Ireland: a ten point plan?*, Paul Gosling: www.paulgosling.net deals largely with economic issues related to Irish unity but also considers how to reconcile unionism and the southern electorate to the concept of a new Ireland. This pamphlet was near completion before either book appeared and it has a wider scope. However, some ideas presented here occur in either one or other of these books or in other places. This pamphlet contributes by bringing together these ideas in a more cohesive and complete plan for others to take up, rip apart and reassemble. The Summary facilitates the less patient reader.

Summary

Northern and Southern electorates are poorly served by current political parties: recent referenda demonstrated growing impatience with conservative nationalism and unionism, whilst Brexit renewed demands for a referendum on an ill-defined idea of Irish unity and demonstrated the frailty of the EU and the UK. Aspirations for a more liberal, pluralist Ireland with transparent governance, mature economy and sustainable politics are frustrated by political party affiliations and management. Both jurisdictions face enduring, common economic, social and environmental problems as well as having shared interests such as a love of place, culture, education and, most crucially, family interests, security and well-being. Traditional identities and animosities prevent progress across the island as a whole but they are also fluid and can be accommodated within a single jurisdiction based on consensus and rights, such that causes of past divisions cease to be relevant. In the Blueprint for Ireland both Northern Ireland and the present Republic of Ireland cease to exist in their current form, and are merged under a new constitution guaranteeing the continuing devolved government of people of Northern Ireland/Ulster, and parallel structures in the remaining Irish provinces, supported by county and metropolitan councils. Elected representatives from the four provinces would also comprise the national parliament of Ireland. Ireland would recognise the rights of all identities and, in particular, accept reciprocity in rights and entitlements between citizens of the UK and Ireland. Only this constitutional arrangement removes the basis for continued conflict and any conceivable threat to minority identities. It complies with the Good Friday Agreement which provides a basis for consensual agreement of a shared future as well as a mechanism for constitutional change triggered by a perception that change is embraced by a majority of the NI electorate. A detailed, draft constitution should be drawn up by an evidence based Forum comprising constitutional lawyers from both current jurisdictions ensuring that the proposition is independent of present political parties. Assuming both electorates adopt a single, new constitution, unionist and nationalist/republican parties would be required to dissolve, with politicians forming new all-island parties along conventional left-right politics, funded directly by government subject to strict criteria and scrutiny. Government, upper and lower houses of parliament, political parties, elected representatives and an expanded electorate should have clear responsibilities and be subject to penalties for non-compliance, to avoid past abuses and issues. A new constitution would also be expected to provide continuing expression of links with the UK, for example in re-joining the Commonwealth, and an increased international role, such as joining NATO, as well as continued membership of the EU. Unionists must decide whether they engage with the process in order to ensure the new constitution reflects their interests and aspirations or risk the possibility of unity based on a nationalist agenda by default as a consequence of changing demography. Republicans have to decide whether they stand aside to allow an independent process leading to a new constitution, or continue along current lines running the risk of antagonising moderate nationalist as well as unionist opinion, delaying if not precluding unity. The future of Ireland and the balance of power lies with the remaining part of the Irish population, the 'third' identity, which must engage fully in the process of constitutional reform if they want to live in a modern democracy which engages with the future rather than dwells in the past. The process of constitutional change requires the vision, abilities and energy of new leaders and activists from throughout the island evident in recent social reforms.

Introduction

1. Global issues will dominate the politics and daily living of all people more and more in the 21st century. Growth of the human population and demand for resources, combined with shortages arising from climate change, have already started to overshadow national interests and regional politics. The largest world powers, the USA, Russia, India and China, and alliances between countries, principally the EU, will seek to protect their interests and greater quality of life for their people by monopolising access to resources and markets, and sharing intellectual property selectively. Successful alliances will be built on mutually beneficial collaborations between countries with shared intelligence, ideals and objectives. Fragmentation of alliances and disputes between states, arising from the pursuit of national and regional ideals, as in the Middle East, will frustrate the wider aspirations of a fair distribution of resources, justice and sustainability. European political focus currently diverges from the high ideals on which the EU was founded, and is jeopardized by national and regional interests in general, and control of external and internal immigration, in particular. The political, social and economic successes and the international standing of the UK, for example, may be sacrificed for the sake of imagined economic advantages inherent in restoring border and immigration control. Vocal minorities have pushed their agenda to the fore sweeping aside debate, negotiation and consensus regardless of the consequences for others. Nationalism has triumphed, albeit narrowly, in an EU referendum where most people did not know what they were voting for or against and where debate and truth were early casualties. Scottish nationalism, rebuffed in a similarly flawed referendum, will surely have its day given the gulf in political attitudes between northern and southern Britain.
2. Nowhere demonstrates division and lost opportunity better than Ireland. Whether the basis of conflict in Ireland is imperialism, identity, religious and cultural division, or class, is irrelevant if the outcomes are injustice, poor governance, poverty and emigration. Whilst any preparedness and commitment to violence remains, as it surely does, Ireland has little chance of addressing the historical problems with which it is beset. The 1998 Good Friday Agreement was a staging post leading to a position where violence is limited and the various factions within Northern Ireland should work in collaboration, and in collaboration with the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, to define a better future for all the people of 'these islands'. If talking constitutes collaboration, the intervening years have been a success but it is difficult to see what good has emerged other than a gradual realisation that the political and religious establishments in both jurisdictions in Ireland have lost the trust of major parts of their respective electorates. The intermittent and sustained collapse of government in Northern Ireland was predictable given the demise of more moderate forms of unionism and nationalism and the oscillating mutual interests and vetoes held by the dominant, extreme parties. The demographic and social changes that have occurred in the Republic of Ireland, so clearly demonstrated by recent referenda on social and moral issues, have not been matched by changes in the political parties or the religious establishment. Contrition is not enough. The inertia, apparent in both jurisdictions, however, is not the fault of present-day politicians but an inevitable consequence of Ireland's political structures and history.
3. Disengagement with democracy based on general disillusionment of an electorate is a significant threat to Ireland, but it is also a global trend. There is a worldwide imperative to

address this issue but it is likely there is no panacea that will address all such circumstances. Solutions to the loss of human rights under authoritarian regimes most probably has to be dealt with, within those countries. There are common consequences of unsatisfactory, undemocratic government, some of which have been and continue to be apparent in Ireland. The economic realities for many people in both jurisdictions of Ireland are unemployment, low income levels and emigration leading to loss of identity, low self-esteem and social isolation. Disadvantage ultimately leads to an ambience of violence, organised crime and disaffection, protest, civil unrest and terrorism.

4. If the people of Ireland, north and south, are to overcome their shared economic and social problems and succeed in realising their aspirations nationally and internationally, they must embrace change. There is evidence that the disaffected voters on both sides of the border, are ready for change, but this is frustrated by the inability of politicians to present any vision for the future and the means with which to move in a new direction. The origins of the major political parties in both The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, is closely identified with particular historical events in the early 20th century, such that they preclude much-needed change within Irish nationalism, north and south, and Ulster unionism in the north, a threefold Mexican standoff. Depressingly little has changed as political generations age to be replaced by younger cohorts mouthing the same rhetoric. To succeed in a political career in a divided society, politicians must take sides and adopt approved positions. Various attempts to create new parties have failed in both jurisdictions largely because they are trapped by prevailing historical divisions and ideologies, policed by 'grass roots' opinions and vested interests.
5. Professional politicians, therefore, are unable to express a new vision for the future governance of Ireland as a whole. Others are similarly bound by their professional or cultural identities: for example, political scientists and academic historians engage in analyses of events and people but seldom argue for a new direction of travel; journalistic principles proffer detachment, subject to the need to sell print, but the focus is on the smaller issues and human interest rather than the bigger picture; and, lawyers are the copy editors of constitutions and the law, but seldom provide the underlying inspiration for either. Apathy, fear and constraints of time, experience and capability, facilitate those who profit from historical conflicts, lawlessness and poverty.
6. Ireland, however, has a relatively well-educated population showing great ability and imagination, with many enjoying successes and providing distinguished service in both public and private sectors, nationally and internationally. The people of Northern Ireland and the Republic contribute good disproportionately to global business, science and technology, health, education, the arts and sport, and, ironically, humanitarian causes. Yet these very same people shy away from the issue of living well together on this island, and together, addressing the challenges of the 21st century.
7. The impetus for political change throughout Ireland must come from without current political parties and the academics, journalists, economists and other professionals on which they depend and depend on them. It must emerge as a mass movement demanding real reform in every aspect of the political life of both jurisdictions as well as a solution that encompasses the rights, interests and well-being of all people living in Ireland, north and south, and political change and justice, over the threat of violence and the complete removal of the causes of conflict. Northern Ireland and The Republic of Ireland are not there yet.

8. People and events can derail any process of change. Setting out agreed goals and aspirations, no matter how unrealistic or unlikely at the outset, provides for continuity and ensures momentum for change to occur. Agreed principles directed at the common good, rather than vagueness, evasion, flag-waving and defence of vested interests, must form the basis of any movement seeking radical change. The ability to see issues from the perspective of those holding opposing views, and to act accordingly, is the most vital skill in reaching a consensus where no side of the argument is allowed to dominate and everyone gains something they hold dear. The Good Friday Agreement is a point on the road which bought time, now largely squandered by people and events. There are positive lessons to be learnt from the 1998 Belfast Agreement but, equally, political cul-de-sacs and potholes, to be avoided. The Good Friday Agreement reflects the positions and priorities of the main political parties involved in the discussions leading up to 1998. The lesson to be taken from it after 20 years, is that the Good Friday Agreement as it stands, is an inadequate basis for long term resolution of conflict in Ireland, good government in Northern Ireland and the relationships among the governments of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It is time for wider interests to be involved, meaning that anyone regardless of background or position, is entitled to express a view regarding the governance of both jurisdictions, their relationship and how they interact internationally. Ultimately, a blueprint will emerge that recognises a pluralist, more liberal, mature Ireland, yet reflects the traditional identities of people on the island as a whole. This is what is required to support good internal governance as well as international relationships, and, more specifically, the relationship between Ireland and the UK. The people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland must take control of their future rather than leaving it to increasingly irrelevant political parties.

Shared strengths and weaknesses

1. Ireland's history is one of immigration with successive influxes of people from across Europe followed by movement to and from Britain and Ireland, and continental Europe. Whilst long-established communities may be defined by their perceived origin or religion, modern Ireland is populated by people with diverse backgrounds, culture and ethnicity. The Irish do not fall neatly into those with a wholly British or Irish genealogy, each with a different version of history. Increasingly, the Irish cannot be defined by race or religion any more than by disability, gender or sexual orientation. There is also a much greater degree of mixing and culture than origin or identity suggest, and there are common traits which are scattered liberally across the people of both main identities in Northern Ireland and the Republic. The politically motivated religious migrations of the 16th and 17th centuries, for example, were predated by thousands of years of movement between western Britain and Ireland and followed by immigration from Europe, Asia and Africa which have added to the present ethnic, religious and cultural mix. It is probable that the basis of most immigration into Ireland was negative. Ireland is on the extremity of Europe, not a land of opportunity, at least for the masses, but a place where there was some political advantage or land available; bearable, albeit at someone else's expense, but not the preferred option. Underlying geology and prevailing climate suggests Ireland, in general, probably never has been rich in conventional terms and so lacks the enduringly wealthy families of Britain or continental Europe. The people of Ireland, thus,

are historically more uniform in class and wealth with fewer social barriers; this closeness combined with shared enthusiasms, leads to a relaxed rubbing of elbows of the well-off and the not so well-off. Wealth is temporary, cannot be taken to the grave and those acquiring it will soon be back to where they started. In recent decades, some have achieved extreme wealth widening the divide of rich and poor. For the most part, the general population regard the rich Irish empathetically if not concern, as the rich have it all to lose.

2. Irish classlessness is maintained through affability, banter, partying, a love of language and wit, and a shared sense of belonging. There is an exceptional regard for sport, music and dramatic arts, and education in general is held in high esteem valued in itself as well as a route to success. Difficult times were and still are endured because there is no other option, with many people and their families laughing and crying their way through life hoping for better times. Strangers are welcomed as if they are distant relatives and Irish emigrants maintain contact with home even after a lifetime or generations have passed. There is love of a flutter and a deal, combined with a strong work ethic. Pleasure is taken in another's success but there is some satisfaction when another's personal objectives have been realised and then lost. The come-uppance of the pompous and the powerful is appreciated universally amongst the Irish. These characteristics are not unique to the diverse people of Ireland but they bring them together, perhaps, most notably, when away from home. The gradual demise of church authority and attendance, once a hallmark of both Roman Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, has allowed the Irish to relax and be themselves. Religion has not been abandoned in Ireland but social and moral freedoms are being claimed. The Irish have learnt to enjoy themselves, albeit a guilt-ridden enjoyment.
3. Irish unionists became Ulster Unionists, whilst Irish nationalists split into parties based on acceptance or otherwise of the British and Irish Treaty of 1921. Subsequent events led to the present schisms in identity, north and south of the border. The prevailing view that everyone in the Republic is a Catholic and an Irish nationalist or republican is far from true even at elections. In the north, substantial numbers of supposed Protestant, loyalist unionists go missing come electoral times and many Ulster (never Northern Irish) unionists are happy to be Irish, British or both. Many are, above all, Ulstermen and women and proud of their heritage, for example, family signatories of the Ulster Covenant. Catholics and Protestants might describe themselves as Northern Irish, possibly as a result of the Good Friday Agreement or not to cause offence. The aftermath of the Brexit referendum has seen a major rise in number of both Northern Irish unionists and nationalists exercising their right to a Republic of Ireland passport, suggesting that aspects of their identity are not so rigid. However, identity should not be underestimated or trivialised. The Ulster identity in Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan is alive: post-partition, both Protestant and Catholics in these counties carried on as before identifying with Ulster and dismissing any suggestion that they become absorbed into any other province and the focus of their economies and relationships is in (London)Derry and Belfast, not Dublin, just as the southwest might look to Cork (City) or Galway (City). The interests of shared and unshared identities should be of equal importance in reaching a strong, sustainable and universal agreement by consensus. Further, identity is about the individual and is carried around. A British person living in France is no less British. Identity provides a strong sense of belonging and a basis for acting in the common good. Valuing and protecting one's own identity does not need to be at the expense of any other.

