

**ABAIR LEAT  
HAVE YOUR SAY  
HAE YER SPAKE**  
THE **NEW IRELAND** IS FOR EVERYONE



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Commission on the  
Future of Ireland**  
December 2024



*Sinn Féin*

[www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland](http://www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland)

# MESSAGE FROM COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON DECLAN KEARNEY MLA

**‘The New Ireland is for Everyone – Have Your Say’, are the main pillars of the Commission on the Future of Ireland.**

“This project has given citizens an opportunity to have their say on the future of Ireland; our economy; our constitutional arrangements; political and democratic structures and governance; the role of the Irish government; the rights and equality agenda; the protection of minorities; future economic and public policy models and a future all-island public health service.



“The Commission on the Future of Ireland has also given those with alternative proposals to present their different visions of Ireland.

“The level of discussion on constitutional change is remarkable. There is now an unprecedented cross-party political consensus on the need to plan and prepare for Irish unity.

“Indeed, important sections of international opinion recognise that the potential for constitutional change is now on the political horizon.

“The pathway to a new Ireland should be incremental and phased – intelligently and democratically managed. Sinn Féin has a clear plan for the transition to a new national democratic settlement on our island.

“We believe there are practical steps to achieve unity. These will include among others:

- Establishment of a reunification unit within Roinn an Taoisigh.
- Appointment of a Minister of State for reunification.
- Publication of a Green Paper on constitutional change within the first 100 days of a new government term.
- Convening a Citizens’ Assembly on our constitutional future.

“A new all Ireland framework of governance must be carefully planned and resourced. At its core the partition of our country institutionalised the denial of the Irish people’s right to self-determination. The right of self-determination is enshrined within international law and is integral to the Good Friday Agreement.

“Irish unity has become the defining issue for our generation. We can be the authors of a new future. One that is positive, progressive, inclusive, anti-sectarian, and multicultural.”

# INTRODUCTION

This is the first Annual Report of the Commission on the Future of Ireland. The Commission was established by Sinn Féin in July 2022. Its remit is to undertake a grassroots consultation with the people of Ireland and internationally on the future of Ireland.

This has been achieved through the hosting of People's Assemblies across the country and internationally; through the collection and publication of written contributions; through hosting sectoral meetings and through private engagements.

A final report will be compiled at the culmination of the project. Thus far the Commission has hosted 19 public events in Ireland. 2 additional events have been hosted by Friends of Sinn Féin in America.



The Commission chairperson is Declan Kearney MLA and vice chairperson is Lynn Boylan MEP.

# KEY HIGHLIGHTS

**74 INDEPENDENT SPEAKERS**

**21 EVENTS SO FAR**

**THOUSANDS OF ATTENDEES**

**HUNDREDS OF WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS**

**PROTESTANT/ UNIONIST PARTICIPATION**

**EVENTS HOSTED IN EACH PROVINCE**

**REPORTS FROM EACH EVENT PUBLISHED**

**EVENTS HOSTED INTERNATIONALLY**

**QUARTERLY UPDATES**

# PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLIES

## BELFAST PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The first People's Assembly public meeting took place in Belfast's Waterfront Hall on 12th October 2022. The meeting was addressed by Sinn Féin's Party Chairperson Declan Kearney, Leas Uachtarán and First Minister Michelle O'Neill, and the independent chair for the evening was Eilish Rooney of the University of Ulster. Over 300 people packed into the Waterfront Studio where they discussed constitutional change and the steps needed to create the new Ireland. The event saw 10 guest speakers make verbal submissions and this was followed by a discussion with the audience. Speakers included Seamus McGuinness - Research Professor (ESRI), Ruth Taillon - 20 years experience of Cross Border issues, Glyn Roberts - Chief Executive- Retail NI, Áine Hargey - Chairperson of the Markets Development Association, David Gavigan - Businessman, Greta Gurklyte - Public Engagement Officer- Disability Action, Professor John Barry - School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics- QUB, Dr Raied Al-Wassan - NI Council for Racial Equality, Maighréad Ní Chonghaile - Irish Language activist and Gaelscoil Principal & Ben Collins - Writer & Communications Consultant. The conference was divided into two sessions. The first covered 'The Economy and Communities in the New Ireland' and the second was titled 'A New Ireland for Everyone'.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B88dmep9SS4&t=19s>

