

Statement to the United States House Foreign Affairs Sub Committee on Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber

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Personal/professional background

Born in Belfast, I was a teenager when the Northern Ireland troubles began. My late teens were spent waking up to the news of riots, bombs and sectarian murders on the streets. In those days of 'tit-for-tat' killings, if a Protestant was killed one day, it would be a Catholic the next. The army was deployed and soldiers set up checkpoints throughout the city. We were stopped and searched everywhere we went. The streets were dangerous, particularly at night and the best we could do was socialise locally or stay home and keep ourselves to ourselves. As the years went by, we started getting used to the conflict and tried to live our lives as normally as we could. It was only when I left Belfast to move abroad that I came to fully understand the life we were living was far from normal.

Many of my family members were committed unionists so I experienced the conflict hearing the commentary from that perspective. In those days it was rare to hear voices of reason. Angry voices dominated the airwaves and the silence from the Churches, the schools and other civic leaders was deafening. I hated the bigotry we heard constantly in the media and the violence we saw daily on the street. All I wanted to do was escape. As soon as we could, my sister, my brother and I left home to study and eventually live abroad. My mother was sad to see us go but she knew it would be better for us to move away from the horror that was unfolding in our country.

In 1973, the UK and Ireland joined the EU and I started a course in 'European studies' at the University of Ulster. After completing my degree, I settled in Brussels working as a journalist and learning about the European peace project. I returned in 1986 as a reporter for BBC Belfast while the conflict was still raging. My first 'atrocious' was the Enniskillen bomb in 1987 when the reporter brought back the interview in which Gordon Wilson forgave the killers for murdering his daughter. This interview was a watershed moment in the Northern Ireland troubles. I also covered the attack by Michael Stone on mourners in Milltown cemetery and witnessed at first hand the mayhem created. It was also my first interview with Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams.

It was not until my son was born in 1991, that I realised I had to live up to my responsibility as a mother to contribute to positive change in Northern Ireland so he would not have to live the life I had experienced. I took the position of European Commission representative to NI, invited EC President, Jacques Delors to visit and in 1994, the year of the ceasefires, working with the local MEPs, we initiated the first £multi-million EU PEACE Programme. That is now in its fifth programme having spent many £billion supporting grass roots peace building initiatives in NI and the border counties of Ireland. This programme is heralded as the most successful PEACE programme ever operated by the EU which helped lay the foundation for the Good Friday Agreement.

The recipients of EU PEACE funds were mainly community activists working at the coal face of the troubles, many of whom were women. My first encounter was with May Blood a community worker on the Shankill Road before she became a Baroness. Impressed by their efforts, I accepted immediately when I was invited to the first meeting of what became the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. We created the party, selected two negotiators for the peace talks, Monica McWilliams and Pearl Sagar, and agreed to operate on the principles of inclusion, equality and human rights.

On the final days leading up to the Good Friday Agreement, I was on the team looking over the draft text. As a keen advocate of Integrated Education, I wanted to ensure provision was made to promote Catholic and Protestant children learning together. We described this as a "culture of tolerance" and inserted the words "to facilitate and encourage integrated education and mixed housing" which appear in the final text. Had the Women's Coalition not been there, there would have been no mention of integrated education in the Agreement. In 2020, I took up the position of Director of the Integrated Education Fund.

In the elections which followed the Good Friday Agreement, I was elected alongside Monica McWilliams to the new NI Assembly representing the NI Women's Coalition. Because we crossed the divide in every direction, we chose to designate ourselves as 'other' which meant we had no vote on matters of political import. On one highly controversial occasion, I changed my designation to unionist to secure the re-election of the First and Deputy First Ministers. Two years later, I was elected Deputy Speaker, a position I held until the Assembly was suspended in 2003. We closed the Women's Coalition down in 2006, having achieved our ten year goal of contributing to peace in Northern Ireland.

I went on to serve as Deputy Chief Equality Commissioner and NI representative to the Brussels-based European Economic and Social Committee. In both roles, I carried on my work for peacebuilding and gender equality. I authored several EESC reports on the EU role in the NI peace process <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/europe/docs/eesc231008.pdf> and specialised in conflict resolution throughout my 15 year term in office. This included exchange of experience missions to Afghanistan, Lebanon, Turkey and Cyprus promoting the role of women in conflict resolution. My time in the EESC was cut short by Brexit in January 2020 when all UK members had to leave the EU civic forum. I have since described the day of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement as the best day of my career and the day of the Brexit referendum result as the worst.