4. Political debate in stable, developed countries is driven by concerns such as access to high quality education and health care, economic issues, and freedoms and rights. Whilst these are undoubtedly major matters of concern in Northern Ireland and the Republic, politics in both jurisdictions are driven by constitutional issues. Contrary interpretations of the past and fear of political opponents gaining the upper hand reduce elections to tribal headcounts in Northern Ireland whilst in the Republic, there is pressure to enforce the historical principles on which the state was founded including a conservative, catholic position on ethical and social issues. There is competition for a conservative right of centre position and little consideration of those who digress from the conventional foundation story of The Republic. The interests of these main political parties *per se*, are thus of more importance to politicians than those of the people who elect them. The frustrations of both electorates due to their greater readiness to accept change, as well as a greater focus on material needs than is apparent in the political parties they are expected to vote for, have become more evident in the last decade. The immediate material requirements of employment, income, taxation, costs of living, healthcare and education are of greater significance to individuals and families throughout the island, than constitutional questions. The emphasis of Irish politics on abstract concepts of identity has led to tolerance of rural and urban deprivation amongst the most extreme in Europe. Flags do not put food on the table or put a fire in the hearth. Constitutional issues and politics detract from finding and implementing lasting economic, social and environmental solutions. There is a danger of increasing disengagement with party politics undermining the democratic process in both jurisdictions.
5. The value placed on education common throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic may reflect periods when access to education was denied, and the frequent aspiration of obtaining qualifications required to secure employment in the professions and public sector. Small countries with few natural resources depend on the character and abilities of their workforce, and, thus, must provide diverse, internationally competitive, educational opportunities for all. Education is also a great unifying force and the foundation of universal suffrage and democracy. The decades of abuse in education through neglect of the needs and rights of children, including direct physical and psychological maltreatment, resulted in a social and economic blight and is one of the great tragedies shared by communities throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The shared demand for high quality education in both jurisdictions is also a major asset which will serve the country well in a future that is freed from the historical constraints that continue to prevent Ireland from realising its full potential.
6. Ireland is a medium sized island lying on the north western edge of Europe. Much of the land is unsuitable for modern agriculture but the population remains largely rural and scattered. Soil fertility is highly variable and the climatic conditions reduce agricultural options further. Both jurisdictions have agricultural systems based on growing grass and keeping livestock. Both jurisdictions depend heavily on subsidies under CAP of the EU and would be severely compromised if these were removed. Cereal production is limited and there is a reliance on imported feeds primarily cereals and pulses. This was not always the case with much more mixed and varied agriculture prevailing into the middle part of the 20th century. There is no sign that Governments in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are interested in creating a more sustainable agricultural and food sector. Costs of public services and transport in rural areas are high. Land prices paradoxically remain high reflecting attachment to land for financial security as well as sentiment. Urbanisation, however, continues to increase with

a major focus in the east around Dublin and Belfast. Land and settlement abandonment affect central parts of the Republic of Ireland and western areas of Northern Ireland. Private sector activity, especially manufacturing, is comparatively weak, focussed in the east and likely to involve inward investment. Hence, development of financial services and manufacturing sectors is likely to depend on international economic parameters. Small jurisdictions, like small businesses find it difficult to create the bases of diverse, sustainable enterprises. The case for greater economic cooperation between small isolated units is obvious. Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland trade depends strongly on Great Britain. Many politicians in the former, argue that this is a major reason for maintaining Northern Ireland's status as part of the UK. Many politicians in Republic of Ireland also recognise the importance of Great Britain and the growing importance of Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement; both Northern Ireland and Great Britain are vital gateways to Europe for the Republic of Ireland, a position under threat since the Brexit referendum of 2016. The economies north and south of the border, are inextricably linked but under threat due to a referendum where neither had much influence on the outcome. One of the great ironies of the last 20 years has been that the Republic of Ireland has benefitted economically much more than Northern Ireland, creating a much greater imbalance north and south of the border. Nevertheless, the shared elements of these adjacent economies and their common problems, suggest that common policies and implementation will benefit both. The undesirability of extreme inequality in opportunity and wealth, applies at the national as well as the individual level.

7. People have always moved in and out of the island of Ireland from prehistory onwards but there is a particular preoccupation with emigration from the 19th century onwards when famine and then poverty created mass migration to Britain and America. Economic migration within Ireland and between Ireland and Britain continues and has resulted in depopulation of rural midland and western areas. In recent decades, depopulation has had a strong age bias with many leaving after completion of education or during early years of independence. Some return after retirement or periodically during upturns in the rural economy. As a consequence, older age classes are often over-represented in rural populations. People from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland relocating for economic reasons do not seem to discriminate much between settling in urban Ireland or in southern Britain or even Australia. Their willingness to return when it is economically possible suggests the Irish, north and south, have an attachment for home and the quality of life available there. They may bring back skills and experience as well as wealth. Net emigration, however, has a triple negative economic impact: it reduces economic opportunities and activity in Ireland, squanders the investment in skills and education of those who leave and do not return, and reduces future government revenues. It also undermines social cohesiveness and makes isolated, vulnerable people dependent on their state for care.
8. Despite strong church membership and attendance in the Republic of Ireland, and declarations of faith and high ethical and moral standards, political and financial corruption and physical and sexual abuse of children and other vulnerable people, were and may still be endemic. These transgressions cannot be disregarded even if offset by the many positive things which religious groups and individuals do in public life such as their charitable deeds. Successive scandals suggest there are inherent problems and have changed the views of many people with respect to the motivation of some politicians and business people, as well as the involvement of the Catholic Church in the provision of care and education in the Republic of

Ireland. Northern Ireland is also affected by the undesirable aspects of involvement of church interests in areas of education and care, reducing contacts between Catholics and Protestants, and questionable activities of some of its politicians, civil servants and business community. The majority of people who endeavour to uphold standards in their private and working lives abhor the activities of institutions and individuals who should be setting standards of behaviour, in both jurisdictions. It is not unreasonable to seek to expose and prosecute individuals who have let down their wider community and to hold accountable institutions that have allowed such to happen. This should also apply to people who have committed 'hate crimes' against minority groups based on race, ethnicity or religion, or crimes in the pursuit of constitutional change or preventing such change.

9. Politics in both parts of Ireland are congruent with identity embracing religious and cultural background. Voting in elections is as much a demonstration of identity as a demonstration of diverse, dynamic opinions. The rigidity of politics in Northern Ireland ensures a highly predictable outcome given the dominance of two diametrically opposite party ideologies each with a veto over the other, whilst the similarity in policies of the dominant parties in Republic of Ireland guarantees little change even if there is a change in the major party forming the government. Neither situation can ensure that political policies keep pace with changing circumstances or that a change of government brings about a significant change in policy. As a result, Ireland has political structures and parties that have no reason to change being bound by decades of rules and precedence, accountable to party grandees and electoral agents, and seeking electoral approval by appeals to their established constituencies i.e. the people who always turn out and vote for the same party out of loyalty. The bulk of the electorate, the majority, is disregarded as the party or parties in government constitute the largest minority. This situation pervades in Northern Ireland where one minority cancels out the other resulting in one propping up the other if and when they choose. There is growing dissatisfaction with an increasing number of eligible voters not registering, not voting or voting for marginal parties or independents never likely to be in government. Roughly a third of voters in Northern Ireland Assembly elections in 2017 did not vote. The figures for non-voting and the support for the two main parties are very similar in the Republic of Ireland. Whilst both jurisdictions can claim to be parliamentary democracies, they are very conservative structures which are not fit for purpose in a rapidly changing, highly competitive world where electorates are educated and increasingly well-informed. All four major political parties in Ireland have to decide whether to embrace change likely to bring about a dynamic democracy or to continue to protect their own historical standpoints. They have to decide whether to be constrained by history or develop modern, competing opinions and ideologies which allow a sophisticated electorate real choice and an ability to deal with changing circumstances.
10. Thus, there is much in common between the people and communities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Regard for place and communities, love of life and education and shared economic aspirations are compromised by historical issues and economic and cultural problems. There is no reason to assume that this dynamic will always be so if it is possible to satisfy issues of identity through a more consensual approach to relationships within Ireland and between Ireland and the UK. It is possible to focus more on the future and shared objectives, but this will require a consensus as well as time and considerable effort to overcome these difficulties.

Constitutional issues

1. Constitutional obsessions characterised both parts of Ireland in the 20th century and continue to be daily considerations, at least in Northern Ireland. The constitutional claim to the whole of the island of Ireland has been removed from the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland following the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Northern Ireland remains part of the UK. Its devolved government has been in existence from 1922 with periods of direct rule from Westminster during the last three decades of the 20th Century and, despite the 1998 agreement, the first two decades of this century. The period following the Good Friday Agreement has been punctuated by political deadlocks and walkouts and inbuilt vetoes ensuring neither unionist nor republican ideologies prevail. The corollary of this position is inevitable stagnation and stand-off and increasing political bitterness a long way from the hoped-for collaboration incorporating all shades of unionism and nationalism. The current position, dominated by a minority that is opposed to the existence of Northern Ireland and a minority that is solely concerned with securing British status, demonstrates an inability to make decisions, pettiness and hints of illegality, accompanied by disillusionment and disengagement of the NI electorate. In the background, inevitably, there is a fear that there will be a return to violence. Where politics is seen to be failing or lacking in direction, there will always be cynical and manipulative persons in the criminal margins willing to exploit the vulnerable and the young in the violent pursuit of constitutional change or defence of a constitutional position. Only an agreed and stable constitution supported by truly democratic representation and dynamic political structures, can spike the guns and disempower criminals masquerading as freedom fighters or defenders of the people.
2. The Good Friday Agreement is arguably a landmark on the road to a fully consensual constitutional agreement in Ireland, but it is clear that on its own, it cannot secure sustainable and effective government in Northern Ireland, and, hence, a stable basis for north-south and west-east structures. The fragility of the current Northern Ireland government affects the wider UK as well as the whole island of Ireland. The fundamental flaw in the Good Friday Agreement is the institutionalisation of sectarian politics, the necessity of politicians to declare their identity as unionists or nationalists, such that economic, educational, social, cultural and other non-constitutional issues become embroiled in the politics of division. Any attempt to break ranks is quashed by party enforcers. Whilst politicians are open to severe and continued criticism, not least by political journalists and commentators, and ultimately by historians, unionist and republican politicians are in effect prisoners of their own history and political structures and rules. Not an inch becomes not a hope, political inertia and breakdown of government. The Good Friday Agreement, however, outlines how constitutional change could come about and the process that led to the accord with its simultaneous referenda in both jurisdictions is a precedent which fully justifies the significance of the Agreement. It also led to a reduction in violence and a general appreciation of a shared history, recognition of the rights of both sides, the need for reconciliation and desire for peace. Thus, the Good Friday Agreement may be judged by history as a success, particularly if it leads to a greater consensus and a more sustained and positive outcome.
3. The constitutional position of Northern Ireland has become central in the politics of Brexit, both in the UK and in Ireland, and in the response of the EU to the imminent changes in its composition and future relationships with a former member state. The Good Friday

Agreement was based on the assumption of continued membership of the EU by both the UK and Republic of Ireland and, thus, is compromised by Brexit. Predictably, the main unionist party sides with Brexit, whilst republicans have discovered a new enthusiasm for the EU and a special status for Northern Ireland leaving it in limbo whereby it may be regarded as not fully in the UK and increasingly Irish through its continued association with the EU. The absenteeism of the main nationalist party, Sinn Fein, from the UK Parliament, however, ensures that only the dominant unionist voice is heard. The latter has been particularly strident despite being out of step with the Northern Ireland electorate, the majority of whom voted to stay in the EU. The positions of the EU and Republic of Ireland, and the government of the UK, seem irreconcilable: there cannot be frictionless trade across international borders with differential regulations and tariffs in different jurisdictions and there must be some degree of change in terms governing international trade as an EU state secedes from the EU, deal or no deal. Brexit, rightly or wrongly, has also been used as a fear factor potentially leading to a breakdown of law and order and a return to republican violence. Structures and people operating physical controls will become targets along an indefensible border, incentivised by money to be made from illicit goods and violence in the name of Ireland. A potential solution, a trading border in the Irish Sea, is resented by unionists and vetoed by the Democratic Unionist Party in a hung parliament. If Brexit is to be realised there are only two options: firstly, monitoring but not controlling trade across an open border of the EU with the UK and turning a blind eye to small scale illegal activity; or, changing the status of Northern Ireland such that it remains within the common trading area of the EU, the westernmost limit of which is the Irish Sea. Again, the opposition of the Democratic Unionist Party suggests the latter option is unlikely to be adopted. The eventual solution with respect to freedom of travel and trade across the Irish (EU) border, therefore, is likely to be a fudge. Brexit also led to the proposal of a border poll by Sinn Fein, despite no obvious satisfaction of the criteria required under the Good Friday Agreement leading many to question the motivation behind this proposal other than as another example of party interests taking precedent. Brexit repeatedly demonstrates the dominance of internal party politics in the pursuit of power over the interests of the wider electorate, in order to retain support and prevent party splits, thereby, putting party before country. This is not peculiar to the UK or Ireland and must be guarded against in any constitutional reforms. Constitutional reform, therefore, should not be a party political matter but a matter for all the people. Political parties should not be able to determine their own rules but, rather, must work within constitutional constraints laid down by the electorate as a whole.

4. Ulster Unionists, as provided for in the Anglo-Irish Treaty 1921, opted out of the Irish Free State (Agreement) Act 1922 leading to the partition of Ireland. Over the last 100 years there have been periods of civil unrest, notably from the late 1960s to the 1990s. It is difficult to overestimate the hurt and divisiveness of this period but there were periods of peace and progress and there were areas affected and not affected directly by violence. Past community relations generally were considerably better than at the height of the Troubles and even as things stand. The Good Friday Agreement has not re-established normality but it has taken the heat out of the situation and provided an opportunity to think again. Partition was brought about as a means of solving a wider issue: unionists were given an opt-out to facilitate an agreement between Irish nationalists and the British Government in the aftermath of a War of Independence in Ireland and World War I. In the minds of both British and Irish,

republicans and unionists, sacrifices were made and ground must be gained. It was perhaps inevitable that, in the early 1920s, there was no appetite for protracted discussions or more innovative solutions. Now, there is more time to decide whether Ireland continues with partition or retraces history to think again about how this island is governed more effectively given the changes that have taken place over the last 100 years. Continuing with partition, however, could lead to further periods of relative peace punctuated by further republican campaigns, thus perpetuating divisions amongst nationalist and unionist people. Reconciliation and living together are worthy objectives, but it is arguable that prolongation of partition will only increase the difficulty of effecting peaceful coexistence and prosperity in unionist and republican traditions.