Reports of the event can be accessed here: [A5](#)  
[REPORTCommissionFutureIre.pdf](#) [A5](#) [REPORTCommissionFutureIre.pdf](#)



## DONEGAL PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The Donegal People's Assembly took place in the Balor Arts Centre in Ballybofey on 13th February 2023. The meeting was addressed by Sinn Féin's Finance spokesperson and local TD Pearse Doherty. The panellists on the night were Professor Terri Scott, retired Pro Vice-Chancellor at Ulster University; Noelle Duddy, a former chair of Donegal Action for Cancer Care (DACC) and spokesperson for Co-operating for Cancer Care North West, CCC(NW); Paul Hannigan, Head of College at Atlantic Technology University Donegal., Toni Forrester, Chief Executive of Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce, and Seamus Neely, former Chief Executive of Donegal County Council. The independent chairperson was Micheál Ó hÉanaigh, former head of Údaras na Gaeltachta.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUmRpPnYt8&t=513s>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [sinnfein.ie/files/2023/A5\\_DONEGAL\\_REPORTcombined.pdf](https://sinnfein.ie/files/2023/A5_DONEGAL_REPORTcombined.pdf)



## ARMAGH/ DOWN/ LOUTH PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

Sinn Féin president Mary Lou McDonald TD opened the Armagh/ Down/ Louth People's Assembly meeting in the Carrickdale hotel on 30th March 2023. The independent chair of the session was Dr Conor Patterson, Chief Executive of Newry & Mourne Cooperative & Enterprise Agency. The panellists were Reverend Karen Sethuraman the first female Baptist Minister in Ireland and a Pastor of SoulSpace Peace and Reconciliation Hub; Aidan Browne from the Regional Development Centre at Dundalk Institute of Technology; Gerry Murphy, Assistant General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. and Mairéad McAlinden a retired health service Chief Executive.

Footage of the event can be watched here: [Armagh/Down and Louth 'People's Assembly' on the Future of Ireland](#)

The report of the event can be accessed here: [A5 ArmaghDownLouth REPORT.pdf](#)



## WATERFORD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The Waterford People's Assembly took place in the Tower Hotel on 12th October 2023. The meeting was addressed by Waterford TD David Cullinane on behalf of Sinn Féin. It was chaired by broadcaster and Public Relations Consultant Liz Reddy. The Panel included Catherine Ní Fhaoláin, Education and Mental Health Advocate; Irial Mac Murchú, the CEO of Nemeton TV; Former Independent TD for Waterford and Minister, John Halligan.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crauHOS48MM>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Waterford\\_Peoples\\_Ass\\_English\\_section\\_\(1\)\\_170124.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Waterford_Peoples_Ass_English_section_(1)_170124.pdf) [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Waterford\\_Peoples\\_Ass\\_Irish\\_170124.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Waterford_Peoples_Ass_Irish_170124.pdf)



## TIONÓL PHOBAIL CHONAMARA

Tionól Phobail Chonamara was held in An Cromptán in the Conamara Gaeltacht on November 27th, 2023. The event was independently chaired by Máirín Ní Ghadhra, the well-known broadcaster and journalist. At the outset Máirín stated what a great honour it was for the people of Conamara to host the first ever People's Assembly entirely 'as Gaeilge'. The panel of speakers included Breannán Ó Beaglaoich, Musician and Activist; Róisín Ní Chinnéide, Advocacy Manager at Conradh na Gaeilge; and Máirín Ní Choisdealbha-Seoighe, Community Activist.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixQrwDMBA8o>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/A5\\_CONAMARA\\_REPORT\\_\(1\).pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/A5_CONAMARA_REPORT_(1).pdf) [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/A5\\_CONAMARA\\_REPORTgaeilge\\_\(1\).pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/A5_CONAMARA_REPORTgaeilge_(1).pdf)



## FERMANAGH PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The Fermanagh People's Assembly took place in the Westville Hotel, Enniskillen on Tuesday 22nd February 2024. The meeting was addressed by Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald. The Independent Chairperson was Noelle McAloon, Enniskillen BID Manager. The panel included Dr Niall McVeigh, Director Cavan Institute; Mairaid Kelly, Local School Campaigner; and Producer and Director Trevor Birney.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNzcVvqtIao&t=1761s>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Fermanagh\\_Report\\_Final\\_28\\_april\\_24.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Fermanagh_Report_Final_28_april_24.pdf)



