



Truth Recovery

Revisited

A Contribution
from within Loyalism

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Foreword

Given the ongoing political discussions in relation to dealing with the past towards the latter part of 2014, it was decided to reignite interest and to promote dialogue on such matters - amongst the constituency associated with EPIC. The overarching aim of the two day event was to explore the views and opinions of this constituency and to determine if there was a desire to engage with any structures to facilitate in dealing with the past, which may have emerged from the top level discussions that were taking place.

Over the years, EPIC has closely monitored the political developments in this area and has responded to the relevant consultations when possible. In fact, the first in a series of our discussions in relation to dealing with the past were captured in a brief document entitled, "Truth Recovery: A contribution from within Loyalism" in 2004. This highlighted significant fears and concerns about the Republican agenda of laying the blame for the conflict on all things British, as well as the general demonisation and marginalisation of Loyalists.

It comes as no surprise that ten years on, many of these factors remain or in some cases have been exacerbated. For instance, we are all too aware that the "feel-good factor" which immediately succeeded the ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement has long gone, whilst the apparent fragility of the political architecture has created an atmosphere which is not conducive to dealing with the conflicting views on the past. This is further compounded by the various public inquiries which have heightened suspicion within Loyalism. In addition to this, we have also witnessed the deterioration of relationships at the grassroots level due to disputes over cultural issues such as flags and parading. As a result, it could be argued that revisiting the past could have a negative effect on our ability to move forward, given the current difficulties within communities, as well as those identified in this report.

In spite of such challenges however, this constituency has acknowledged their role in the past and have engaged constructively in attempting to create a better future - as they will continue to do. Therefore EPIC welcomes this report as it simply highlights some of the concerns within Loyalism, whilst giving a voice to those who are often ignored in such discussions. EPIC will continue to monitor developments in this area and capture the views and opinions of this constituency.

EPIC would like to thank Martin Snoddon, Michael Atcheson and Dr William Mitchell for their roles in facilitating the discussions and Dr Lisa Faulkner for preparing this report. We would also like to thank the keynote speakers; Professor Kieran McEvoy, Queens University; Denis Bradley, Co-Chair of the Consultative Group on the Past; Alan McBride, Wave Trauma Centre and Kate Turner, Director of Healing Through Remembering. Also, a special thanks to those members of the EPIC management committee and staff who helped with the organisation of the event, and for all those who shared their views and opinions over the two days. Finally, thanks to Intercomm for supporting this project.

Tom Roberts, Director, EPIC

Foreword

The process which is documented herein is a very good addition to the protracted discussions on dealing with the past in Northern Ireland. I was very pleased to be asked to make a contribution and to share in the discussions which I found to be thoughtful, measured and reflective. These are complex and sensitive matters and it is important that all of us realise the challenges involved before we overpromise what is achievable – particularly to those directly affected by the conflict. Certainly what is possible will be dictated by engaging with those who were directly involved in the conflict.

One of the key differences between the most recent round of political discussions which led to the Stormont House Agreement and the Good Friday Agreement before it, is that the representatives of Loyalism were not at the table. However, their role in dealing with the past is absolutely crucial and their voices need to be heard, especially as the dealing with past institutions begin to take shape. I commend those involved in steering this important process and I also suggest that anyone with a serious interest in dealing with the past should read this document.

Professor Kieran McEvoy, Queens University Belfast



Agreement

Prosecutions

Dialogue

truth
recovery

Victims

Good Friday

Agreement

Reprisals



Introduction

This document gives an overview of a two day conference which explored the views and concerns of a specific Loyalist constituency, in relation to Dealing with the Past in and about Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on the mechanism of truth recovery. Following a similar event in 2004, 'Truth Recovery – Revisited' (27th November and the 3rd December 2014), took place against the backdrop of the multi-party talks which subsequently culminated in the Stormont House Agreement, 23rd December 2014.

The event featured keynote speakers from a range of professional backgrounds, including; Professor Kieran McEvoy, Queens University Belfast; Denis Bradley, Co-Chair of the Consultative Group on the Past; Alan McBride, Centre Co-Ordinator of Wave Trauma Centre and Kate Turner the Director of Healing Through Remembering. Drawing on this wealth of knowledge and expertise, the delegates deliberated on the idea of truth recovery through a series of workshops and seminars.