5. Constitutional options can be summarised with respect to partition or no partition and variation in the level of internal arrangements under continued partition. Under partition, Northern Ireland might continue as a devolved jurisdiction within the UK, come under the direct rule of the UK government, become an independent state in its own right or form some link with another part of the UK, probably Scotland where there are strong cultural links and anti-Brexit sympathies. The latter option might be termed Dalriada. If partition was to end, constitutional arrangements could be based largely on the present constitution of the Irish Republic i.e. absorption of Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland, or integration of both current jurisdictions under a new constitution. This would be the Second Irish Republic, the first being derived from the Republic of Ireland Act 1949. The final option is co-dominion with Northern Ireland subject to both UK and Republic of Ireland governments.
6. A devolved Northern Ireland within the UK is the continuation of the present position with the Republic of Ireland as an independent state, and internal and cross-jurisdictional links implemented under the Good Friday Agreement. Assuming that some form of Brexit is brought in, the only change is the loss of the overarching link of the EU encompassing both the UK and the Republic of Ireland. It would be likely that people if not politicians would become increasingly disillusioned due to the erratic history of Stormont and non-functionality of north-south and east-west links. The latter emerge only occasionally as circumstances permit but cannot be said to have delivered growing cooperation, collaboration and reconciliation. Some unionists do not want north-south structures to work and some, maybe most, republicans do not want Northern Ireland to work. The cost of a devolved administration in Belfast and the subvention are unlikely to be met indefinitely by the UK government. The resulting reduced public expenditure with no commensurate increase in the private sector, low wages, and rising unemployment could lead to increased political violence and criminality. Perhaps the best outcome would be increased reliance on business and employment for skilled workers from Northern Ireland in the Republic of Ireland. This would depend on maintaining at least the current flow of traffic across an invisible border. On the unionist side there would be disillusionment with perceived unfair treatment from Westminster and growing bitterness that Northern Ireland is in fact economically dependent on Dublin. Some republicans whilst enjoying the discomfort of unionists, increasingly, would feel their identity poorly served. Shared declining standards of living and public services are likely to lead to increased civil unrest and, eventually, resumption of terrorist campaigns. Ineptitude and the inability or refusal of unionists and republicans to work together effectively in devolved government has disenfranchised and frustrated the Northern Ireland electorate. The Republic of Ireland is also not well served by instability north of the border and no benefit

from the time and money invested in building up cross border relationships in government and business. The stagnation of Northern politics is already matched south of the border with little sign of meaningful change. Whilst greater focus on 26 county affairs south of the border is understandable, it would sustain an unsatisfactory, and potentially volatile, constitutional *status quo* as well as an impoverished and difficult to police borderland.

7. Integration of NI within UK is already the preferred option of some unionists and part of the frustrated electorate. Under this structure, the Republic of Ireland would deal directly with London with regard to cross border matters. Representation of Northern Ireland would be through Westminster. Assuming elected republicans continue to refuse to take their seats, only unionist opinions would be heard. Northern Ireland interests are often promoted as special and different from the rest of the UK. There may be truth in this but Westminster at present takes on the great diversity of interests in England and Wales and the whole of the UK for non-devolved issues. There would also be some advantage to Northern Ireland in this approach with the application of the full range of professional expertise available in the UK Civil Service to Northern Ireland. The sporadic nature of devolution in Northern Ireland has led to a much weaker Northern Ireland Civil Service. Over the last 20 years Northern Ireland has lost professional expertise in its Civil Service, particularly in technical and scientific areas. The creation of special (political) advisors has further disempowered the Civil Service. A Westminster administration governing Northern Ireland directly could bring stability and professionalism to Northern Ireland, sadly lacking in recent decades. The obvious problem with this proposed constitutional arrangement would be the lack of local input into decisions which affect local services. Whilst direct rule might serve Northern Ireland well in the short term it is likely to have little chance of permanency. Recent UK administrations during periods of direct rule demonstrate little interest in anything other than a return to devolved rule. Like most Northern Irish politicians, Westminster does not want direct rule and is willing to squeeze Northern Ireland public expenditure in the mistaken view that the more the electorate complain, the more likely it is that local politicians will agree. It is difficult to see Northern Ireland prospering under direct rule long term. Many unionists would tolerate it on the grounds that it reinforces their identity. Republican attitudes could range from welcoming the demise of Stormont to blaming Westminster for declining services and living standards. As in the past some would regard violence as a justifiable response to the oppression by a colonial power. A Republic of Ireland Government, initially happy to deal with Westminster directly, might feel that things really have not progressed from the 1970s and are faced once again with policing the southern side of a contested border and a northern neighbour viewed with suspicion by most of their electorate.
8. Joint authority or co-dominion are constitutional rarities. Only republican sources show any interest in this approach to addressing the future of Northern Ireland and only as an interim position *en route* to unity. The idea is abhorrent to unionism and loyalist areas could erupt at the idea given their recent history of antipathy towards changes in the display of the Union Jack on public buildings and proposed control of 'traditional' bonfires. The option of joint authority seems unpopular generally as the main mechanisms for resolving the status of disputed territories are military or financial settlement. It is not likely that either might be applied to Northern Ireland. Interim joint authority in Northern Ireland might quickly backfire because unionism would be so opposed to the idea from the outset, even if they were in a minority. It might also be difficult for northern republicans to fall in behind the views of Dublin

based politicians any more than they would accept the decisions of London based politicians. This option, however, might well be a non-starter given the probable attitude of both UK and Republic of Ireland Governments with regards to who pays and who is in charge?

9. An independent Northern Ireland equivalent to the Republic of Ireland is occasionally mooted as a constitutional option. This may be attractive since it addresses a growing identity with Northern Ireland. It is not surprising that people born and raised in Northern Ireland see it as a place apart and identify with their fellow Northern Irish more than the British or Irish regardless of their religion. British and Irish live in and all around Northern Ireland and identifying with a region does not require exclusivity but it does it make it a viable, sustainable independent state. The only chance of an independent Northern Ireland prospering would be where all its people brought all their talents to the table setting aside past divisions and aspirations. This would seem unlikely given the strength of the aspiration to be part of either the UK, remaining British, or part of a unified Ireland, remaining Irish. An independent Northern Ireland raises interesting questions about the relationship between identity and governance. However, it takes more than a strongly held, shared view of identity to develop a stable, democratic, prosperous state. It also requires the acknowledgement, respect and acceptance of that identity by neighbours within and beyond borders. These conditions are unlikely to be present in an independent Northern Ireland. It is not an island but part of an island, economically dependent on its neighbours and its population is diverse embracing diametrically opposed views and identities.
10. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU by substantially more than voted for Brexit in the rest of the UK. The shared history and culture of north eastern Ireland and Scotland goes back to the postglacial settlement of north west Europe continuing to the present through shared economic histories, religious ideologies and allegiances, for example, football. It is possible to envisage a latter-day Dalriada incorporating Northern Ireland and Scotland with a parliament based, presumably, in Scotland and representatives discussing common problems from throughout both regions. It is not difficult to imagine a devolved administration or independent government presiding over a historical, culturally unique and beautiful region of Europe. Music and whiskey, craic and football, however, are insufficient bases for stable government and many of the issues regarding diversity of identity that would undermine an independent Northern Ireland would also plague Dalriada. The complications of Scots trying to exit the UK and Northern Irish unionists trying to remain in the UK, and the extra costs of government across the Irish Sea combined with the remoteness of isolated populations from central services, make Dalriada a romantic, but non-viable, option. The mooted bridge between Northern Ireland and Scotland is both impractical and unaffordable.
11. The option of a united Ireland is inherent in the policies of Irish republican and nationalist parties north and south of the border. It is the antithesis of the aspirations of unionists. The idea of a united Ireland, however, is just as vague as Brexit. Similarly, just what it is that unionists fear with respect to an all island state linked or not linked to the rest of the UK is no longer clear. For example, is it the fear of united Ireland itself that unionists fear or a fear of losing a valued connection to the rest of the UK? A united Ireland might mean different things to different people – physically the island, give or take some offshore islands, is a single unit. Perhaps it is possible to have unity with two jurisdictions under an overarching European structure? Perhaps a single unit might contain a number of sub-units? Regardless of the answer to these questions, the idea of a united Ireland remains vague, perhaps deliberately

so. The concept of an independent Scotland was put to a referendum with a singular view of what an independent Scotland might be like proffered by the Scottish Nationalist Party. The concept of Brexit at the UK wide referendum could not have been more elusive and the arguments deliberately evasive. The vote in Scotland was decisive and against change. The vote on Brexit was close with a marginal and unexpected vote for change. Two years have come and gone during which there have been exhaustive and inconclusive arguments about what Brexit will entail. A referendum on Irish unity based on an ill thought-out concept of unity without detail or prior, thorough consultation, almost certainly would be lost in Northern Ireland and also possibly in the Republic of Ireland with the likelihood that there would be no further movement for at least a generation. Any proposed constitution which does not recognise the right and sensitivities of all the people of this island might scrape a majority but result in chaos whereby a substantial minority would not identify with the outcome of a referendum, and threaten, if not show actual willingness, to fight for continued partition in some form. Ultimately, most people make sensible judgements based on identity and the delivery of rights, valued services and assets, but these have to be clearly spelt out.

12. Irish unity based on the incorporation of Northern Ireland into the present Republic of Ireland is unlikely to gain favour in the north or the south without some thought regarding political structures, human rights, services, finance etc. Even then, it would be a hard sell since it could be interpreted as a successful state taking on unsuccessful part of another state. There would be costs, not least the swallowing of pride and identity on the unionist side. It would create uncertainty and instability and, thus, would be resisted probably in a manner not that dissimilar from the early part of the 20th century. Politicians and the electorate in the Republic of Ireland would be fearful of taking in a large number of potential dissidents or incurring the costs of services they have become used to in Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom government on the other hand might be quite enthusiastic, in an understated kind of way, seizing the opportunity of offloading political trouble and, eventually, reducing public expenditure on a region regarded as a burden economically. Depending on which party is in power in Westminster, the UK government might regard the transfer of power in Northern Ireland as realisation of a long standing, unacknowledged objective. The absorption of Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland is also based on the fallacy that all is well in the latter and in little need of change other than some attempt to accommodate the north and its potentially antagonistic Protestants. Arguably, the south suffers from the same kind of economic, social and political problems as the north. Unless these common issues are addressed it is unlikely that any perceived take-over would be peaceful and successful. If Northern Ireland is to change, so must the Republic of Ireland.
13. The alternative approach to Irish unity is abandonment of both current jurisdictions and adoption of a new, all island constitution which reflects the aspirations and rights of all people living on the island. The 1916 Proclamation of an Irish Republic did not lead to an Irish Republic which was not enacted until 1949: thus, under this proposal, dissolution of the current Republic of Ireland would be followed by an all-island, Second Irish Republic. There is a Second Republic reform movement but this is restricted to the 26 counties of the present Republic and, thus, does not and cannot address the problems facing the whole island or, indeed, those within a 26 county context adequately. France has had five Republics since 1870, so it is not unusual for democracies to adapt and make constitutional changes. The Second Irish Republic would not be absorption of one state by the other, or even integration

based on cherry picking what goes on in the present jurisdictions, but an entirely new constitution. The principles on which this new constitution would be based, would be put before the electorates of both current jurisdictions through referenda, explicitly stating the new constitution. Such a process would build on the Good Friday Agreement and conceivably arrive at a consensual Ireland which guarantees the rights and interests of both major traditions and addresses institutional shortcomings in the present jurisdictions. Further, it is the only proposition that might simultaneously remove any justification for violence either in the pursuit of further constitutional change or to protect current political and sectarian interests. It would be essential to explore and assuage the concerns of all such interests in advance of drawing up a proposed constitution and any referendum. The process of political change becomes more than a simplistic vote and starts with identifying the issues and then addressing them in a manner that builds confidence, examines the referendum process, wins the referendum maximising support, and, finally, implements change effectively and, most of all, does so peacefully.

Reconciling nationalism, unionism and pluralism

1. There are three great traditions in Ireland: a dominant nationalist ideology, a unionist philosophy embracing the United Kingdom dominating but not exclusive to Northern Ireland, and a widespread but large minority characterised once as dissenters but in the latter part of the 20th century perhaps best regarded as comprising a broad group of people with a liberal, international outlook. This group often distance themselves from politics in both jurisdictions because they cannot identify with the political philosophies likely to form a government i.e. they accept the status quo but cannot contribute to it. Organising these modern dissenters could change Ireland as there seems to be a strong movement towards liberal ideals with respect to social issues. Referenda on same sex marriage, abortion rights and blasphemy, suggest this is true in the Republic of Ireland. However, a referendum on the constitutional structure of Ireland could be fought along entrenched sectarian politics with pressure on liberal opinion to fall in with either unionist or nationalist viewpoints. There is little hesitation to play on peoples' fears rather than to engage in debate and look for a more consensual approach.
2. Whilst opinion polls generally suggest a clear majority for Northern Ireland remaining in the UK, national and regional elections suggest a much narrower majority voting unionist, and census data suggest that a catholic/nationalist majority will be attained by 2021. Republican/nationalist parties have to decide how hard to push for an early referendum and how to get middle class catholic opinion on board rejecting unionist overtures regarding their perceived benefits of living in the UK. Unionist parties have to decide whether their best strategy is to resist any poll, or focus on middle class, catholic opinion. Unionism's other option is to negotiate a new Ireland in which the rights of unionists and their relationship with the UK are protected, since there is genuine expectation that a catholic and, hence, nationalist/republican majority is imminent. In the event of a yes/no referendum, however, there are likely to be few unionists voting to leave the UK and few nationalists voting against a united Ireland. The votes of liberal, pluralist dissenters could be the major determinant of whether there is a clear nationalist majority or there continues to be a marginal majority for

retaining the position of Northern Ireland in the UK. A marginal win for unionism would sustain the current constitutional position but likely only delay the inevitable. A marginal win for nationalism could lead to chaos and violence amongst loyalists and republicans: civil unrest along the lines of the flag dispute could escalate into conflict directed initially at catholic or nationalist/republican communities and structures, leading in turn to retaliation directed at the police and state infrastructure, continuing the cycle of violence and uneasy peace familiar from the War of Independence and foundation of Northern Ireland, onwards.