## WEST TYRONE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The West Tyrone People's Assembly took place in the Fir Trees Hotel, Strabane on Tuesday 27th February 2024. The meeting was addressed by Conor Murphy MLA. The meeting was chaired by Independent chairperson Michelle Canning, a former journalist who now works as a communications advisor. The panel included Dr Kieran Kennedy, Chairman of 21 Training & Strabane Business Improvement District; Professor Malachy O'Neill, Director of Regional Engagement at University of Ulster; Annette Kelly, a former teacher and owner of Little Penny Thoughts and Dr. Brendan O'Hare, a GP & former Chair of the Western Local Commissioning Group.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGg7MDIE-pQ>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/report\\_may\\_24\\_west\\_tyrene1.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/report_may_24_west_tyrene1.pdf)





## LURGAN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The Lurgan People's Assembly took place on 11th June 2024, in the Ashburn Hotel.

Finance Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald gave the opening address. The meeting was chaired by Conor Downey - Solicitor and the panel included Orla O'Dowd - School Principal, Dooley Harte - Trade Unionist and Rachel Coyle - Head of Campaigns and Mobilisation with the National Women's Council.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHXhKB2UoEI>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/LURGAN\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/LURGAN_REPORT_FINAL.pdf) [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/LURGAN\\_REPORT\\_GAEILGE.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/LURGAN_REPORT_GAEILGE.pdf)



## ARMAGH PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The Armagh People's Assembly took place on 29th October 2024, in the Armagh City Hotel. The opening address from Sinn Féin was made by Declan Kearney MLA. The meeting was chaired by Darragh Mackin (Human Rights Lawyer) and the panel for the event included Sinead Hughes (Health Professional), Ian Marshall (Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy at QUB & former Senator) and Dr Anne Devlin (Economist).

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFaSDePkIWU>

The report of the event will be available soon on [www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland](http://www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland)



# SECTORAL EVENTS

## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY- ENDING DIVISIONS

‘Celebrating Diversity- Ending Divisions’ was held in the City Hotel, Derry on 6th December 2022. It was chaired by former teacher and school principal Joe Martin who is also Chair of Colmcille Press. The panellists were: former Sinn Féin MLA Maeve McLaughlin who is Project Manager of the Bloody Sunday Trust and a community activist; former minister of First Derry Presbyterian Church David Latimer; writer and former editor of The Impartial Reporter Denzil McDaniel, and Catherine Pollock an Irish language activist and rights campaigner.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://youtu.be/KYm5iMyUKY>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2023/A5\\_DERRY\\_REPORTtogether1.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2023/A5_DERRY_REPORTtogether1.pdf)



## BELFAST WOMEN’S ASSEMBLY

Over one hundred women came together to have their say on the Future of Ireland at the Belfast Women’s Assembly. Lynn Boylan MEP & Aisling Reilly MLA both spoke at the event. The independent Chairperson of the session was Eilish Rooney, an Emeritus Scholar at Ulster University and a member of the Constitutional Conversations Group. Eilish was supported on the night by Cuisle Nic Liam from Conradh na Gaeilge. This event hosted round table discussions with women from different backgrounds. Due to the success of this event, an independent ‘Belfast Women’s Assembly’ structure has now been established. This group have went on to host events and private discussions about our future. For more information on how to become involved email [belfastwomensassembly@gmail.com](mailto:belfastwomensassembly@gmail.com)

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGg7MDIE-pQ>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2023/A5\\_BelfastWomensAssembly\\_REPORT\(2\)1.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2023/A5_BelfastWomensAssembly_REPORT(2)1.pdf)



## DUBLIN YOUTH ASSEMBLY

The Dublin Youth Assembly took place in the Communication Worker's Union on 28th June 2023. The meeting was addressed by Commission vice chairperson Seanadóir Lynn Boylan and chaired by Cllr Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien (Youth Worker). This event included round table discussions, interactive activities and gave the young people the opportunity to outline their hopes and aspirations for the future.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PohxICNHi4&t=9s>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2023/A5\\_YOUTHDublin\\_REPORT\\_\(1\).pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2023/A5_YOUTHDublin_REPORT_(1).pdf)