What emerged was that many of the concerns and fears raised in 2004 remain, or have in some instances been exacerbated, such as; the general assumption that any mechanism would serve only to further criminalise and demonise the actions of Loyalist ex-combatants during the conflict. Therefore, whilst the delegates acknowledge that the past must be addressed in order to sustain peace, there is no appetite to engage with mechanisms such as truth recovery at this time. This was largely attributed to the fact that Loyalists at the grassroots level tend to be excluded from discussions pertaining to dealing with the past.

As an independent researcher, my role was to record the discussions and to document the main issues to emerge. In doing so, a limited number of recommendations are offered which may assist this constituency in continuing with their discussions on such matters. It must be noted this report does not fully represent the overarching views, opinions or strategic thinking of EPIC. Rather, it should be viewed as an ongoing, 'bottom-up' discussion about the truth recovery debate.

Dr Lisa Faulkner



Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre-EPIC

The Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre (EPIC) emerged in the early 1990s in response to the problems surrounding the reintegration of politically motivated prisoners. Focusing specifically on those prisoners from an Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) or Red Hand Commando (RHC) background, EPIC has been operating along more formalised lines since 1995. Since this time, it has developed and adapted to many issues which have emerged within Loyalist communities in the post-ceasefire climate.

EPIC continues to support and advocate on behalf former political prisoners within a constituency which is increasingly disenfranchised from the political architecture of Northern Ireland. Therefore, by exploring other conflicts and post-conflict societies throughout the world, EPIC has attempted to influence policymakers, whilst lobbying for the successful reintegration of former combatants in order to consolidate and sustain peace.

While the successful reintegration of ex-combatants in itself makes a significant contribution to peace-building, EPIC have, through a wide range of activities made a much wider impact to peace-building in Northern Ireland. Examples of these activities are as follows;

Creating opportunities for ex-combatants and others to engage in dialogue with political adversaries (humanising and de-stereotyping).

Youth intervention (using the experience of former prisoners/combattants to influence youth to channel energies towards non-violent methods of resolving conflict.

Assisting former UVF/RHC activists to contribute positively and non-violently to their communities.

Resolution of interface violence by lines of communication with Republican activists.

International study visits to other regions in post conflict and building of relationships with academic institutions in the field of conflict resolution.

Assisting UVF/RHC in the process of transformation.

Provision of Welfare Rights Advice service to both ex-prisoners and the wider community.

EPIC remains committed to reconciliation and conflict transformation both within and between communities. This is demonstrated through their role in promoting social justice, community engagement, restorative justice and the reintegration of former prisoners and their families.

Context

The political landscape in Northern Ireland has undergone a radical transformation. Changes since the 1990s have included the ceasefires, the signing of the Belfast Agreement and the passage of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which provided for a devolved, cross-community, power-sharing government. Unlike some of the peace accords in many transitional societies however, the Belfast Agreement did not include a mechanism such as a truth process designed to deal with the past.¹ Rather, it contained a number of mechanisms which may be described as piecemeal elements of an approach to the past² such as, the early release of political prisoners, police reform and the provision of services to victims.

Since the signing of the Belfast Agreement the question of whether Northern Ireland should have a formal truth recovery process has been on the agenda; with many advocating or rejecting the idea according to what they believe about such processes in other transitional contexts, such as South Africa. Truth recovery is a wide process which involves many different mechanisms, of which a truth commission is one. In general terms, a truth commission can be a less formal, victim centred solution which is unhindered by the complex rules of evidence and witnesses in traditional court settings. As such they have much greater space to create a broader picture of what happened, can hear from all involved and allow them to tell stories and give the perspectives, which would be excluded from a trial.³ The main arguments in favour of a truth commission in Northern Ireland are; that the past cannot be ignored as it will have consequences for individuals and society at large at some later stage,⁴ that it will foster responsibility and acknowledgement and that victims have an impeccable 'moral claim' to have their experiences and needs recognised.⁵

One of the most significant attempts to deal with the past in Northern Ireland came in the form of the British Government appointed – Consultative Group on the Past, which in 2009, recommended that a 'Legacy Commission' be established, that would fulfil a reconciliation, truth-recovery and justice mandate. In spite of the enormity of the task facing the Consultative Group, much of the attention it received was focused on the 'recognition payment' rather than the proposed architecture which attempted to better co-ordinate and build on previous work in this area.⁶

Regardless of whether a truth commission is created in order to investigate the past in Northern Ireland, both amnesties and prosecution have already been used in some form in addressing certain cases relating to the conflict. In fact the most recent example came in the form of the "On the Run" scheme, whilst the Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains and the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday ensured that information provided by individuals could not be used in criminal proceedings against them.⁷ Moreover, investigations by the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) have resulted in a number of prosecutions. In general terms however, there is a prevailing perception amongst Loyalists that these mechanisms, particularly the HET, are more focused on historical incidents within Loyalism than within Republicanism, or other actors of the conflict.