3. Nationalism/republican ideology must win a referendum on the position of Northern Ireland decisively, if there is to be any chance of a peaceful transition. Thus, a referendum must be based on a realistic view of what a new Ireland would hold for unionists and others who do not normally share the conventional nationalist viewpoint. This requires a protracted period in which, for example, the political and rights structures in a new Ireland are outlined clearly in principle, if not in detail. The uncertainty surrounding an ill-prepared referendum on the Irish border, such as the UK EU referendum in 2016, might fail nationalism or, worse, lead to a collapse of conventional politics and return to widespread violence. Unionists recognising the inevitability of a nationalist win, alternatively, could negotiate a constitutional agreement and guarantee of rights in a united Ireland from a position of strength. Given realism amongst nationalists from both jurisdictions, and unionists, there might be some shift in unionist voting habits at a referendum but not in sufficient numbers to make a real difference and push the vote for unity towards a 60% or 70% vote in favour. However, it would ensure the support of catholic voters who might waiver in their support of a united Ireland and the liberal pluralist part of the electorate who do not vote consistently in general elections but do so in referenda concerning political and social issues. The latter comprise around a third of the electorate in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Combining a small movement of unionist votes, and a more significant mobilisation of the dissenter vote, a 60-70% vote in favour of new constitution based seems attainable, if not likely. Concessions to unionists, however, will have to be significant if such a level of support is to be achieved. Nationalist/republican opinion should be willing to set aside some of their historical demands for a peaceful transition to their long held objective of a united Ireland.
4. The history of politics in Ireland is intimately entwined with violence and the threat of violence. The divisions and animosities running deep in Irish politics and cultural identity are a barrier to agreement encompassing all. A solution based on either a nationalist/republican or unionist ideology, no matter how carefully constructed or equitable, is likely to result in the maintenance of entrenched voting habits and fail to persuade the liberal pluralist voters to participate. Thus, any proposition subject to a referendum must not be identified closely with any existing political parties. This could be achieved through a forum comprising constitutional expertise and diverse opinion, nominated by the governments of Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and United Kingdom. A constitutional forum would have an independent, international chair, be supported by civil servants from both jurisdictions in Ireland, be able to co-opt additional members, take written evidence from all possible sources and complete its remit within a year of being set up. The forum would decide on the level of support in excess of 50% + 1 necessary to trigger constitutional change although this might be the threshold required under the Good Friday Agreement. The proposition in favour of constitutional change would take effect from the start of 2022. The parties and the electorates of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland would then decide whether or not

to support the proposition, much as in the run up to the Good Friday Agreement. The constitutional position of any party opting out from the process would be considered in final discussions leading to the publication of the final constitutional proposals placed simultaneously before the electorates of both jurisdictions.

5. It is a simplification to regard the ongoing divisions in Ireland as based solely on British versus Irish identities. Identities may reflect a particular constitutional stance as well as ethnicity, religion, culture and history. However, it is possible to have a constitutional view without the corresponding cultural interests or religious views. Further, a person might adopt multiple identities – British and Irish – whilst others might not regard themselves as either British or Irish. Both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are increasingly home to large numbers of people from very different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities. These may be short term residencies or span decades and many generations. Ireland is enriched by increased diversity and should provide for integration of immigrants, but all ethnic groups should enjoy the same opportunities as the British and Irish to live as they please within the law. Identity should be a matter of individual choice. If living in Ireland makes someone who regards themselves as Chinese no less Chinese, then someone who regards themselves as British is no less British and subject to the same laws and rights as someone regarding themselves as Irish, and vice versa. Nationalists, unionists and others, however, share common aspirations and should have the same opportunities to develop and live their lives as they wish. Nevertheless, there is a common respect for fundamental freedoms and an expectation that all are subject to the same laws. In finding an agreed Ireland, where unionist and nationalist identities can exist together and cease to be a basis of division, certain fundamental rights of both groups will need to be recognised. Similarly, the roughly one third of people in each jurisdiction who have opted out of politics must be reassured that their views and aspirations are also catered for in constitutional reform. They must be given a reason to engage with politics if a stand-off position in Northern Ireland is to be avoided and politics in the Republic of Ireland is to shift away from its Civil War origins.
6. The island of Ireland as a single independent state is a legitimate, long-held aspiration which is very strongly embedded amongst nationalists in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This alone as a basis for a new constitution would be very attractive to nationalists and republicans. There is also a strong identity with the historical Irish counties and the four provinces they comprise. Constitutional change which provides for influence at the provincial level is likely to be welcomed by nationalists, particularly in rural Ireland, with potential devolution of investment offsetting the gradual centralisation of political and economic power around Dublin. Human rights are a particular interest amongst people identifying as republicans and the Irish language and culture, and perhaps the arts in general, are well supported by nationalists. Irish nationalism once pursued international relationships which many would find embarrassing today, and thus would welcome a more overt internationalism embodied in a strong European ideology and wide recognition of human rights, free trade and international affiliations.
7. A change in the status of Northern Ireland will be regarded as a major sacrifice on behalf of the unionist population. Rightly, most unionists will expect to be able to retain their British citizenship and that this should also be available to their children and successive generations should they wish to have it. As is the case, free movement between the UK and Ireland and reciprocal arrangements for working rights, access to services and so on will need to be

maintained in perpetuity. Financial commitments such as pensions will have to be honoured and positive consideration must be given to the transfer of UK Government assets to the people of Northern Ireland. The unionist population would expect to continue their traditional culture and freedom of worship and would resist any attempt to impose an Irish catholic, nationalist agenda. They would expect a change in national symbols, flags and anthems. Elected representatives from the present Northern Ireland would sit in parliament in Dublin rather than London but devolved government would be expected to continue in Belfast with control over issues like education, health, infrastructure and policing. A regional government based in Belfast may also be required under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. Northern Irish Unionists have always had a strong identity with the province of Ulster and it could be argued that reunification of Ulster would be a principal gain for northern unionists and protestants and would also be welcome in Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan which have an uncomfortable position in a 26 county Republic comprising three other provinces. There are cultural ties linking protestants in these border counties with their counterparts in Northern Ireland and towns and cities along the border would regain cohesive hinterlands as well as control of infrastructure, services and water catchments. Historically unionism held internationalist views with regards to political and defence organisations. Thus, Ireland would continue as part of the EU in keeping with the result of the 2016 Referendum in Northern Ireland and the position of the present government of the Republic of Ireland. Ireland might re-join the Commonwealth forming political and cultural links with countries with large number of Irish migrants that would enhance Ireland's status beyond Europe. Unionists would welcome close collaboration between Irish and UK armed services and expect the latter to retain Irish regiments and recruit in Ireland. This might also be welcome in the UK which has difficulty meeting recruitment targets for its armed forces. Defence collaboration would be enhanced by Ireland joining NATO showing a tangible commitment to the defence of Europe and democratic ideology. Unionists, like many in the Republic of Ireland, would also expect stringent law enforcement and continued investigation and prosecution of politically motivated crime. They are sceptical of politicians with criminal convictions and paramilitary associations and empathise with their victims.

8. Democracy is not well-served by growing disengagement of an electorate. The non-unionist, non-nationalist component of the electorates of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, is heterogeneous and reasons for not voting are diverse. Referenda and opinion polls suggest that political, social, economic and environmental issues may be important factors, but where people feel disengaged from society, and see no prospect of change regardless of how they vote, they are not likely to vote. A constitutional change that brings a realistic prospect of change in government with meaningful choice, should be welcomed by this significant group of non-voters. A new constitution could prioritise individual freedom in social issues and prohibit pressure groups from interfering with individuals who are already under personal stress. This disparate group may welcome recognition that Ireland no longer comprises only British and Irish identities but numerous racial and ethnic groups as well as migrants from countries worldwide, and increased engagement in world issues. Commitment to human rights, international obligations and environmental issues may ensure support for a new constitution from the educated middle classes who do not vote at present.
9. Democratic politics requires more than one political party capable of winning a majority at a general election and thus forming a government capable of seeing through change. The

current position in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland suggests that as a result of schisms within nationalist/republican (4 parties) and unionist (2 parties) groups, no single party is likely to be able to form a majority government. The prospect of an inherent nationalist majority in the national assembly under a new constitution would be a powerful reason for unionists to resist the outcome of a constitutional referendum. Meaningful change and reconciliation often fails because of internal party structure and politics favouring the status quo. Given their indecisive and often erratic nature, coalitions involving bitter opponents are not likely to be able to form an effective government. The greater fundamental issues, however, require a much more radical solution. Were nationalists/republicans able to form a single unit they would dominate government continuously and for ever, excluding unionists from holding power in the national parliament. This would be just as unacceptable as the old Stormont government. Further, all the parties are based on the politics of the early part of the 20th century and their relevance, after major constitutional change, is highly questionable. There is no role for either nationalism/republicanism or unionism in an Ireland adopting a new, all-island constitution. If the electorates of both jurisdictions vote for constitutional change, all parties must dissolve and politicians should be free to form new, all Ireland parties, electing new leaders and developing new policies based on left, right and centrist social and economic policies. The constitutional position would be settled for the foreseeable future and new parties would be concerned largely with conventional, left-right politics focussing on the economy and provision of services as well as on meeting international commitments with regards to the environment, cooperation and trade.

Government of the people, by the people, for the people

1. The first decades of the 21st century have been characterised by a crisis in long-established democracies related to a rise in extremism internationally, and resistance to globalisation, particularly immigration, and centralisation. Populist politicians and autocrats have emerged as leaders in international politics undermining democratic structures and processes. Both the UK and Ireland have been affected by these trends through Brexit, the hardening of attitudes on migration elsewhere in Europe, and other uncertainties in international relationships, not least those involving trade with the US. Illiberal, right wing politics fronted by charismatic leaders are a threat domestically and internationally to any new structures proposed for the governance of Ireland and its relationship to the UK. The global crisis in democracy has come about primarily by complacency and a failure to restate and further refine universal suffrage, human rights and strong, transparent, democratic institutions, and cynical interventions by autocratic governments and individuals often abetted by powerful media interests. The democratic process from the electorate to government must be clearly defined in order to ensure effective management of all government areas of responsibility as well as address the difficult issues of identity, conflict resolution and reconciliation that are essential in a revitalised Ireland which encompass all the aspirations of all its people.
2. A written constitution as opposed to one embedded in the 'law of the land', is a necessity where people are insecure and uncertain about their future. A constitution should be accessible and written in plain and easily understood language. It should be agreed by the electorate but include a mechanism for change(s) proposed through government and by the

electorate. A legal education should not be necessary to understand a constitution, although an independent judiciary may interpret a constitution or identify where it is inadequate and requires change. Democracies are based on individual suffrage, freedoms and equality, all of which are often subject to qualification. One hundred years on from female suffrage in the UK there are still issues with respect to gender, sexual orientation, age, disability and treatment of law breakers. The electorate returns parliamentary representatives at one or more levels of government based on political parties, each supposedly with distinct and consistent policies. The electorate has the right to replace its representatives on a regular basis. Governments may have the right to change regulations and manage the affairs of government within certain limits but to make more substantial change, must bring forward new legislation which must pass through parliament having been scrutinised and revised to the satisfaction of elected representatives in one or more 'houses' or committees. The judiciary is responsible for interpretation and implementation of the law. Accountability and scrutiny of government may be achieved through other means, including sectoral ombudsmen and quangos. Government and the law must recognise the rights of a free press and broadcasting to gather and report information that might be critical of government and other state institutions. The media in turn is subject to the law as well as to codes of practice to ensure the electorate are well informed and are not misinformed.

3. Both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland use the single transferable vote system and this should continue under new constitutional arrangements. Universal suffrage should mean that the electorate is as inclusive as possible. Eligibility to vote should be on the basis of residency in Ireland including both UK and Irish citizens as well as other nationalities. In a reciprocal arrangement, Irish people living in the UK should be able to register as voters there. The electorate should balance older with younger voters: hence, there is a strong case to adopt the age of legal responsibility or consent as there is no upper limit in voting age. The age of consent varies in Ireland and the devolved regions of the UK. The age of consent is 16 throughout the UK and 17 in Ireland. In the UK, 16 year olds can join the armed forces whereas in Ireland recruits must be 18. Current voting age is 18 in all parts of the British Isles but many will not have an opportunity to vote until well into their twenties. Therefore, there is a strong case that the voting age should be lowered to 16. Expanding suffrage to younger voters would ensure that most first-time voters would be 17-19 years old at their first general election. Convicted felons have the right to vote in Ireland but not the UK despite legal judgement from the EU Court of Justice. Whilst there is political resistance to prisoner voting in elections and referenda, prisoners complete their sentences and continue to have rights throughout. They may have dependents and engagement in the political process may enable adjustment to a more acceptable and legal lifestyle on release. More than a third of the electorates of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland do not engage in general elections with a much greater proportion giving the polling station a wide berth during local elections. The vote on retention of the Irish Seanad engaged less than 40% of the electorate. There is a strong case that legislation on the conduct of elections should require all eligible people to register and to vote unless unable to do so through incapacity. Downloading verifiable electoral papers and returning postal votes by a particular date rather than electronic voting should become as easy as voting at a polling station. However, in every election, voters should be able to record a protest vote as 'none of these' interpretable as dissatisfaction with the candidates or indicative of an unfilled political ideology. Failure to register or use a vote should be

punishable by fixed but small fines payable to an Electoral Commission, or other body overseeing electoral processes and referenda. Secondary level education and immigrant induction should include electoral rights and civil responsibilities.