Proposals to the Sub Committee

1) Brexit - extending the NI Protocol to Scotland - a creative, constructive compromise

Since 2016, I have dedicated my career to campaigning against Brexit and finding solutions to reducing the negative impact on Northern Ireland. Immediately after the referendum, I launched a petition calling for NI to remain in the EU as part of the UK. <https://www.change.org/p/theresa-may-mp-grant-northern-ireland-honorary-eu-association-to-remain-as-part-of-the-european-union> The demands in this petition closely reflect the NI Protocol which I regard as the best of a bad Brexit deal. Aware of the objection to the Protocol from the Unionist/Loyalist community because of the perceived border in the Irish Sea, I have proposed an alternative which should serve to satisfy all stakeholders.

The extension of the NI Protocol to Scotland would effectively move the Irish Sea border to the Scottish/English border and Scotland, like Northern Ireland, would remain in the EU as part of the UK. This new 'Celtic Protocol' could meet the needs of Scotland, NI, the UK and the EU in one fell swoop and give the two UK nations which voted to remain in the EU the best of all worlds. In Edinburgh, it could help satisfy Scottish independence supporters who would see the Protocol as a 'waiting room' for EU membership. It would also appease Scottish frustration at not being offered the same competitive advantage as Northern Ireland. In Belfast, it would help calm loyalist concerns over the constitutional status of Northern Ireland by bringing Scotland into the equation. In London, It might also serve as a means to mollify calls for Scottish independence by answering Scotland's call for an arrangement similar to Northern Ireland. In Brussels and Dublin, it would be seen as a means to stabilise peace in Ireland and finally lay Brexit to rest.

A 'Celtic Protocol' could have a positive impact on both a political and practical level. In logistical terms, the Scottish border, covering 100 miles, would be easier to regulate than the Irish border which is 300 miles long with dozens of crossing points where smuggling could be rife. In political terms, the Irish were seen to have won their case against a hard border in part by warning about the risk of violence to any new border infrastructure. The Unionist/Loyalist community feel Northern Ireland has been cut adrift from the rest of the UK by the Protocol and their British identity has been diluted. This has seeded the potential for a violent reaction, some of which we have seen in recent weeks. The inclusion of Scotland could go some way to changing this political perception.

If Brussels, London, Edinburgh, Belfast and Dublin were willing to take the risk for peace, the Scottish solution may be the answer. The fact that the Protocol entitles these nations to benefit from EU trading arrangements while remaining within their home country, may also serve to reduce the desire for independence or Irish unity. In the case of Northern Ireland, the demand for a referendum on a united Ireland would have been much stronger in the event of a hard Brexit. As it stands, the Protocol serves to assure NI's position in the UK for the foreseeable future, making space for the time needed for an in-depth debate on its constitutional position.

The elections in Scotland this week could prove to be a defining moment for the constitutional integrity of the UK. An interesting debate, prompted by Irish academic Dorcha Lee and others, has begun on the potential coming together of Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland (SCINI) in a 'Celtic Association' similar to the Benelux countries which founded the EU. A Celtic Protocol could help prepare that process. In economic, social and cultural terms, it would boost the region's tremendous renewable energy potential in advance of the global climate conference in Glasgow. It could also serve to regenerate cultural links between Scotland, Ireland and the age-old Ulster/Scots connection with America. For example, with US support, the locally produced musical 'On Eagles Wing' telling the story of the Ulster/Scots heritage and the link with over a dozen US Presidents could do for NI what Riverdance did for Ireland on the world cultural stage. It would be ideal for this musical to be relaunched by President Biden during his first visit to Ireland which should include a trip to Northern Ireland.