¹ Amnesty International highlight that in more than 30 countries throughout the world, truth commissions have been established as official, temporary, non-judicial fact-finding bodies to investigate a pattern of abuses of human rights, including the crimes, and to establish the truth. Most conclude their work with a final report containing findings of fact and recommendations. Accessed, 17/12/14. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/international-justice/issues/truth-commissions>

² McEvoy, K (2006) *Making Peace with the Past: Options for Truth Recovery regarding the Conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Healing Through Remembering*, page viii.

³ Adams, S. *Truth recovery, Accountability and the Use of Amnesties in the Transition from Violence: Lessons from South Africa, Uruguay and Uganda*: http://www.academia.edu/5858894/Truth_recovery_Accountability_and_the_Use_of_Amnesties_in_the_Transition_from_Violence_Lessons_from_South_Africa_Uruguay_and_Uganda

⁴ Biggar, N (eds) (2003) *Burying the Past: Making Peace and Doing Justice after Civil Conflict*. Georgetown University Press.

⁵ Lawther, C (2011) *Unionism, Truth Recovery and the Fearful Past*, *Irish Political Studies*, 26:3, 361-382

⁶ *The Consultative Group on the Past recommended that £12,000 be paid to the families of all those killed in the conflict. This provoked outrage amongst some victim and survivor groups, and politicians alike.*

⁷ McEvoy, K, Anthony, G and Malliner, L. *Amnesties, Prosecution and the Public Interest*, Accessed, 3/3/15 <http://blogs.qub.ac.uk/amnesties/>



Dealing
with the Past

Dialogue

truth
recovery

Amnesties

Prisoner
Release

ceasefires




Loyalists - Dealing with the Past

Much of the debate in relation to dealing with the past tends to suggest that Unionists and Loyalists are reluctant to engage with the truth recovery debate. In that respect, Unionism is often portrayed as being particularly weak at telling its story, which in turn, leaves it at a disadvantage in engaging with such discussions. Whereas, Loyalist paramilitaries' opposition to any form of truth recovery process is often based on the premise that they would 'become scapegoats for the actions of Unionist politicians yet again'. What many of these commentators fail to point out however, is that there is clear evidence that Loyalists, in particular, have engaged in wide-ranging discussions around the idea of 'truth recovery', or that the Loyalist stance is more complicated than is conveyed.

Whilst this report goes some way to outline the 'Loyalist stance' and the factors which influence it, their attempts at addressing the past are perhaps best outlined by the Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC) ceasefire statement issued on 13 October 1994; whereby Loyalists moved closer than any other armed group towards offering an apology by stating;



In all sincerity, we offer to the loved ones of all innocent victims over the past twenty years, abject and true remorse. No words of ours will compensate for the intolerable suffering they have undergone during the conflict. ¹⁰

Although Loyalists played a significant role in the peace process, they have not been afforded the same opportunity to engage in the protracted discussions on dealing with the past in the post ceasefire climate. Therefore in attempting to address this void, EPIC actively encourages former prisoners and others to participate in workshops and seminars such as those on which this report is based.

⁸ See Lawther, C. (2011) *Unionism, Truth Recovery and the Fearful Past*, *Irish Political Studies*, 26(3), pp. 361–382.

⁹ Edwards, A (2012) *Fearful of the Past or 'Remembering the Future and Our Cause? A Response to Cheryl Lawther*, *Irish Political Studies*, 27:3, 457-470

¹⁰ *Combined Loyalist Military Command (1994) Statement, 13 October*, available at: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/clmc131094.htm> (accessed 12 January 2011).



Overview: “Truth Recovery: A Contribution from within Loyalism, 2004”

This section will briefly sketch out the key issues which emerged in 2004, in order to fully appreciate the most recent round of discussions in December 2014, as detailed in the following section.