4. Parliamentary representatives have different opinions about who they represent, to whom they are responsible and what their role is. They are confused about whether they represent the portion of the electorate who voted for them, the wider electorate within their constituency or the wider, national population. Too many relegate the interests of their constituents below their own personal interests and answer only to party whips and leadership as a means of advancing their political careers. Under party policy, elected members use absenteeism as a means of protest, failing to fulfil a vital role of elected representatives, or withdraw from government in order to bring down government structures they do not agree with. Others toe the party line in order to enact policies that have minority support or block policies that would be supported by most of the electorate. Some simply adopt a low profile until the next election or use their privileged position for personal gain or nepotistic purposes. The result is a loss of confidence and respect for politicians and political structures, making Ireland vulnerable to populism and extremist views. Elected representatives must have a job description which requires them to attend the assembly to which they have been elected, represent the views and attend to the needs of all their constituents, and address the wider needs of the people of Ireland, living and to come. They should be prepared to consider the sincere views and facilitate the interests of people with whom they do not agree provided they are not unlawful. It cannot be assumed that elected politicians prioritise the interests of the country and a written job description will help restore the confidence in politics that is required nationally and within local government. Enforcement of the job description should involve fines on the individual and their party, and, where a breach of the law is suspected, through the legal system. Appointments of all political support staff should be subject to national employment legislation to protect against nepotism and exploitation of vulnerable, inexperienced workers and ensure fair employment and equality of opportunity.
5. The historical bases of political parties in both jurisdictions in Ireland hinders change towards a more stable and effective democracy where people share common objectives. Political parties are necessary in a successful parliamentary democracy since there must be some overarching philosophy which a significant number of people and, hence, their elected representatives, can support. A coalition of independent members is unlikely to develop sufficient common ideals or accept a leadership structure required to form a government. New parties may emerge in time, although the record of success of new parties in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is poor. Given an agreed constitutional change, parties based on nationalistic and unionist ideals, cease to be relevant and politicians will be required to establish political parties reflecting, for example, the socioeconomic spectrum. Concerns regarding political parties will remain, particularly in the wake of controversies surrounding misbehaviour of elected representatives, advisers, party officials and lobbyists, as well as questionable sources of party funding and misuse of social media. There may also be concern that the vestiges of nationalist and unionist party politics will remain influential. Government funding, therefore, should be the main source of funding for registered political parties, based on electoral support, supported only by fixed fees derived from individual party members. Parties would be incentivised to maintain and expand support from the electorate and avoid

unacceptable lapses in behaviour likely to result in a reduction in income. This system would avoid biases created by parties supported by affluent individuals, particular socioeconomic sectors and interests based outside Ireland. Funding would be expected to cover all areas of party expenditure and be audited tightly reducing parliamentary costs and avoiding escalating costs amongst competing parties associated with elections. Political parties would be prevented from overspending their income and would have to operate in all parts of Ireland and in rural and urban constituencies, ensuring representation across a diverse electorate. Management of funding for political parties would be the responsibility of the Electoral Commission and involve annual, independent scrutiny of finance and performance indicators such as attendance in assemblies, and responses to constituent issues. All data would be put into the public domain. An Electoral Commission would also oversee electoral and other political information and its dissemination, to ensure that material is attributable and factually correct, thus developing a new level of confidence in the political process and politicians.

6. The use of referenda in both current jurisdictions in Ireland is established as a means of effecting constitutional change and, in the case of the Good Friday Agreement, providing a sea-change not only in the politics of the whole island but in the mood and attitudes amongst both electorates. Referenda have played a significant role in changing Ireland and should continue to do so with regards to constitutional issues and, where appropriate, moral and ethical issues. A robust constitution developed during the process of change, however, should limit the need for further referenda.
7. It is reasonable to define the responsibilities of Government i.e. what it is for or what it should do for the people who elect it? Electorates often complain that the only time they see their representatives is at voting time whilst hard working representatives feel their efforts in helping constituents are unrecognised. Outlining what elected representatives and Government actually do for the public money they cost, strengthens the connection with the electorate and provides a basis for practical democratic structures. Definition of the responsibilities of Government also protects the people from short term decisions favouring popular areas of expenditure at the expense of less popular but none-the-less vital areas, particularly those affecting economic and environmental sustainability. Governments divide responsibilities into departments each with a budget. Yet there is strong evidence that there are synergies between, for example, education and economic growth, health and environment, and so on. Services may be provided by direct government expenditure or indirectly where government provides incentives for private investment or enters into a contract with a private provider. Regardless of how it is done, the national government is responsible for: providing the infrastructure and fiscal environment necessary for wealth creation; environmental quality, development and planning; regulation of housing, public buildings and space, places of work and agriculture; collection of taxes on income of individuals and corporate bodies and expenditure; health and education; legislation, the judicial system and policing; defence and security; culture, the arts and sport; and, overall well-being of all the people. Government is also the custodian of the constitution, and responsible for international relationships and role of the country.
8. Ireland has a small population and lies on the extremity of Europe. However, it has a significant history leading to the dispersal of people with Irish backgrounds around the world. The Irish make disproportionate contributions to the arts and sciences, medicine, industry and engineering, commerce and sport. No doubt this will continue and will be based on a well-

educated population with positive attitudes who have come to terms with their past and are developing a liberal, pluralist democracy. This will be Ireland's main contribution to the world and, thus, Ireland should play a full role in international organisations, most obviously the EU, devoted to similar ideals. Democratic structures, regrettably, are threatened militarily worldwide. Ireland, therefore, should support military alliances that defend a shared democratic ideology. Not only will this address Ireland's responsibility to speak up for what its people believe in, it will enhance its ability to resist internal and external threats. Promoting the ideals on which Ireland is founded should also be fostered through commitment to international organisations in the arts, culture and sport. Ireland has a reputation as a welcoming country and, thus, should provide opportunities for returning emigrants, and welcome and assist asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants. Their drive and experience will enrich all aspects of Irish life.

Governance of Ireland for the 21st century

1. Democracies normally comprise a central government and regional assemblies with paid, elected, constituency representatives. Central government retains powers related to national and international issues whilst regional government exerts control over areas of public concern and expenditure which due to regional differences based on history or culture, would benefit from regional control. Both central and regional tiers have money-raising powers but often the major part of funds for regional government are granted from central government. In addition, there may be local government (councils) presiding over delegated issues. The Republic of Ireland, unlike the UK, does not have a regional tier of government. The asymmetry inherent in the devolved UK government structure is problematic, often referred to as the Midlothian question: only Scottish representatives may vote on issues devolved to the Scottish Assembly but Scottish MPs can vote on the same issues arising in Westminster affecting only English constituencies. The erratic existence of the devolved Northern Ireland Government further illustrates the asymmetry and fragility of UK tiers of government. Local councils also receive their main funds from central government but may also have limited money-raising powers. Three tiers of government in an Ireland combining both current jurisdictions, may comprise county and metropolitan area-based councils within each of the four historical provinces, overseen by a central government. This avoids the Midlothian question and satisfies the Good Friday Agreement with regard to self-determination of the people of Northern Ireland. A three-tiered structure has the merit of being based on existing identities with counties and provinces and symmetry and uniformity throughout the island. Elected structures are supported by a professional civil service, or local government officials, where specialists and non-specialists provide advice and deliver government decisions as directed by the elected assemblies. This unelected branch of government (the Civil Service) also provides continuity and builds experience through successive governments.
2. Federalism is common in Europe and elsewhere, arising from historical and cultural differences, or geophysical isolation, insufficient to warrant separate national status. In Ireland, recognising government at provincial level should appeal to Ulster unionists re-establishing their domain to the original basis for their existence i.e. a distinctive status for

the nine northern counties with a provincial assembly based in Belfast. Comparable assemblies in the other three provinces, would also appeal to many in the west and south who feel remote from central government and subservient to the interests of a Dublin-based, national government. Issues such as health and education, culture, economic development, housing and planning, might benefit from control at provincial level based in Galway, Cork and Drogheda. Similarly, political oversight of civil policing would benefit from a federal structure with overarching structures to ensure financial and other efficiency. Major infrastructure and planning of major projects might be dealt with more appropriately at central government level, and local councils might retain aspects of planning where potential effects are likely to have limited impact. Whether a federal state represents a unified state or not is a moot point but balancing the sacrifice of powers to a central state with retention of powers within a region is a worthy compromise and should be regarded positively as both regional and national interests gain power. Germany, for example, has a federal structure with 16 states and is generally regarded as a unitary state within in the EU.

3. The Parliaments of both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have a lower house where members are elected at general elections at intervals of four years. The historical capital of Ireland is Dublin and it should continue to be the seat of central (national) Government in an agreed, all-island system of government. A future Commons or Lower House would be the main elected component of government, comprising multiple elected representatives from each constituency in proportion to the size of its electoral roll. The Head of State or President would invite the leader of the largest party to form a Government comprising a Prime Minister and Ministers with specific portfolios, and support of one or more parties. Elected representatives would elect Officers such as a Speaker, appoint committees, and agree standing orders and codes of practice. The lower house would initiate and consider new legislation and be able to make changes to existing legislation. It would also have budgetary responsibilities, overseeing government income and expenditure. This house would be the principal place where elected representatives, primarily the largest party not in Government, call government to account in the chamber with shadow appointments, but also in parliamentary committees paralleling each ministerial portfolio. Non-budgetary legislation would be passed to an upper house for further scrutiny and would consider suggested revisions of the latter. Ultimate authority would lie with the lower house.
4. The Republic of Ireland has an upper house of Parliament, the Senate or Seanad. The Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 abolished the corresponding chamber resulting in a long period where an elected lower house operated sporadically and there was no second chamber, undermining still further the opportunity for local opinion to influence decisions taken by Secretaries of State. The binary system continues at Westminster but rarely considers Northern Ireland legislation and the upper chamber is appointed with some remaining hereditary members. There is a strong case to reinstate this system in an all-island, central government, but this should be updated to meet present and future needs. Members of Senate should be elected at five year intervals such that the upper chamber comprises elected representatives based on a select list of candidates with a wide range of expertise reflecting the professions and other categories of employment, as well as wider interests reflecting societal diversity. The upper house or Senate would be charged with scrutinising non-budgetary policies and legislation passed to it by the lower house. Further, there should be an opportunity for the upper house to initiate legislation as it sees fit. The upper house would

be unable to block legislation received from the lower house but could make amendments. Elections to the upper house would be for a longer period than the Commons with elected members serving for a maximum of two five year periods.

5. Northern Ireland's present government is a devolved administration with certain areas of government reserved by Westminster. This is not quite equivalent to federal status as the powers and structures of the devolved governments vary. Further, Scotland and Wales but not England have regional assemblies. The Republic of Ireland has no history of provincial assemblies such that careful consideration is required to prepare for the definition and separation of the powers of provincial assemblies in Belfast, Cork, Galway and Drogheda, the largest centres of population in Ulster, Munster, Connacht and Leinster, respectively. Dublin is clearly the largest centre of population in the latter but it is the seat of central and local (metropolitan) government and dispersal of political power and its associated economic benefits arising from infrastructure and employment, is desirable. Two types of responsibility might lie with Provincial Assemblies. Firstly, services related to policing, health, welfare, education and culture. For example, there might be provincial differences in the promotion of the Irish language. Secondly, oversight of planning with regards to significant proposals, and environmental management which might impact regionally or locally but not be of national concern. Hence, local routes and main roads might be considered at this level but not major motorways or airports. However, provincial government may have views on the latter and they might also police the activities of local authorities with regards to planning affecting the immediate environment. Provincial assemblies should also have a remit to promote environmentally sustainable, economic activity within their jurisdictions, also taking on responsibility for designated areas including National Parks, expanding forestry and securing bog land and other critical habitats for future generations. Procedures in provincial governments would be modelled on central government with elections staggered one year after general elections to the latter. As in the case of the national government, Provincial governments would be formed by invitation to the leader of the largest party from the Head of State or President.
6. People interact with local Government or councils in a manner in which they do not with central government. Their responsibilities range from less pervasive planning proposals, and local road construction and maintenance to sanitation, waste disposal and recycling. Often appointed officers take on executive roles with elected councils dealing with more contentious issues and representation of their constituents. There is a more expansive role for local councils in Northern Ireland but basic principles underpinning councils seem similar in both jurisdictions such that they have a real democratic value and essential administrative role. Party politics dominate council chambers and might be regarded as a training school for politicians aspiring to election at provincial and central levels. Council elections occur at set intervals. In an all-island context County Councils of 100-200,000 people could be based on the historical counties and where necessary counties might be split or combined to form units where savings of scale could be obtained. There might also be situations where County Councils work together to provide certain services. Such a system caters for local identity as well as builds on historical structures and boundaries. However, the two major metropolitan areas of Dublin and Belfast do not rest easily with the county model. Belfast spreads across adjacent areas of Antrim and Down whilst Dublin City occupies most of Dublin county. Both cities have a history of being metropolitan councils and this should continue. Elsewhere, there

is a more complementary and shared relationship between town and county in, for example, Cork, Galway and (London)Derry City.