The role of the US engaging with both communities in Northern Ireland will be vital. President Clinton did much to change the negative unionist perception of Irish America when the spoke of 40 million Irish Americans, half of whom were of Protestant stock. With invitations to the White House and other diplomatic approaches, he reached out to the unionist/loyalist community in a bid to ensure they felt America would treat them as equals. In these days of growing Unionist/Loyalist concerns for their future, the US could work alongside Europe, the UK and Ireland to ensure their voices



are being heard. The poster below which has appeared in many parts of Northern Ireland speaks for itself.

2) US&EU joint Reconciliation fund

The United States and the European Union both have a vested interest in maintaining peace and promoting reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The long-standing attachment of America to its Irish roots is fabled in folklore and

visible to all. But its Ulster-Scots heritage, a centuries old link, is nowhere near as prevalent in either memory or policy making. The European Union is a relative newcomer on the scene but its history dates back to the days when the Irish pilgrim Columbanus left from the north of Ireland to discover a continent which he named Europe. These legendary links which bind the US and the EU together in a small corner of the Western world are sturdy enough to commit both to work closer together for the future of their protégé.

Both the US and the EU have shown remarkable generosity in their support for the people of Northern Ireland. The long-term financial commitment to the important work of the International Fund for Ireland is a positive demonstration of their ability to work together in areas such as youth development, breaking down barriers in local communities and working in border areas to mitigate the impact of Brexit. Also, the 'Ireland Funds America', founded by Dan Rooney and Tony O'Reilly has been very supportive of peace, reconciliation and integrated education, particularly the Dallas branch. In the 'political' space, the US and EU operate at very different levels. The US invested immense political capital at the highest level supporting the peace process from the very top down. The active involvement of both President and Hillary Clinton was hugely appreciated as is the continued involvement of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and many other elected representatives who continue to hold our interests at heart. The EU approach has been to operate from the bottom up, by supporting grass roots communities coming together and confidence building to enable the peace process to take root under its successive Peace programmes. The success of their efforts working alongside the British, Irish and local communities to bring an end to decades of conflict culminating in the Good Friday Agreement is legendary. There is no way they can allow these achievements to be in vain.

The only thing lacking in their approach to so far has been a joint US/EU effort. If this was happening behind the scenes, it was not obvious back then. But the political climate has changed. It is now time for the combined forces of European and American political, diplomatic, financial and cultural clout to step up and show their colours in support not only of peace but also orange/green reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The fifth £multi-million EU Peace programme has several more years to run but it was never intended to last forever. It's focus is shifting from peace to reconciliation but, with a mountain still to climb, it could do with a helping hand. It is important that the US join with the EU to look to the longer term working in partnership to promote community reconciliation for years, if not decades to come. Peacebuilding needs long-term sustainability, particularly in circumstances that are producing major challenges.

The Biden administration commitment to supporting the Good Friday Agreement is widely welcomed but there are concerns in some quarters that Irish America will overly influence its approach. The EU was seen as an 'honest broker' in the peace process because the UK and Ireland were equal members of the EU. But the Euro-sceptics who brought about Brexit were almost exclusively on the unionist side. This means any joint approach must ensure the US and the EU deal with an even hand to ensure 'parity of esteem'. Because unionism has little influence in America and the UK departure from the European stage has left the British out on a limb this will be difficult. By acting together in the interest of community integration and reconciliation, the US and EU could prove the doubters wrong.

The Good Friday Agreement brought violent conflict to an end. But with peace walls still dividing communities in Belfast, schools and housing still somewhat segregated and many politicians still playing the Orange/Green card for electoral purposes, any new approach needs to focus on hearts and minds. In the post-EU Peace Programme period, the US could work with the EU to craft an extended and better resourced initiative that could build on existing experience and knowledge to fund work to bring our two traditional communities together in peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. This could help change the northern political landscape for the better, once and for all. With a border poll on a united Ireland potentially imminent, work towards breaking down 'them and us' barriers is more important than ever.