Key issues: 2004

The conflict is not over

Many wounds are still too raw for a truth process to succeed

Such processes run the risk of indoctrinating a more ‘militant’, younger generation

Northern Ireland is too small for individuals to disclose information

Loyalists do not have the same legitimacy in their own communities as their Republican counterparts

The demonisation, stigmatisation and criminalisation of Loyalists is a main barrier to engaging with any process

Disclosure could result in discrimination/reprisals against individuals and family members

Revisiting the past could harm relations within families

The lack of political remorse could be misinterpreted by victims

Uncertainty about the underlying agenda for a ‘truth recovery’ process.

In sum, this consultation process demonstrated that any type of truth process must clearly outline the benefits for Loyalism. This conclusion was based on the fact that;

There is a tendency for Loyalist ex-prisoners/paramilitaries to be used as scapegoats

There is an endless stream of one-sided inquiries targeting Loyalists

Loyalists have yet to tell their stories, which may dispel some of the negativity directed towards them



Overview: “Truth Recovery Revisited: A Contribution from within Loyalism, 2014”

This section provides a general overview of the main issues to emerge during the Truth Recovery Revisited event, December 2014.

Loyalist Views and Opinions are Neglected

It is reasonable to suggest that the prevailing assumption from all levels of society in Northern Ireland today is that;

“ “ *The past will not let itself be ignored and past traumas can always be expected to have emotional consequences for an individual and a society at some later stage.* ” ”¹¹

In many respects, the delegates were also aligned to this way of thinking, given their participation in the event itself and the fact that, to their knowledge, “this group are the only Loyalist grouping to have engaged with the Consultative Group on the Past.” In spite of their efforts to actively engage with such processes, there was an overarching consensus from the delegates that they are excluded from “any meaningful participation in any dialogue or process which aims to address the past.” For many, this was because the Republican agenda tends to dominate, whilst for others, “Loyalists are viewed as having nothing valid, innovative or constructive to bring to such discussions.” These sentiments are succinctly captured by the following statements;

“ “ *The Loyalist community are merely bystanders watching many processes taking place. There’s not one Loyalist victims group – they all tend to be Republican orientated with a Republican agenda, using their position as a stick to beat the state, and to ensure their stories are kept at the forefront. Loyalist views don’t seem to matter.* ” ”

¹¹ Biggar, N (eds) (2003) *Burying the Past: Making Peace and Doing Justice after Civil Conflict*. Georgetown University Press.



We haven't had the courtesy of being briefed about current processes, which to me is because we are still being demonised. So if we are not welcome to have our say, then our views will never be heard, after all - mainstream Unionists won't convey our opinions. , ,

In fact, many felt that this constituency have no input into the programmes, policies and processes which aim to address contentious issues in our society – issues which tend to impact more significantly on Loyalist, working class areas, where the majority of the delegates live and work. One delegate for example explained that;



The consensus in this room is that there are always discussions about flags, parades and the past, we are resolving these issues on the ground, we are living in these communities and these issues are alive and raw, but there is never any consultation with us and we are the ones who will feel the impact of any mechanism. , ,

Over the course of the two day event it became apparent that excluding Loyalists (whether actual or perceived), heightens their sense of alienation and distrust of “elitist” discussions and processes, which in turn, adds to their reluctance to engage with such mechanisms.

Prosecutions, Discrimination and Reprisals

Given the issues raised by the speakers over the course of this event, the delegates were soon debating the 'perceived' intricacies of their likely involvement in any future truth recovery mechanism. In that respect, the issues raised in this section are 'hypothetical', and would "require a greater degree of analysis and discussion, should this constituency find itself represented at the discussion table." Therefore, the points raised represent the beginning of a discussion, rather than the conditions for any future engagement.

Although the main criticism was that this constituency are not included in any discussions, "being involved in the overall design of any mechanism would not simply dispel the concerns and fears of this constituency." Rather, it was assumed that involvement, in any capacity, would result in prosecutions, discrimination and reprisals. Consequently, this only added to the level of ambiguity about; what exactly truth recovery means, the benefits of such processes and how exactly a constituency such as this should approach the matter in the future.