7. Governments raise money from taxation on income and expenditure of individuals and corporations. It may also expect individuals and corporations to pay for services provided such as electricity, transport, water, waste disposal, education and health. However, it may not be politically acceptable for people to pay directly for the essential or basic level of provision required with respect to education, health and care, economic development and environment. Raising money through taxation on expenditure directed at changing behaviour benefitting health and environment should be uncontroversial. Central government should be the main conduit for raising and directing money to all three tiers of government based on direct and indirect taxation. Provincial and local councils should also be able to raise additional but limited amounts of money as sanctioned by their electorates. The ability to pay should be a core principle and Government must avoid punitive taxation on property and land leading to abandonment and dereliction.
8. After 2019, the UK and, hence, Northern Ireland, will cease to be a member of the European Union. The electorate of Northern Ireland voted to remain within the EU. It seems likely that as a member of the EU, a single jurisdiction in Ireland would be accepted readily as a member of the EU, on the basis that Ireland is and will continue to be a member, and an expanded Ireland would accept the responsibilities associated with EU Directives. This would be familiar ground to electorates of current northern and southern administrations. In the wake of Brexit, whether there is agreement with the EU or not, the much earlier agreement of free movement between Britain and Ireland would continue. Trade arrangement within Ireland would cease to be an issue and trade between Britain and Ireland likely be easier to agree and police. The west east structures established under the Good Friday Agreement might also play a significant role ensuring trade and other issues are agreed on the basis of mutual benefit between two neighbouring countries with close ties of family, and a common history, language and culture. Shared interests in security, environment and economy are also very strong imperatives for close cooperation. This would be easier to discuss and agree trade and other relationships were the UK to reconsider its position regarding the EU but that seems unlikely. As the UK seeks to build up trade with the world beyond the EU, re-activation of Irish membership of the Commonwealth, might lead to additional economic, cultural and social opportunities for Ireland, as well as acknowledge historical and political allegiances.
9. The President or Head of State of the Republic of Ireland is elected every seven years from nominees from members of upper and lower houses of parliament or county councils. Whilst undoubtedly people of high distinction have fulfilled this role in the past, it is open to abuse due to party politics and the emergence of candidates who would not dignify what is an important constitutional position with an equally important ceremonial and international role. The prolonged media circus of recent elections adds costs whilst one-off elections involving a single position have also become vulnerable to distortion through the social media. Perhaps a better means of ensuring candidates of high achievement who are fully independent of party politics, would be to use Senate to identify suitable candidates and to invite nominations subject to agreed criteria. This would lead to a long list that then could be shortened to a handful of the most well-suited and willing candidates. The election would be based simply on the written biographies of the candidates short-listed, posted online and in newspapers, avoiding the potential biases and abuses of broadcast and social media. The

Queen is the current Head of State of Northern Ireland. Were Ireland to reactivate membership of the Commonwealth, there would be an option to invite the Queen to be Head of State in a fully independent, expanded Irish state under a new constitution. This might be very popular in Ulster and, perhaps elsewhere, especially if other suitable candidates for position of President do not emerge. However, the present Queen's popularity may rest on her longevity and her disposition. It is not clear that her successors will enjoy quite so much unquestioned loyalty. There would be many others who would consider a potential return of the monarchy in Ireland as a retrograde step. Nevertheless, there might be a role for the monarchy in Ulster and as a potential but unlikely appointment as Head of State in Ireland as a whole if circumstances required it. In any case, some qualified role for the monarchy in Ireland would be welcomed by the most difficult of its constituents, the Ulster unionists, and Republicans as well as Unionists may have to sacrifice historical ideology in order to realise a greater gain.

10. The independence of the judiciary is a central tenet of democracies whereby parliament writes laws, whilst the judiciary interprets and, with the police service, enforces the law. The judiciary must be free of political interference. This is especially critical where there is a history of issues involving human rights abuse and equality if confidence is to be restored in government and justice. Legislation has been introduced throughout Ireland to guarantee the rights of minority communities based on religious denomination and identity, and outlawing additional bases of discrimination such as sexual orientation and age. A more secular Ireland with increasing numbers of non-Christians and diverse ethnicities, family composition and attitudes must not be complacent in establishing and maintaining legal protection for all from direct and indirect discrimination and fearfulness. Maintenance of law and order by the civil police, including intelligence service, must be achieved in an environment embracing equality and public scrutiny. Political management of policing and prison services must be at the highest Government level and the police and prison service must be free to do their job within the law. Defence services are also subject to national and international laws. Significant, planned deployment of defence services on active duties, in isolation or in association with allies, must first obtain agreement of the lower house in Parliament. Government would have the power to order deployment of defence forces where Ireland or its interest are subject to surprise attack and in response to national emergencies due to military incursion or natural disasters. Parliament should also agree involvement of Ireland in international alliances for defence purposes.
11. A civil service constitutes the professional spine around which governments form. Politicians and political parties have a finite role in government subject to the electorate but a civil service provides continuity. They are answerable to the political wing of government, for example before Parliamentary Committees, and subject to the law and public scrutiny. In return, they contribute the diverse expertise and experience required to manage ministerial portfolios successfully. Politicians, however, increasingly treat their civil service as dispensable and a main target for saving government expenditure regardless of damage to services and retention of necessary expertise. Public ridicule of the civil service not only erodes the morale of people providing for the common good, it further encourages schisms in society. Short-sighted policies thus undermine healthcare, education, public housing and many other essential services. A change in culture amongst politicians to re-establish the respect with which public employees in general and civil servants, in particular, are treated fairly in all

regards by the political wing of government. There is no obvious role for party appointed special advisers in departmental structures of government. The existence of special advisers operating outside scrutiny or control has proved both costly and problematic in Northern Ireland and cannot be regarded as acceptable at any level in a future government. The three tiered structure deployed throughout Ireland will enable a redistribution of jobs in the public sector from areas where there are too many to those with newly established assemblies. The redeployment of civil servants from Stormont to Dublin's national assembly, as well as to other provincial assemblies, would assist in disseminating experience at regional government level and reducing the imbalance of public and private sectors in Northern Ireland.

A constitutional framework

1. Rights, responsibilities and aspirations should form the basis of a new all-Ireland constitution accommodating the diversity of identities and religious and non-religious affiliations apparent in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in the 21st century. Constitutional principles should reflect the Good Friday Agreement and be capable of meeting the political, economic, social and environmental challenges ahead. A new, agreed constitution for Ireland would form a point of reference for all its citizens as well as a basis on which the economic, social, medical and environmental well-being of the island is founded. It should also provide a basis for the relationship between Ireland and its nearest neighbours, Great Britain (UK) and Europe, as well as defining its role in the World.
2. In seeking definitive change based on the outcome of a referendum as required under the Good Friday Agreement, recent referenda in the UK and Ireland suggest that a clear decision is based only where options are spelt out clearly. The Scottish referendum was based on a notion of independence lacking in detail other than the views of a single political party. The EU vote in the UK was close and was based on a vague appreciation of costs and benefits involved in the UK remaining or leaving, and a debate focussed on a few issues largely outside the control of either the UK government or the EU. The social referenda in the Republic of Ireland, in contrast, produced clear outcomes as they involved clear options with regards to single issues. Hence, a set of constitutional principles is essential as a basis for marshalling electoral support for constitutional change. Principles, if agreed in a referendum, would require legal interpretation and development, before final scrutiny in a newly constituted parliament.
3. Constitutional principles for a Second Irish Republic.
 - I. The new constitution replaces the present constitution, i.e. The Government of Ireland Act 1947, and its amendments.
 - II. National land and maritime boundaries based on the geographical island of Ireland and its adjacent smaller islands in accordance with international law.
 - III. The Good Friday Agreement guarantees the continued existence of Northern Ireland as a discrete entity within an agreed all-island constitution. It does not provide for the absorption of Northern Ireland into a unitary state. This infers a federal structure most easily based on the four provinces of Ireland. An agreed constitution which reunites the six northern counties comprising Northern Ireland and the three border counties comprising the rest of the province of Ulster, and elevates the political status of Connacht,

Leinster, Munster and Ulster such that they have a degree of governmental autonomy, provides equivalent governmental structures throughout the island reflecting access to representation, transparency, mutual respect and equality underpinning a new beginning and an innovative constitution which addresses past errors and can meet the challenges of the 21st century.

- IV. The constitution recognises the diversity of the people of Ireland and their legitimate identities, historically as Irish or British or both, and, more recently, as Europeans. In particular, the historical, geographical, economic, cultural and family links between Britain and Ireland are expressed through recognition of freedom of movement to work and live in either country with reciprocal access to political rights and services. Regardless of their origin, all residents of Ireland must be treated equitably with regard to the law, rights and access to services.
- V. The constitution recognises the contributions of the descendants of Irish émigrés to the economic, cultural and social development of Ireland, through their inclusion in Presidential and Senate elections, and defined rights of resettlement in Ireland. Ireland should have a constitutional imperative to reduce emigration and facilitate immigration, thus increasing the overall population and its diversity, and enhancing economic activity and robustness. Non-EU, non-Irish immigration should be related to educational attainment and potential economic, social, scientific, technical and cultural benefits.
- VI. The measure of a government and a people is what they pass to the next and successive generations. Government structures at all levels should not indulge in short termism in decisions or disregard relevant data and opinions compromising the aspiration to leave future generations an improved economy, environment, social conditions, health and care, cultural richness and quality of life.
- VII. There shall be no official language with Irish, English and other languages used as appropriate to the situation in government, commerce and education or any other endeavour. Irish and English, and their dialects, occupy special positions in the history, life and culture of these islands, and people from throughout Ireland have contributed greatly to the richness of these languages. This should continue to be the case with Government support of this diversity channelled through provincial assemblies and local authorities in accordance with their population size. Education should be primarily through the medium of English but bilingualism is encouraged in accordance with the wishes of school and college governing bodies, students and parents. Language must not be used as a barrier to educational advancement, employment or any other aspiration.
- VIII. National emblems, principally a flag and an anthem, must reflect the diversity of the people of Ireland, their shared history and aspirations. Current flags and anthems may be used but will no longer be considered national. Provincial flags will continue to be used in their current or modified form subject to the views of provincial assemblies. All flags and emblems should be used on appropriate occasions with the respect they deserve and full regard of the sensitivities of local communities. Provocative display and use of flags, symbols, anthems and songs will be considered a criminal offence and subject to penalties including imprisonment. Organisers of events where such provocative behaviour occurs, will be financially liable for the criminal behaviour of attendees and supporters.
- IX. Ireland will continue to be part of the European Union and work with other member states to improve the health, wealth and quality of life across the alliance. Ireland will re-join

the Commonwealth and continue to be a member of the United Nations, and will work towards international understanding, education, peace and reconciliation. Ireland will meet all international responsibilities and commitments with respect to human rights and environment. In particular, Ireland will welcome asylum seekers, and treat them sympathetically until their futures can be decided. Non-EU immigrants of good standing and meeting agreed thresholds with respect to education, will have the opportunity to remain in Ireland.

- X. Ireland will be a single jurisdiction where every person is subject to the same law under a single, independent judicial system consisting of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, and the High Court which will apply the law in Ireland derived from the Constitution, statutory law and common law. Judges will be appointed by the President/Head of State directly, subject to nomination by a Judicial Appointments Advisory Board, the composition of which is statutory. Lower level courts will be set up by the High Court to deal with lesser offences. These structures should reflect the constitutional role of provinces and counties and ensure accessibility to all. All judicial appointments must reflect the diversity of people who they serve, be based on merit alone and adhere to equality provisions with regard to gender, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, religious belief or similar philosophical belief, political opinion, racial group, age, sexual orientation, disability, settled or not, and dependant responsibilities. Ireland is subject to the laws of Europe and acknowledges and supports the role of the European and International Courts of Justice. Compliance with ecclesiastical or other religious laws is an individual right, provided this does not conflict with constitutional, statutory or common law.
- XI. Law enforcement and intelligence activities will be the responsibility of a single police force comprising four divisions, one each in Connacht, Leinster, Munster and Ulster. The police are answerable to a National Policing Board comprised equally of elected members of Parliament, both upper and lower houses, and independent appointees selected by a process of appointment to the Minister for Justice. The National Policing Board will be mirrored by Provincial Policing Boards. These structures should reflect the constitutional role of provinces and counties, ensure accessibility to all and afford a degree of transparency in meetings open to the public and news media. All Policing Board appointments must reflect the diversity of people they serve, be based on merit alone and adhere to equality provisions as above. The Policing Boards will advise the Minister of Justice with respect to the appointment of the overall Chief Constable and Divisional (Deputy) Chief Constables.
- XII. Ireland as a sovereign state has a right of defence and if under threat pre-emptive actions in defence of national interests. A standing defence force with full time and reserve components enabling naval, aerial and land defence will be established. Ireland will enter into one or more defence alliances to defend common interests and democratic processes at risk. Ireland will co-operate closely with Great Britain and other nations to defend mutual interests by cooperation in training, procurement of equipment and in strategy and tactics. The military links between Great Britain and Ireland will be recognised by facilitating recruitment into British services in Ireland and continued existence of one or more Irish regiment. Deployment of defence forces other than as an immediate response to attack or a natural disaster, must be sanctioned by the Irish parliament.

- XIII. Ireland guarantees individual rights, with respect to employment, public appointments and access to public services, ensuring equality under the law with respect to: gender, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, religious belief or similar philosophical belief, political opinion, racial group, age, sexual orientation, disability, settled or not, and dependant responsibilities.
- XIV. Victims of crimes have the right to have their grievances investigated to a final conclusion within the resources available without any statute of limitation, and have the right of redress under the law subject to available resources. Accused and convicted prisoners have the right of access to the law and legal defence subject to available resources and have the right to be treated humanely whilst in custody. The law does not distinguish between members of defence and police forces, on the one hand, and civilians on the other. Resident Irish citizens and non-citizens will be treated equally under the law.
- XV. Ireland recognises the role of religion and faith in the lives of many of its citizens and their right to worship as they wish. The interests of followers of all major religions in Ireland, and those of no religious faith, will be recognised on state occasions, and during days of national grief and celebration.
- XVI. Social freedoms with respect to marriage and reproduction are an individual right subject to legislation based on accepted scientific and moral limits. Legislation may be developed through parliamentary processes or following a referendum. All individuals and groups of individuals exercising legal social freedoms, have the right of freedom from harassment and condemnation from others.
- XVII. The right to vote in all Irish elections and referenda will be granted to all legal residents with a minimum residency of three years, who are 16 years of age or older. All residents satisfying these requirements must register on the Electoral Roll and are required to vote at all subsequent elections subject to exemptions due to incapacity. Failure to vote will result in a small financial penalty imposed by the Electoral Commission. The electoral system will be based on a single transferable vote and constituencies, of similar sized electoral rolls, making up counties and metropolitan areas within provinces. National, provincial and local assemblies will be limited to a maximum of 65 elected representatives. Strict regulations governing electoral processes will be established to ensure that all elections and referenda are fair and independent tests of opinion. Electoral fraud and corruption will be treated as serious criminal offences. All electoral processes, including the maintenance of an accurate, up-to-date electoral roll, the organisation of elections, counts and dissemination of results, will be overseen by an Electoral Commission.
- XVIII. Elected representatives have a mandate based on a manifesto. They will sign a contractual agreement requiring them to represent all their constituents, prioritising the interests and concerns of the people of Ireland as a whole ahead of those of their constituents, their party and themselves, where these conflict, and to adhere to regulations and procedures established and voted on by their assemblies. Penalties for failure to adhere to regulations, for example with regards to attendance, will include dismissal and exclusion from future elections. Parties will be expected to set expenditure in all areas of activity, and to balance their budget within the parliamentary term.
- XIX. Political parties must organise and contest elections in all four provinces. Parties must register with Government and will be in receipt of funding related directly to their

electoral strength in the previous general election. Parties will also be allowed to raise funds from party members based solely on individual membership subject to a cap determined by the Electoral Commission. These will be the only income sources permitted to political parties. Party income must cover salaries of representatives, costs of performing their duties and the democratic process. Statements concerning finance made during elections must be verifiable and in line with financial projections based on Government financial models. Dissemination of electoral materials must be through media which are secure from interference likely to distort the outcome of the election. Candidates and party leaders will be expected to respond to questions raised by the media and the electorate prior to elections. Parties will be required to produce annual accounts clearly documenting all income and expenditure. The Electoral Commission will appoint auditors to inspect party accounts annually, and, periodically, will review efficacy in fulfilling parliamentary, provincial assembly and local council functions. The Electoral Commission will publish its findings. Breaches of financial regulations under which parties operate will be brought to the attention of Parliament and where fraudulent behaviour is suspected, the police, the Public Prosecution Service and High Court.