Entitled the US&EU Reconciliation Programme, there is no better name to herald a new beginning for communities desperately searching for a way to reconcile their differences and no better time to find a peaceful way forward for a people who deserve no less. This programme could include greater support for much needed Integrated Education in Northern Ireland. With only 7% of schools genuinely integrated, it is still possible to find young people in who never meet someone from the 'other side' until they enter higher education or move into the workplace. The integration of teacher training and the removal of the exemption for the employment of teachers could also help reconcile difference in the education system. The importance of legacy, learning from the conflict and victim support will also benefit greatly from increased US/EU funding. Organisations such as WAVE Trauma Centre for victims of the troubles and places of peacebuilding, such as the Hume Centre, Corrymela, Glenree, Cooperation Ireland and the Centre for Cross border studies will require support long into the future. I have recently been appointed Co-Chair of the organisation to establish a 'Museum of the Troubles and Peace' on a peace wall location in Belfast which we intend to be part of a network of centres throughout Northern Ireland and beyond.

3) The NI Civic Forum to be reinstated

As former Vice President (Deputy Speaker) of the European Civic Forum, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which gathers 350 business, trade union and other representatives from (then) 28 EU member States, I have long-standing experience of the value of such a consultative body on European decision making. While the EESC had no power of veto, the European Parliament and Council of Ministers were required by EU Treaty law to consult the EESC on every piece of legislation. EESC 'Opinions' based on consultation and compromise between social partners, serve to advise law makers on all aspects of EU legislation from farming to fisheries, to energy, environment and external affairs to social policy, consumer and cultural affairs.

This model was a move to encourage the participation of informed civic society representatives in a politics that was narrowed by division and the legacy of violent conflict. It is a more formalised version of the participatory democracy mechanisms such as the citizens Assemblies set up in Ireland in advance of the referenda on equal marriage and

reproductive rights. Their success is an important indicator of the value of civic consultation as a means to promote change in society. Attempts by the Irish Government to extend the reach of these assemblies on an all Ireland basis have fallen foul of unionist reluctance to participate. However, the Good Friday Agreement makes provision for a Northern Ireland Civic Forum which was proposed by the NI Women's Coalition as a means of garnering grass-roots community consultation and support for the political way forward. The Civic Forum was set up at the start of the NI Assembly but it did not get the political backing required to stay in place and was disbanded after two years.

The reinstatement of the Civic Forum would help stabilise the Assembly for the future. It would add the vital 'non political' voice to support decision-making and give clear guidance to Assembly Members at this crucial time in our history. While the views of NI farmers, business, women, youth groups and many others will provide a 'value added' perspective to all aspects of Assembly law making, the most important civic discussion will be the economic, social and cultural impact of any move towards a 'shared island'. These discussions are ongoing within the shared Island unit set up by the Taoiseach, but unionism and loyalism appears once again reluctant to participate. This may not be the case if the Civic Forum were to be reinstated and civic representatives of these groups were invited to engage.

At present, the only debate on the subject takes place either within academic circles which are often seen to be far removed from grass roots or on the airwaves which depend on the whim of the presenter or producer of the day. A constructive, creative in depth discussion which takes account of all aspects of the issues involved from the health service, to voting rights, to citizenship to cultural identity and much more should be aired in the structured inclusive confines of a Northern Ireland Civic Forum.

4) Greater South/North cooperation, collaboration, consultation and exchange

There is a serious need for greater exchange on the island of Ireland between people from all walks of life. The shared island unit in the Department of the Taoiseach is a welcome step but more could be done to foster a much needed understanding of Irish culture, traditions and structure of governance among the Unionist community in the north. At the same time, greater Unionist involvement in affairs of the South should help promote mutual understanding. The recent Irish government decision not to follow the 'tradition' of nominating a northern unionist, in this case former UFU President Senator Ian Marshall, to the Irish Senate has been met with a combination of disappointment, frustration and a rising feeling of the Unionist community being let down. If it were possible to 'reserve' a seat in the Senate for a unionist member, this should be done.

The decision to extend the Erasmus student exchange programme and the European Health Card to British and Irish citizens in Northern Ireland is a welcome development. More could be done, however, to explain to NI citizens how they can benefit from this important gesture, particularly when it comes to issues such as cancer treatment or elective surgery. Anecdotal evidence showing a patient facing a three year waiting list for a hip replacement in the North can get it done within three months in South and be reimbursed by the NHS is vital public service information which should be commonly known in Northern Ireland. On Erasmus, a North/South exchange of students on an annual basis would be a valuable contribution to mutual understanding among the youth of the island. These and more proposals are set out in my submission to the shared island unit which is detailed below.

