**Summary of Ulster Unionist Party proposals on Parades & Protests, Flags and Dealing with the Past**

**Introduction**

The Ulster Unionist Party sees the creation of “mutual trust”, as set out in the Belfast Agreement, as the key to positively transforming how we do political business. 16 years after the signing of the Belfast Agreement the toxic legacy of our Troubles remains and Northern Ireland founders in a “post-Troubles”, rather than peaceful state.

The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to doing what’s right for Northern Ireland, and that test was as applicable during the Haass talks as at any other time or in regard to any other issue. This means putting the interest of the country ahead of the interests of the Party.

**Flags**

The Ulster Unionist Party respects the right of all our citizens to declare their identity to be British, Irish or other; all should be respected equally. However identity is not the same thing as sovereignty.

**Proposals**

* All political parties reaffirm Northern Ireland’s constitutional position as part of the United Kingdom and the mechanism for change.
* All political parties accept that there is only one sovereign flag which recognises the constitutional status of Northern Ireland.
* Legislation introduces a protocol known as Statutory Plus. This specifies a number of days when the Union Flag is flown from a set list of public buildings. Where there is sufficient political support, Councils may agree additional days.
* The one exception would be Belfast City Hall, which, as a totemic structure, and main civic building of our capital city, should revert to the policy of 365.
* Enabling legislation shall also state explicitly that no other sovereign flags shall be flown from official poles, except as is accepted in international protocols.

**Parades & Protests**

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that our streets belong to the people, who should be free to assemble as they wish, in a lawful and respectful manner. This is the internationally accepted standard, not least in the European Convention on Human Rights.

We accept the need for a regulatory regime. This must include:

* An administrative body that deals with the huge majority of parades and other assemblies that cannot, reasonably, be deemed in any way contentious. This body should operate in a manner that is focused on making the process as easy as possible for our citizens
* A new Adjudication Body, operating in a fully transparent and accountable manner, including the application of set criteria, consistent with international law, in reaching determinations.
* An Appeals process, independent of the adjudication body.
* Voluntary Codes of Conduct for those engaged in parades and protests.

**Dealing with the Past**

As previously stated, our commitment to find ways for Northern Ireland to move on will not be at the cost of disrespecting the rights and needs of victims and survivors of the Troubles, or disregarding the rule of law. Terrorism is terrorism and all terrorism is wrong.

Specifically, the Ulster Unionist Party supports:

* A pension for those severely injured in the Troubles (excluding those responsible for their own injuries arising from acts of terrorism)
* A major initiative to improve the health and wellbeing of our citizens and communities
* Victims and Survivors of the Troubles being exempt from reassessment under Welfare Reform
* A Historical Clarification Group
* Acknowledgment Statements
* A Reconciliation Initiative
* Co-operation and Co-ordination with victims and survivors in Great Britain

We reject the organisational solutions proposed in the Haass process such as the establishment of the Historical Investigation Unit (HIU) which would be a parallel police force with full arrest powers, but unable to effectively investigate the Provisional IRA due to the protection afforded by the OTR administrative scheme and the decommissioning of weapons.

Instead we propose:

* The early completion of the review of Troubles related murders.
* The HET needs significant reform.
* The NI Policing Board currently has oversight of HET, as part of the PSNI. To further remove politics from policing, we recommend oversight of the work of the HET be transferred to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).
* A fit-for-purpose HET may need to revisit a number of previously completed reviews, but only after completing its outstanding work programme. It would be for ACPO to define the criteria that would be used to trigger a second review.
* The establishment of accessible Advocacy Services for all victims and survivors.
* The resources currently directed to “supergrass” processes should end. The history of these trials is unreliable testimony, collapsed trials, the consequent waste of legal resources on a massive scale and the undermining of public confidence in the criminal judicial system. Where “informants” wish to assist the police and the courts, they should not be immune from prosecution; rather their co-operation should be a factor in their sentencing, if guilty.
* OPONI’s legacy work should be independently reviewed.
* The European Courts are engaged regarding the application of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights to legacy coroner’s courts. It is our belief, not least because Article 2 requires “timely” investigations, that legacy coronial courts require particular protocols.
* In any case where an OTR letter was issued, it is rescinded and the OTR’s case is re-opened and fully examined.

**Conclusion**

The overarching ambition must be to complete the processes as quickly as possible. Our citizens deserve the opportunity to move on to enjoy a peaceful and prosperous society. The proposals above are by no means complete, but they are achievable, practical and capable of generating the momentum that builds the trust, confidence and hope that devolved government can work.

Instead we have the continuing drive to re-write history and overturn agreements already made.

In 1998, the people of Northern Ireland were promised respect for everyone’s identity, a peace dividend to boost the economy and better government than Direct Rule. It’s time to deliver.