- XX. Parliament will consist of two houses. The Lower House (Commons), will be the main elected chamber and have primacy with respect to Government decisions and expenditure. It will also initiate new legislation. The Upper House (Senate) will be apolitical, comprised of Senators elected from nominees from the major professions, business, trade unions, NGOs, the arts, and major religions and denominations. Senate will scrutinise all legislation emerging from the Lower House up to two times before passing into law. Senate will be able to propose amendments to, but be unable to block legislation from the Commons.
- XXI. Parliament will be based in Dublin. Provincial assemblies will be based in Cork (Munster), Drogheda (Leinster), Galway (Connacht) and Belfast (Ulster). Parliamentary and Provincial elections will take place every four years with two years between the former and the latter. County councils will be based in county towns or other major settlement and may incorporate more than one county. Metropolitan councils will be based in Belfast and Dublin. Council elections will take place every third year.
- XXII. Central government responsibilities will include: legislation, policing and judicial systems; defence and international alliances; the national health and welfare system; education; the environment; agriculture and fisheries; universities, research and development; culture, sport and recreation; and the economy. Central Government will devolve aspects of these portfolios to Provincial Assemblies and to Councils. Councils will provide Citizen's Advice Bureaus incorporating constituency offices for Parliamentary, Provincial Assembly and Council members facilitating contact between the public and all tiers of government.
- XXIII. Government responsibilities cannot be delegated to churches and other religious organisations, NGOs and other interest groups. Churches and other religious organisations are excluded from having a direct role in the management and provision of government services including education, health and welfare at any level.
- XXIV. The currency of Ireland will be the Euro. Changes in currency are subject to review by the Irish Parliament and a public referendum based on a clear proposal from Government. Government will be required to maintain fiscal stability with borrowing between 30% and 60% GDP. Government subject to Parliamentary review can set personal and corporate

taxation to provide income to finance government services. Government may also raise income from indirect taxes on goods and services, and charges for services and goods.

- XXV. The position of Head of State is apolitical and elected every seven years from 3-5 nominees proposed by Senate. Nominees must be distinguished and capable of representing Ireland on national, international and ceremonial occasions. Nominees may include non-nationals who have given great service to Ireland or the World. The main constitutional role of the President will be to invite the leader of the largest party in the Commons to form a Government. The President will also give notice of the resignation of the Government and initiate general elections.

Pathway to an agreed Ireland

1. The pursuit of a consensual agreement in the island of Ireland, as opposed to the struggle for and resistance against the aspiration of a unified country characterised by a nationalist, catholic ethos, first emerged in the 1980s under the auspices of The New Ireland Forum 1984. The earlier Sunningdale Agreement marginally engaged with the Republic of Ireland and sought, and ultimately failed, to reconcile unionist and nationalist politicians and people in Northern Ireland. Moderate opinion was seen off by extremist attitudes, continuing terrorist violence and the ineptitude of London-based politicians who antagonised unionist opinion unnecessarily. The unionist boycott of The New Ireland Forum meant that this too was doomed from an early stage. It was unsurprising that a group of northern and southern nationalist politicians produced a series of largely nationalist options. However, The New Ireland Forum was seminal in that it recognised overtly the importance and rights of two traditions in Ireland. It was not the fault of the Forum that only one side was properly represented and as a consequence, the rights of unionists were treated inadequately in the final report. The Forum, however, was at fault at failing to address the equally dismal record of the Republic on human rights: for example, it made no mention of the reduction in protestant numbers after partition, or the unhealthy collusion of church and state affecting health, welfare and education in the Republic, now widely regarded as a great scar on the children and disadvantaged of a supposed independent nation. Fourteen years later, recognition of the rights of two traditions became central to the Good Friday Agreement with the addition of north-south and east-west structures guaranteeing the constitutional position of Northern Ireland with the UK unless the people of Northern Ireland determine otherwise. Despite the Good Friday Agreement leading to a much reduced level of violence, it has not yet provided continuity in providing a devolved government representative of all sections of unionism and nationalism and the cross border and east-west apparatus, voted for by the overwhelming majority of people in both jurisdictions on the island. The political struggle for and against Irish nationalism in Northern Ireland, has produced a succession of political deals, subsequently disputed, supporting a coalition of extremes to the exclusion of more moderate opinion. Distrust, disrespect, self-interest, potential corruption and persistent rumours of hidden forces controlling party policies, undermine confidence in the democratic process. This is not what the Good Friday Agreement promised.
2. The Good Friday Agreement benefitted from the involvement of a greater diversity of opinion than The New Ireland Forum, most notably, mainstream unionism, or at least, one of the two

main unionist parties. It also benefitted from a highly experienced and patient international chairman determined to reach agreement no matter how long it took, and the presence of both national Governments. For the first time, interests of the minority, nationalist position in Northern Ireland, with regards to the Irish language, were recognised under the law and a provision identifying a route to unity was made. This was agreed by the Ulster Unionist Party and subsequently supported by the bulk of Northern Ireland's population just as the bulk of the southern electorate accepted changes in the constitution of the Irish Republic, recognition of the constitutional status quo and a guarantee that there would be no change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland without a majority vote. Further, the devolved rights and self-determination of the unionist population in Northern Ireland are recognised in perpetuity within the UK or within a unified Irish state. However, the formalised sectarianism underpinning the Northern Ireland Government and the dilatory approach of terrorist organisations to decommissioning and 'putting beyond use' weapons verifiably, created the circumstances under which moderate parties failed electorally, leaving extreme parties to take centre stage, ultimately leading to a series of renegotiations and stand-offs over 20 years. The situation has been exacerbated by Brexit creating further sources of impasse amongst opposing but inter-dependent, political partners. The legacies of the Good Friday Agreement, however, are mutual recognition of rights between unionist and nationalist traditions and a mechanism for constitutional change. The Good Friday Agreement is international and binding and cannot be set aside as a collateral effect of Brexit, apathy or self-interest in the Republic of Ireland or the UK, or the self-interest of the two largest Northern Irish political parties.

3. The Good Friday Agreement empowers the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to initiate constitutional change requiring a referendum on the issue of Irish unity. He or she must be of a mind that such a referendum has a high probability of accepting the proposition of unity. The referendum outcome is based on 50% + 1 vote suggesting little margin for error on the part of the Secretary of State and, consequently, the probable, overly zealous application of the Precautionary Principle. The UK has experienced the effects of a poorly constructed referendum twice in three years and, thus, has further reason to be very cautious with regard to Northern Ireland. The Scottish independence vote led to ongoing demands for a further referendum, partly as a result of the definition of independence based on the views of a single nationalist party and partly because of the weakened position of the unionist tradition in Scotland attributable to the right wing policies of the Conservative party faced with growing English nationalism from the 1980 onwards. The departure of the Labour party from its left of centre position provided nationalism with the opportunity to engage in mainstream, bread-and-butter politics. The divisions in the Conservative party led directly to the referendum on membership of the EU. The absence of any leadership expounding the political argument in favour of the UK remaining in the EU and the ambiguity with regards to what Brexit might entail, left much to chance rather than reason and an outcome with a narrow margin. Given the details emerging with respect to abuse of electoral rules and misrepresentation of the impact of Brexit, it is not surprising that there are growing demands for a second referendum, or a new one based on the reality of the deal on offer. Thus, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland might initiate a referendum process only if certain that the proposition would command support from both nationalist and unionist traditions in Northern Ireland and equally strong support in the Republic. This will require a proposition for major constitutional

change throughout Ireland, addressing the concerns and identity of both communities in Northern Ireland, as well as the persistent issues regarding the historical basis of parties with similar social and economic policies in the Republic of Ireland. The proposition put to the people in both jurisdictions must have at least the same level of detail as the booklet outlining Good Friday Agreement. Indeed, the greater the level of clarity, the more likely support for the proposition will exceed a level necessary to assuage the concerns of critics in both jurisdictions.

4. Given the improbability of agreement by the Northern Irish political parties to implement the Good Friday Agreement fully, and the equally remote possibility that parties from throughout the island address Ireland's inherent constitutional, political, social, economic and environmental problems, it is legitimate to consider effecting change by means other than conventional party politics within the context of The Good Friday Agreement. Political parties are unlikely to initiate change which puts their own future in doubt. Unionists cannot deliver union in perpetuity, any more than nationalist/republican parties, and their militant fellow travellers, can deliver a united, independent Irish state. Political parties in both jurisdictions are part of the problem, being tied by history, leading to the present pariah status of any proposition of unity, with an assumption that such a proposition will fail and or result in a return to violence. To break this log jam it is necessary to create a vision or Blueprint of what Ireland might become in the 21st century, that can be embraced and promoted through a popular or citizens led movement, outside conventional political processes and structures, and capable of initiating a process realising this vision under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. The sea-change in Irish politics envisaged is embodied in the concept of a pluralist, liberal Ireland based on recognition of human rights of present and future generations, education and sustainable prosperity within the context of Europe and appropriate west-east relationships, recognising the common history and close affiliation of all the people of Ireland and Great Britain.
5. Ideas are tested, resolved and improved by discussion involving many people with differing perspectives. This Blueprint provides ideas some of which might be accepted as uncontroversial, and others that can be improved on or dropped. This discussion is facilitated best by dissemination free of any attribution, career advantage or reputation that would distract unnecessarily from the ideas therein. This Blueprint may find its way online facilitating the widest possible access to new generations of Irish people, throughout the island and abroad, who will constitute the major part of the Irish population of the 21st century. They can develop their own vision of what Ireland can become if they are confident enough to shake off those elements of our history which prevent them from moving forward together and addressing our common problems. These new generations, emigrant as well as resident in Ireland, will dominate in the first part of the 21st century, benefitting as it has from education, travel and higher expectations. They can bring their energy, collective creativity and skills to put to rest the 'Irish Question' and engender real unity of purpose among the different, diverse traditions of this island.
6. It is wrong to go into any process expounding change but expecting failure. The process must have a plan with a realistic chance of success within a reasonable timeframe, can adapt as conditions and circumstances change and maintain the commitment and enthusiasm of early proponents. It must have wide appeal and engage with significant numbers of people. Seven stages are envisaged:

- (i) A copy of this discussion paper or Blueprint has been sent to public, university and institutional libraries throughout Ireland. Further copies have been sent to printed and broadcast media and to individuals. Readers are asked to disseminate the paper by whatever means they wish but the hope is that it will quickly find its way online and can be downloaded and accessible to everyone. It is hoped the Blueprint will generate interest and support. It is not copyrighted and contains no statements regarding individuals likely to attract legal attention. It is not offensive and does not incite hatred.
- (ii) The Blueprint is likely to be scrutinised through the social media. Resist bigoted and ignorant comment regardless of origin or target. Whether there is a balance of opinion, albeit biased by its sources, will become clear. Revisions can be made, material deleted or added, ideas refined or revised. Ultimately, there may be multiple online groups with a few or hundreds of members in broad agreement or disagreement with the initiative and, perhaps, some ideas of how it may be improved or what to do next. Ultimately, the process will require an organisation to metamorphose into a real movement.
- (iii) A few individuals in each online group may take the initiative in building momentum by arranging an open meeting or a 'Political Picnic' as much a social as a political event. Perhaps several such events are needed in an area in order to exchange and refine views and plan how to progress further by meeting and talking to like-minded groups until there is a constituency or county or postal code group comprising hundreds or thousands of people and some local organisation is required.
- (iv) The emergence of a significant movement based on scattered groups acting autonomously will require some more central organisation, leadership and finance. Groups might initially come together within each of the four provinces but given the requirement to work within the Good Friday Agreement, the co-ordination and coherence of groups based in Northern Ireland is essential. Further, these groups will have to consider how they reflect all traditions and constituencies, for example, using area postal codes rather than counties as a basis for membership. A growing movement will attract negative comment from existing political parties in both jurisdictions but the Blueprint initiative is not party-based and there is no intention of engaging in elections. Its sole objective is to formulate a basis for the future government of Ireland and subject this to public opinion through a referendum which if successful will require constitutional change which will necessitate action in all political structures throughout the island.
- (v) The main objective of the movement should be to identify and agree the principles on which the government of a pluralist, liberal Ireland might be based, embracing all traditions, religious affiliations and ethnicities, and protecting the rights of all individuals. The movement should involve specialist constitutional and human rights lawyers. The Blueprint movement's immediate objective should be to petition both national Governments and the assembly of Northern Ireland, to establish a balanced Constitutional Commission or Forum comprised of senior legal figures charged with drawing up a draft Constitution of Ireland within a fixed period. The new constitution would then be put in full to the electorates in both Northern Ireland and the Republic. Before this could happen, the organisation based in Northern Ireland would have to demonstrate support for constitutional change in this jurisdiction i.e. a yes vote is likely, as required under the Good Friday Agreement. This could be done, for example, using an online, independently-audited petition, incorporating spatial data reflecting diversity of support. Alternatively,

the Secretary of State could engage the Electoral Commission to hold a pre-referendum vote simply to gauge support for constitutional change. This would apply only in Northern Ireland but would have the advantage of securing a double mandate with the potential of a yes vote well in excess of 50% +1, in the second vote. The all-island referendum question in the process effecting change in both jurisdictions would seek approval of the outcome of the Constitutional Forum, the proposed new constitution of Ireland, yes or no.