Submission to the Shared Island Unit (December 2020)

Jane Morrice (European Unionist)

The new Shared Island unit in the Department of the Taoiseach is a welcome step in attempts by the Irish government to build greater exchange between Northern Ireland and the Republic and to develop a mutual understanding of the way forward for the people of both parts of the island of Ireland. This form of outreach backed by political will and substantial funding, is a valuable commitment of time, energy and resources which could have a real and lasting impact on North/South relations if targeted correctly and handled sensitively. Above all, it will need the necessary 'buy in' from the unionist community in Northern Ireland.

This type of outreach may not have been as necessary if it were not for the UK decision to leave the EU and the impact of Brexit on the island of Ireland and on community relations in the north. Before UK withdrawal from the EU, the island was 'shared' under the EU umbrella. The economic 'coming together' North and South has been slowly progressing since the UK and Ireland joined the EU in 1973. Increased acceptance of different political aspirations in Northern Ireland came about with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 which was also facilitated by joint EU membership. This progress which brought an end to the 30 year conflict, has been damaged by the UK departure from the EU. The effort on the part of the Irish Government to promote cross-border outreach could therefore be seen as an important exercise in damage limitation.

Understanding unionism

Viewed from a unionist perspective, the more liberal response might be to greet the shared island idea as a 'good neighbour' approach. Recognising the need for the two parts of Ireland to get to know each other better, the Irish government is reaching the hand of friendship to British citizens who live in an adjoining state and share the same island. Others think very differently. They see it as the start of a 'slippery slope' to a United Ireland which explains their negative attitude towards the idea. The unionist majority in the north is made up of several shades of the same political colour. Generally speaking, any positive shift in unionist attitudes towards Irish nationalism was brought about by their experience of power sharing on the basis of equality and the example set by the Paisley/McGuinness leadership. The progressive change in the unionist approach to cross border relations was fostered, mainly in the business sector, by the Single EU Market and the removal of the border in all but name. Given the differing unionist/nationalist positions on EU

membership, cross-community division has been brought into sharper focus as a result of Brexit by strengthening unionist loyalties to the will of the British people and the destiny of the UK outside the EU.

EU membership has been a long standing bone of contention between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland. In line with Irish thinking, the nationalist community was more eager to embrace all things European particularly because it allowed them to leap-frog London and gain an equal place with the UK and others at the top table in Brussels. In spite of the fact that Northern Ireland was a net recipient of EU funds, the unionist community reflected the British position as a 'reluctant' member of the European club. As members of the European Parliament, the Hume/Paisley relationship offered some confidence in the ability of both to work together, particularly with their joint support for the introduction of the EU PEACE programme, but their relationship was always more strained when they returned home from Strasbourg.

While the nationalist/unionist divide was blurred to a certain extent by the Good Friday solution, differences within the unionist community itself can be reflected in their own internal positions on both the Good Friday Agreement and EU membership. The element of unionism that was anti-Agreement was also pro 'Leave' while the other was pro-Agreement and anti Leave. Eventually, the anti-Agreement unionists were resigned to accept the will of the people of Northern Ireland and eager to accept Brexit as the will of the British people. By the same token, the pro-Agreement unionists are resigned to accept Brexit as a fait accompli because it was a UK-wide decision. The result for unionists of all shades is dissatisfaction, demoralisation and diminishing return. This is not a good place for them to be.

On social issues, the divide within unionism was further deepened by the referenda in the Republic on equal marriage and abortion. This led to acceptance among liberal unionism that the South was moving further away from the old adage 'Home Rule means Rome rule', while the others perceived it as a step too far from their position on these issues. It also served as a reminder of their inability to influence the march of change in any 'shared island' context. The Celtic tiger also contributed to changing unionist attitudes. The days when the road surface on the border changed from good in the North to bad in the South are gone. The Belfast-Dublin enterprise, the motorway, holidays in Donegal and access to Dublin airport, Aerlingus and Ryanair made cross-border exchange speedy, seamless and enjoyable.