For example, whilst there was a consensus that any engagement would have to take place in a "collective manner," many believed that this in itself would prove problematic given that "people remember things in different ways," or that it "would be impossible to make people come forward." Furthermore, there was a level of confusion about what information the state, victims and others would be seeking – given that "there is a lot of information in the public domain already." Consequently, many were highly sceptical of all processes and indeed, the conditions which are often in place to make them appear more inviting to former combatants-such as amnesty. One delegate for instance explained that;

“ I have always seen amnesty as red herring, unless it goes hand in hand with anonymity, and that means you would have to consider the value of telling the truth – if no-one knows who it is that is telling it. ”

The delegates understood that amnesties, in their classic form, shield individuals from investigations, prosecutions and punishments with the recent 'On the Run' scheme cited as an appropriate example of this in practice. Nonetheless, they felt that there was a lack of clarity about the legal infrastructure surrounding amnesties, mainly in relation to how they would work if participation was to occur in a "collective manner." In other words; "If individuals go forward and receive some form of amnesty, does that mean that if we are participating collectively - that more forms of amnesty would be granted, as the level of information would be substantially greater than what one individual would provide? And would it matter that the information is already in the public domain?"

It is also worth noting that there is a desire to know more about how truth recovery processes have worked in other post-conflict societies, and what victims have gained from such transitional justice mechanisms. Although many felt that this could give some indication as to how Northern Ireland could approach this matter, others felt that other contexts are irrelevant as;

“ Any process is doomed to fail here, no matter what it's based on, as there needs to be participation from all levels of society, that's from non-state actors to religious institutions. They all need to recognise and acknowledge the role they played and until they do, there is no way of being clear on the true agenda of having a truth recovery process here. ”

In sum, it was clear that many concerns and fears are to be addressed before any consideration of engaging in a truth recovery process takes place. Until such times however, there was a strong desire to continue with such discussions at this level—particularly as, “this constituency has not been afforded the opportunity to debate such matters at other tables”.

Concerns and Fears

Many of the concerns and fears raised in 2004 remained in 2014. For example, the delegates declared that;

- Such processes run the risk of indoctrinating a more 'militant', younger generation
- Loyalists do not have the same legitimacy in their own communities as their Republican counterparts
- The lack of political remorse could be misinterpreted by victims
- The demonisation, stigmatisation and criminalisation of Loyalists is a main barrier to engaging with any process
- Uncertainty about the underlying agenda for a 'truth recovery' process
- There is a tendency for Loyalist ex-prisoners/paramilitaries to be used as scapegoats
- There is an endless stream of one-sided inquiries targeting Loyalists.

Some of the recent concerns may be attributed to the 'hypothetical nature' of the current debate, (given that it is based on speculation about what mechanisms may be established in Northern Ireland), as well as the level of ambiguity surrounding truth recovery. Yet, they generally tend to reflect the views that; the Loyalist, working class community are increasingly disenfranchised from the political architecture in Northern Ireland, that former Loyalist ex-prisoners/combatants are continually stigmatised and that Loyalists will be criminalised, more-so than their Republican counterparts. Overall, these factors gave rise to genuine concerns that dealing with the past in any way, will have a profound impact on individuals and their family members.

For instance, Northern Ireland was deemed by all as being "too small for truth recovery to work", as "people know people." As such, "those who would put themselves forward to take part in any mechanism would be easily identified," which will "leave them open for discrimination or attack," or could pass - what was referred to as "the sins of the Father, onto younger generations."

Furthermore, it was also argued that "the inter-generational impact of the conflict is playing out already," as the children of former political prisoners face discrimination in certain jobs, as a result of their parent's convictions. Subsequently, many explained that taking part in any mechanism would have serious implications for their children, partners and friends and would most likely damage relationships with work colleagues and others. Therefore, should there ever be collective engagement in a truth recovery process in the future, many feel that;

“ You run the risk of labelling yourself and your family, for the rest of their lives. And let's face it, the demonisation of Loyalists and the relentless flow of one-sided inquiries directed at them will hardly have everyone queuing up to take part. ”

Even if engagement was to occur in a 'collective manner', many felt that they would still be alone, given that working class Loyalism has no political machinery to advocate on its behalf. Therefore, as one delegate put it;

“ *If we speak out, we are doing it on our own. Whereas, if Republicans put themselves forward they have the political cover and support – protection. We don't have the elected, political voice to speak for us.* ”

It may be stated that this constituency would find it difficult to envisage any positive outcomes of engaging in truth recovery processes; for themselves, their communities, their families and for victims, whom they acknowledge have multifaceted needs.

Victims Sector: “Too Vague and Opaque”

Throughout the course of the conference it became apparent that the ‘victims sector’ is difficult to define, categorise or understand. As a result, many were ambivalent about the value of participating in any truth recovery process, given the complex views and needs of victims. On the one hand, it was apparent that “the past cannot be forgotten”, whilst on the other, many questioned whether those who perceive themselves as victims would want a constituency like this to come forward with information. In fact, this caused some people to question if “various versions of processes would need to run simultaneously?”