- (v) Given the process, the expected outcome would be a yes vote for the new constitution. On the basis of the proposed government structures envisaged in this pamphlet, a successful referendum would require the existing President to initiate appointment of an interim Government based in Dublin led by the incumbent Taoiseach and the First Minister in the Northern Ireland Government. The interim national government would commence the process whereby new government structures oversee changes in government services, legislation and policies, their relationship with Provincial Assemblies, and set a date for new national elections based on current constituencies using voting procedures under the new constitution. The Assembly in Northern Ireland would continue as the interim Ulster Provincial Assembly. Arrangements would be put in place for interim Provincial Assemblies based in Cork, Galway and Drogheda. These interim Provincial Assemblies will be required to establish their procedures, set a date for elections of members, and develop effective communications with Metropolitan and County Councils. The national and provincial interim governments will have a maximum tenure of two and three years respectively.
- (vii) Political parties will be subject to constraints with respect to national representation and funding from the public purse. Nationalist (republican) and unionist parties will be redundant given a successful proposition of a single jurisdiction in Ireland guaranteeing rights and respect for all traditions and ethnic groups. The interim structures will retain the services of all elected politicians both in the Dail and in Stormont but during the interim period, the expectation is that these politicians will identify shared, fundamental ideologies leading to new party affiliations which on registration can meet the requirements for public funding. A major turnover of politicians will occur with an influx of energetic activists who have never engaged in sectarian politics of the north or the historical nationalism of the south.
- (viii) 2022 marks the centenary of the foundation of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. Both should be celebrated with equal enthusiasm. Both countries endured successive crises throughout the 20th century and show a commitment to peace and reconciliation. A positive vote for a new constitution, however, will remove the basis of conflict and division in Ireland for all time. January 1st 2023 should mark the start of a new era but it should also be a day to reflect on the lost and broken lives arising from divisive nationalist and unionist aspirations. It should also be a day of celebration when past divisions on the island of Ireland are left behind and new relationships are established amongst the people of Ireland and Great Britain. The new era will undoubtedly bring severe challenges, but these will be surmounted more easily with a unity of purpose.

Concluding remarks

1. This Blueprint may be criticised as idealistic and unrealistic by politicians and party activists, commentators and academics, in proposing total change in the constitution and politics of Northern Ireland the Republic of Ireland. However, this is a necessity if the economic, social and environmental challenges of the 21st century are to be met effectively at national level and through international alliances. The *status quo* is no longer affordable, financially or otherwise, and it runs the risk of breaking down chaotically, undermining the economy and wider quality of life in both jurisdictions. Brexit is only one manifestation of external pressure undermining the relationship between the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic. Neither voted for Brexit but the likely effect will be to drive a further wedge between the two Irish jurisdictions and between Great Britain and Ireland. The constitutional changes proposed here avoid the undesirable effects of Brexit made clear, not least, by unionists, and would make it easier for Great Britain to refocus its international relationships including those with Ireland.
2. It may seem unlikely that unionists will simply relinquish their attachment to the United Kingdom and embrace closer relationships within Ireland. However, they must face the prospect that in the near future they will no longer form the largest party in Stormont and that the overall nationalist/catholic vote will match and then overtake the unionist/protestant vote. Brexit and unionist intransigence to recognise identities other than their own, their recent cavalier approach to political administration and failure to implement the Good Friday Agreement in full, will ensure that a referendum on the future of the Irish border will be very finely balanced. A close call will be met with demands for a further referendum within a few years. Present unionist opinion that they are untouchable in this regard is certainly unrealistic given recent events and changing demography in Northern Ireland. Unionist aspirations are also compromised by the disproportionate emigration of middle class unionists/protestants, increased disaffection among liberal and international-minded portions of the electorate that hitherto supported them, and the indifference of their (former) allies in UK Government. At present, there is an air of unreality amongst the unionist parties which is as likely to destabilise Northern Ireland's relationship with the rest of the UK as any process leading to major constitutional change within the island of Ireland.
3. Constitutional change would be a new beginning for all, planned and implemented with the support of the major part of the electorates of both northern and southern Irish jurisdictions. This is certainly a viable position given the apparent chaos and uncertainty that would result from clinging to a failing unionist ideology in a post-Brexit Europe. Unionist parties could make a major contribution to the future of the people of Ireland, particularly the people they represent, by engaging with the process described by the Blueprint, standing aside whilst an all island constitution is drafted, and engaging with the transitional process if the constitution is adopted by both jurisdictions. They could show great leadership and statesmanship and facilitate a good deal for the British identity in Ireland as well as robust west-east structures and trade. The alternative is the perpetuation of negative politics and manoeuvring within unionism and between unionism and nationalism, regardless of the costs, until change is forced on unionists, falling back on a weak negotiating position which ultimately weakens their British identity and links between Britain and Ireland.

4. A process which culminates in a new Irish constitution creating a single jurisdiction might well be welcomed by the main nationalist and republican parties north and south, but it could also be cold-shouldered, suppressed by party loyalties. The horizons of these parties have not diverged significantly from their historical positions which make little concession to the diversity of the people of Ireland and, more specifically, do not take into account the significant minority which continues to value its British identity. The antipathy towards the latter is often just as inconsiderate, bigoted and vitriolic as any in the reverse direction. Nationalist and republican parties may resent any grassroots movement expounding any part of an ideology to which they feel a prior claim. These parties, however, have not broadened their appeal beyond their core support. It is not enough to proclaim an ideology without defining it, keeping it up-to-date and accessible to a broad spectrum of the electorate. It is also cynical, and possibly sinister, to work towards some historical objective which is not acceptable to a significant group of people, seeking ultimately to overpower by weight of numbers without making a meaningful attempt to arrive at the consensual position. Like the unionist parties, nationalist and republican parties could make a major contribution to the future of the people of Ireland, by engaging with the Blueprint process, standing aside whilst an all island constitution is drafted, and engaging with the transitional process if the constitution is adopted by both jurisdictions. They should also recognise that they are part of the problem which prevents progress towards their stated ideal. The more pedantic and antiquated a view of an independent Irish state free of external impurities, the less likely any unitary state is to emerge without the risk of obdurate, political resistance, and probable violent opposition. A unitary state in Ireland is identified as a legitimate aim under the Good Friday Agreement but it also protects the self-government in Northern Ireland and the interests of unionists. Unification cannot be in the form of a takeover of one territory by another. The Blueprint expounds integration based on mutual consent, not subjugation.
5. The third party in the relationship within and with Ireland, is the UK Government, presently fully occupied by Brexit but, latterly, a signatory of the Good Friday Agreement. It is bound to facilitate a border poll if The Secretary of State believes there is a strong likelihood that a proposal for constitutional reform would be successful in accordance with the terms of the Good Friday Agreement with regard to safe-guarding self-determination of the people of Northern Ireland. UK Government interests do not enter into the decision process. Under the present circumstances there seems little likelihood of a positive vote for removal of the border and any Secretary of State would likely be cautious in supporting a proposal for a poll. However, given momentum for change that eschews conventional political parties and focusses on mass popularity across religious and political divides within Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State might be more amenable. He/she may also be influenced by a general feeling that time is right for change especially if this results in more flexibility with regard to Brexit and solution of a longstanding political, economic and security headache. The second important role of the UK Government is to ensure that the British identity and political rights of people from Ireland in the UK are guaranteed, reciprocating the position of UK citizens in Ireland in accordance with the new constitution of Ireland. Thirdly, there must be a guarantee that UK citizens in Northern Ireland and their successors can adopt either nationality after constitutional reform and that all people in Northern Ireland will be protected with regard to pension and other financial benefits accrued whilst in the UK. There must also be recognition that taxation raised in Northern Ireland contributes directly to central Government and that

much of this is spent elsewhere in the UK increasing assets, real, for example, infrastructure, and intellectual, for example, research and expertise.

6. The differential between government income and expenditure is negative throughout the UK regions outside London and the south east of England and is greatest in remote regions, including Northern Ireland. Affordability of Northern Ireland's perceived deficit in public expenditure is often used as an argument against constitutional change in Ireland assuming those costs are fully met by a central Dublin government. The actual value of subvention is inflated by addition of public expenditure on services and facilities outside Northern Ireland. However, the deficit in expenditure actually reflects the bias towards the south east of England and London comprising an area with roughly a third of the UK population, the highest concentration of people, well-paid professional jobs in the financial and other parts of the private sector, and major national facilities and head offices of multiple companies paying corporate tax. In contrast, Northern Ireland is remote from the centre and has a scattered population, low property prices, low salaries and endured over thirty years of conflict. The differential between London and the UK regions also fails to take into account that the latter supply talent and services to the capital: many people educated at tax payers' expense in Northern Ireland and other regions work in and pay tax in London, and many small and medium-sized companies provide it with materials and services. The south east is also the main hub for the UK and point of entry and often the sole destination for tourists. Prior to partition, Belfast and adjoining counties were amongst the richest, most industrialised parts of Ireland. Inward investment into the Republic of Ireland and its position as a member of the EU, in contrast to Belfast's marginal EU position as a region of the UK, dependency on declining heavy engineering and lost investment, failing infrastructure, trauma and poorer competitiveness due to terrorism, reversed the economic standing of Belfast and Dublin. Thus, there is no *a priori* reason to doubt the capacity of the Northern Irish counties to pay their way in a larger economy in a settled Ireland. The three border counties of the Republic would also gain economically from the restoration of their catchment areas and improved infrastructure. There is no difference in the quality, work ethic and motivation of school leavers and graduates, north and south, required to expand Ireland's economy to the benefit of all parts of the island. There would also be an economic dividend based on a new constitution in Ireland bound to attract inward investment throughout the island and further supported by relocation of UK based enterprises to Ireland in the event of the implementation of Brexit. Just as Northern Ireland benefitted from the Celtic Tiger years and the Republic of Ireland from the Good Friday Agreement, enhanced efficiency and greater stability in government structures in Ireland, and above all peace, will facilitate internal and external investment and, as a consequence, greater prosperity throughout the island.
7. The economic, social, physical and psychological effects of terrorism in Northern Ireland cannot be overstated and will require generations to resolve, just as the healing process of the impact of the global conflicts of the 20th century continues to the present through the children and relatives of those directly affected. Peace, time and support are the only conditions that the wider community can offer to aid the healing process. Division and aggression, even in the absence of actual violence, will only perpetuate the emptiness of grief. The consensual basis and recognition of diversity and the rights of victims under a new constitution, not least the open-ended commitment to equality and justice, cannot take away

- the grief but it can provide hope. Victims want answers and reassurance that their circumstances will not be repeated in the future. This hope is core to constitutional reform.
8. Public opinion is influenced by politicians, academics, journalists and other writers, broadcasters and the social media, but it is probable that conversation with friends, family and other contacts, as well as deep-rooted attitudes from childhood, are the main determinants of political views. Social media may have become dominant influences, negative and positive, on opinions developed within social networks. Opinion is shaped largely by word-of-mouth constantly renewing or challenging broad political views as well as personal opinions on particular political, social and ethical issues. The public ultimately determine opinion and attitudes with politicians, journalists following rather than leading trends. Politicians and journalists have a role in articulating public opinions and transforming policies and actions at party and government levels. The role of academics and, in particular, historians and political scientists, is to uncover the truth, reviewing and interpreting evidence objectively, without the pressure of electoral support or public opinion. The history of Ireland in the early 20th century, is subject to this process and this has led to a reconciliation of opposing views benefitting current generations, for example the families of 1st World War veterans. Review of historical events will continue but it is slow and cannot direct change towards some particular goal. Only the chaotic process of comment and response throughout innumerable social networks will give rise to generally acceptable principles that can be given a more formal clarity and form of expression by writers, politicians and lawyers. The immediate aim here is to engender discussion regarding the future of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, by freely copying, printing, posting, critiquing and revising this pamphlet. Political journalists and columnists should refrain from outright rejection and consider the wider issues and what might work as well as what presents difficulties, and resist the temptation to lampoon honest attempts at making the future of Ireland a little better.
 9. Mandates from elections and referenda are based on general and specific policy issues, respectively. The former, however, may encompass moral or ethical as well as political issues, whilst a referendum considers extremes of change, for example, in or out of an international alliance, or a narrow issue, such as recognition of same sex marriage. A referendum on a constitution which recognises rights of individuals will exercise the consciences of an electorate with respect to red lines between what is generally acceptable and what is not; for example, conditions under which a woman may have an abortion of a foetus. No matter how strongly views on ethical issues are held, they should not be allowed to dominate debates, some of which have already been the subject of referenda in the Republic of Ireland. The results of an election can be changed at the next election but referenda may dictate policies and laws for generations. Nevertheless, they can be amended to reflect changes in attitude as has been demonstrated in the Republic of Ireland. It is critical to establish a constitution under which every person can live acceptably with the potential to change that constitution without losing the supporting framework. Forgoing the chance of establishing such a constitution because of the contents of a single clause or sentence, is to lose sight of what might be gained for the greater, permanent good. Recognition of the rights of one identity should not affect how any other is perceived or valued.
 10. Justice and respect for an individual, facilitating opportunities for all and supporting those facing difficulties, should underpin any constitution. A constitution, thus, should be biased towards recognition of rights rather than denial of actions. It should also require respect to

be given to the rights of others to take particular actions, even where such actions are questioned by a majority of people. Limits should be set out by specialists, clinicians and scientists, lawyers and moral philosophers, not by politicians. Pressure groups for or against moral positions should be required to show restraint with regard to individuals availing of rights under the constitution providing for their happiness or relief from distress.

11. Success of any process of transition involving large numbers of people is difficult to define. There may be little evidence of change for many years and a plan may not be fully realised or may be changed fundamentally due to unforeseen circumstances. The sequence of events envisaged here may not proceed as intended or it may be subject to delay. The Blueprint should be considered successful if more people engage in political debate and consider alternatives to the current political impasse and status quo involving the nationalist and unionist parties of Northern Ireland, the conservative parties arising from Civil War factions of the Republic, and republican ideologues throughout the island. Collectively, people are capable of addressing the deficiencies inherent in both jurisdictions and establishing a basis for a better future. Ireland cannot prosper by adhering to historical stances forever. It must change and change has to start sometime and somewhere.