On the economic front, while northern nationalists would generally regard the impressive high tech revolution in the South as a welcome development, some unionists appear to resent the shift in prosperity from the once glory days of the industrialised north when the Belfast shipyard was the centre of Protestant employment. Aware of the decline in Northern fortunes and the heavy dependency on London for support, many unionists are concerned for their future and some fear being cut adrift by an increasingly English nationalist culture. The National Health Service is still their saving grace and most shades of unionism believe this is the solid ground on which any attempt at uniting Ireland will fall.

Creative constitutional thinking

On the constitutional question, the change in language from 'united' to 'shared' is a welcome recognition of the sensitivities involved. There are those, however, in the unionist community who believe the word 'island' should be plural rather than singular and placed in the context of the British/Irish isles. To this end, creative thinking beyond the island should be encouraged within the shared island unit. This should not ignore the role Scotland could play in future relations between the islands. With the tide turning as a result of Brexit, Scotland could hold the key to the future of Northern Ireland. An independent Scotland searching for a way back to the EU will have no better place to look than through Ireland. On its way, it will recognise the value of Northern Ireland as the link between both. An idea floated by a Dublin academic proposes a coming together of Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland (SCINI) in an arrangement similar to the BENELUX countries of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, which formed the origin of the EU. The potential for SCINI to provide the Orange/Green balance to divided loyalties in the North should not be underestimated.

With the unionist/nationalist demographic balance likely to be tipped following the centenary year of the creation of Northern Ireland and a border poll triggered thereafter, there are monumental challenges ahead. In the lead up to a decision on the timing of any referendum, it will be vital to learn the lesson from Brexit. Adequate time must be allocated for discussion, debate and clear understanding before decisions are thrust on the people. Vital issues such as voting rights, including age, nationality and obligation, must be decided well in advance. The greatest challenge will be to accommodate all shades of unionist colour on the way forward. Outreach is vital but, following the courageous example of previous peace builders such as John Hume, David Trimble, Baroness May Blood, Mary McAleese and Mo Mowlam, it must be considered from every angle, including those regarded as less palatable.

The role of US/EU/GB/IRL

On this path, Northern Ireland will need continued and substantial backing from all those with 'skin in the game'. Most important are the citizens of the North whether British, Irish, both or neither. They must be consulted, through civic fora, opinion polling and education every step of the way. In terms of 'outside influence' the United States will be a major player, particularly when Joe Biden takes over in Washington. US political pressure set the stage for ground-breaking 'Fair Employment Legislation' providing equal access to the workplace. The intervention of the Clintons in the early days of the peace process was a substantial influence on its success. A new strategy from a Biden administration with an intricate understanding of the value of EU input, might even be able to reach beyond the achievements of its Democratic predecessors.

The US approach to the peace process has always been seen as 'top-down'. Its use of the grand Presidential stage, megaphone diplomacy, visa flexibility and inclusion of the unionist dimension under the Clinton administration was a master-stroke in brinkmanship. When Bill Clinton announced that of the 40 million Irish Americans, half were Protestant, his words resonated in Belfast. At last, many unionists thought, orange voices were being heard in Irish America. When Hillary Clinton defended the voice of women in the peace negotiations, at last, many women thought, their voices were being heard in the world. The EU strategy has always been much more 'bottom-up' with support going to farmers, local

infrastructure and cross community, cross border initiatives. The EU decision to continue its PEACE and INTERREG programmes post Brexit is a mark of its unwavering dedication and commitment to continue targeting grass-roots funding to support peace and reconciliation and enhance the social and economic standing of those most in need.

Together, the US and EU will play an important role in the future of NI. The top-down/bottom up approach, using a combination of political pressure and economic support, will enable the EU/US partnership to pull the levers which will help Northern Ireland find its place in a shared Ireland. Alongside Britain and Ireland, their role will be as vital as each leg on a four-legged stool keeping the people of Northern Ireland balanced and stable and securing a prosperous, peaceful future for their place in history. These relationships should be encouraged within the structures of the GFA. Given the sensitivity of the peace process and the concrete commitment by all to the Good Friday Agreement, they are unlikely to miss any opportunity to protect their investment in peace and reconciliation by finding what could be a long-lasting solution to a century-old conflict.