Perhaps the main concern in relation to victims was that there appears to be no definitive outline of what they would hope to get from any truth recovery process. Such concerns are captured in the following statements;

“ “ *Victims could say – I want information. When they get that, they could go on to say – I want justice, it is hard to see how any process would begin and come to an end. ”* ”

“ “ *Given that we hear all the time that re-visiting the past and opening old wounds can be harmful, does looking to the past actually bring any form of healing to victims? ”* ”

Whilst there was genuine empathy for all innocent victims of the conflict, the delegates were uncertain as to how their needs could ever be addressed through a truth recovery process. Not only did this cast doubt on the perceived benefits of such a process for victims and others, but it also led many to conclude that the “wounds in Northern Ireland are still too raw.”

“Dealing with Our Own Past”

Whilst it has been made clear that this constituency feels excluded from various talks and processes, this has not dampened the grassroots efforts to deal with the past. As such, the delegates discussed their work within communities, which they explained is underpinned by a community development ethos and conflict transformation principles. This work includes, amongst other things;

Verbal storytelling

Capturing past experiences through the written word

Drama

Commemorations

Historical Exhibitions

Creating opportunities for ex-combatants and others to engage in dialogue

Exploring the journey of former combatants and others, in other post conflict societies

In addition to this and in parallel to the work of EPIC, many also drew attention to the fact that the constituency has its own unique, transformation programme – Action for Community Transformation (the ACT Initiative). ACT has been successful in engaging former combatants in the post-ceasefire climate, supporting them to embrace new positive leadership roles within their communities. Within this programme, former combatants have the platform to participate in storytelling, commemoration and drama initiatives and there is also a Historical Exhibition and opportunities for cross-community engagement – all of which align to the principles of promoting peace and reconciliation. Quite simply;

“ *All the mechanisms are in place to further develop our thinking, we have demonstrated that there is a commitment to moving forward, part of which, is dealing with the past. Although, these efforts are never publicised we must continue to engage in dialogue amongst ourselves.* ”



Recommendations

In light of the issues detailed in this report, the following recommendations are offered. These are intended to assist this constituency in their efforts to erode the negative caricature of Loyalism, and to promote their continued participation in such discussions in a meaningful and informed manner. It is therefore recommended that;

A “Dealing with the Past Subgroup” should be established which would;

1. Comprise individuals who are representative of the constituency
2. Who are dedicated to the matter at hand
3. Who possess the skills to sustain dialogue amongst this constituency and with others
4. Who will keep abreast of political developments in this area and disseminate all relevant information to ensure that future debates are well informed.

EPIC, ACT and others representing the interests of this constituency should take steps to highlight the positive work which is being carried out at the grassroots level. Such efforts may help to dispel some of the negativity surrounding Loyalism.

Relationships with relevant professionals should be established/strengthened and maintained, thus enabling dialogue to take place in an informed manner

There is value in exploring such processes in other post-conflict states and regions, particularly in relation to the role of former combatants and the benefits of such processes for victims

Finally, consideration should also be given to consulting more widely with civil society, particularly those representing and advocating on behalf of the ‘victims sector.

Final Thoughts

This report demonstrates that this particular Loyalist constituency has acknowledged its role in Northern Ireland’s turbulent past and as such, it has been exploring the most appropriate role it can play in moving forward. Evidently, there is a level of cynicism in relation to the discussions, mechanisms and structures which have attempted to address legacy issues. Yet, contrary to the beliefs of many commentators, this Loyalist constituency recognises the importance of dealing with the past and welcomes the opportunity to engage in dialogue about such matters. Therefore, in spite of the challenges, the delegates have made clear that they will continue to monitor the developments in this area.

This project has been supported by INTERCOMM through the Systemic Peace Building strand of their Uniting Communities Project which was designed to support and enhance the delivery of good relations outcomes across North Belfast. This project is funded by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister through the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme. Engaging with legacy is a real barrier to building a shared and better future. This presents challenges for so many across communities as they seek to engage with the fears and suspicion of the past and hopes for the future.

Participation in this project is evidence that people are up for engaging with the challenges of the past. This is the basis for building an inclusive shared future.

INTERCOMM





Truth Recovery

Revisited

December 2014