The way forward - 12-point plan

Against this backdrop, accommodating unionism in a shared island and increasing Irish understanding of their British neighbours presents a growing and serious challenge. There are, however ways in which cross fertilisation of North/South ideas could and should be encouraged. These include:

- the creation of a similar shared island unit within the NI Executive
- a reinstated NI civic forum working in partnership with an Irish citizens Assembly
- use of EU ERASMUS student, teacher and worker exchange on a North/South basis
- recognition of integrated education as a valued method of understanding difference
- reviewing the possibility of dual House of Lords/Senate mandate
- increased North/South, East/West cooperation under INTERREG also including Scotland
- closer cooperation with British/Irish Association and North/South inter parliamentary links
- stepping up the number of 'joint 'events, such as North/South business conferences
- greater cultural cooperation such as music festivals to help local bands and young people post Covid
- an all island high tech cyber strategy to promote reconciliation, youth leadership and prevent youth radicalisation
- Increased cooperation with International Fund for Ireland, peace-building and cross- border NGOs
- regular US/EU/UK/IRL expert and summit meetings to agree progress

WhiteDoveWay <https://janemorrice.com/?p=143>

I have also been working on an ambitious new project to create a European path of peace from Northern Ireland to Nicosia, linking the two divided islands on either side of the EU, tracing the legacy of EU peacebuilding in the aftermath of world war and following in the footsteps of Columbanus, the Irish pilgrim, said to be the patron Saint of Europe. This proposal was approved by the EESC in 2019 and has been sent to the EU decision making institutions for follow-up. As Columbanus (White Dove) is also the Patron Saint of motorcycles, I have proposed that the first attempt at the 3000 + mile route should be done by motorbike and the Harley Davidson Association of Greece is ready and willing to take up the challenge. I have also commissioned a 4 minute 'Virtual Reality' experience of the path of peace showing the white dove breaking down the Belfast peace walls and moving into the trenches of Flanders fields. I would eventually like this to be a ten minute Virtual Reality 'history book' of peacebuilding in Europe available in schools throughout the EU.

Northern Ireland - on the cusp of greatness

The centenary of the creation of the state of Northern Ireland is the year the nation starts facing up to its greatest constitutional challenge. But Northern Ireland is not alone. At no other time in the post-partition history of the British/Irish isles have all five nations which make up the UK and Ireland faced the changes which now confront each and every one. Brought on by the UK vote to leave the EU supported by two of its four nations, Brexit is already cracking under the heavy weight of its irresponsibility. With calls for a Scottish independence referendum and an Irish border poll growing louder, tension over customs borders increasing and tens of thousands of British citizens applying for Irish passports, the potential for confusion leading to chaos is significant.

Northern Ireland would be at the heart of any solution and rightly so. Its experience of conflict and peacebuilding is a microcosm of the EU story. It is perfectly placed between Britain and Ireland to become the link between two countries destined to grow apart as the reality of UK/EU withdrawal bites. But Northern Ireland has something to offer the global stage as well. Sitting on the crossroads of Europe and America with historic ties and vested interests on both sides, Northern Ireland is well placed to help bridge the trans-Atlantic divide in a Western alliance built to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Because of their global reach, Coronavirus, climate change, radical extremism and world poverty can only be combatted by acting together. By joining forces, America and Europe could live up to their global responsibility to work for the common good of the world. Northern Ireland has the political know-how, the connections, the youthful skill set, the sorry experience and the powerful success story to help bring US&EU together.

It is said that it takes as long to build peace as it does to fight war. If that is the case, Northern Ireland is set to emerge from 30 years of peacebuilding after thirty years of conflict, in 2028, the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, as a role model for conflict resolution worldwide. It's potential to return to the glory days of the building of the Titanic on a new foundation of equality, inclusion, human rights and mutual respect will be world beating and the opportunities for its role as a trade and investment gateway to Europe and the world will be second to none.

A peaceful, prosperous, industrious nation with a reputation for scenic beauty, friendly hospitality and 'craic' will find tourists and investors flocking to its shores to witness the wonder of a place which has emerged from terrible tragedy to find its way in the world.

Thanking you in advance for giving me the rare opportunity to address the highest level of US political decision-making, I want to express my appreciation for the dedication, commitment and support the US has given to the cause of peace and reconciliation in my beloved country.