## EXPLORING NORTHERN PROTESTANT IDENTITIES AND CULTURE

'Exploring Northern Protestant Identities and Culture in a Shared Future' took place on 13th September 2023 in the Verbal Arts Theatre, Derry. Three women from the unionist section of our community – all community based activists - participated in the event. They were: Catherine Pollock – who chaired the event - Catherine Cooke and Alison Wallace. The opening remarks were made by Pádraig Delargy and Sinn Féin's National Chairperson and Chair of the Commission Declan Kearney gave the opening address.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xsp5WicaBqE>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/A5\\_DERRY\\_ProtestantREPORT\\_\(1\).pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/A5_DERRY_ProtestantREPORT_(1).pdf) [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/A5\\_DERRY\\_ProtestantREPORTgaeilge\\_\(1\).pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/A5_DERRY_ProtestantREPORTgaeilge_(1).pdf)



## RURAL COMMUNITIES IN A NEW IRELAND

3 discussions on 'Rural Communities in a New Ireland' have been hosted by the Commission on the Future of Ireland.

### NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS

2 events have been hosted at the National Ploughing Championships in Co Laois. The 1st took place in September 2023 and was chaired by Agriculture and Rural Affairs Spokesperson Claire Kerrane TD. Claire was joined on the panel by Nigel Renaghan, an organic farmer from County Monaghan, Damian McGenity, a farmer from County Armagh and member of Border Communities Against Brexit and Niamh Farrell, current chair of Macra na Feirme's Youth Committee. The 2nd event took place on 18th September 2024. The meeting was addressed by Sinn Féin Agriculture Spokesperson in the north Declan McAleer MLA and chaired by Sinn Féin Agriculture & Rural Development Spokesperson in the south Martin Kenny TD. The panel for the event included Catherine Lane (National Women's Council), Paula Melvin (Uachtarán Conradh na Gaeilge), Richard Halleron (Agriland) & Louise Lennon (Irish Rural Link).

Footage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swet4OmE5Qs>

Report: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/ploughing\\_report\\_english.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/ploughing_report_english.pdf)

The large crowds in the Sinn Féin marquee at both events demonstrated the growing momentum in the conversation about the future of Ireland. Hundreds of people who visited the marquee also took time to have their say on Irish Unity by filling out surveys on the topic.

### BALMORAL SHOW

The event at the Balmoral Show took place on Thursday 16th May 2024 and was addressed by Sinn Féin Agriculture Spokesperson Declan McAleer MLA and chaired by Michelle Gildernew MP. The panel for the event included John McCallister (Beef & Dairy Farmer), Louise Coyle (Director- NI Rural Women's Network) and Elaine Houlihan (President- Macra na Feirme). This was the 1st event of this kind to be hosted at the show.

Footage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOBvsEuF3-c&t=4s>

Report: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Rural Communities in a New Ireland Report final \(3\).pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Rural_Communities_in_a_New_Ireland_Report_final_(3).pdf)



## RIGHTS IN A NEW IRELAND

Rights in a New Ireland was hosted on the 3rd May 2024 in St Comgall's - Ionad Eileen Howell, Divis Street, Belfast. The meeting was addressed by Declan Kearney MLA. He opened the meeting by saying, "Sinn Féin is for a citizen centred, rights based society. Equality and fairness and justice must be at the heart of a new Ireland. These issues of rights and equality are at the heart of our collective efforts to end the divisions and conflicts of the past and to build a new future – a new Ireland for all our people. The historical reality in Ireland is that for centuries rights have been contested and in many instances violently denied. British dominance in Ireland over the centuries has relied on coercion and repression."

The meeting was Independently Chaired by Ailbhe Smyth. Ailbhe is currently Chair of Women's Aid and also of Ballyfermot STAR Addiction services. She is a director of Age Action and of the Women's Global Health Network Ireland, and Patron of the Women's Collective Ireland (WCI). Among other campaigning activities, she is a founding member of Le Chéile: Diversity not Division, a cross-sectoral alliance challenging far right extremism.

Ailbhe was joined on the panel by Daniel Holder - Director of the Belfast based Committee on the Administration of Justice and Co-Convener of the Equality Coalition. Dr Shannonbrooke Murphy - Endowed Chair and Associate Professor in Human Rights at St Thomas University in New Brunswick, Canada and Professor Colin Harvey - Professor of Human Rights Law in the School of Law, QUB and member of the management board of Ireland's Future.

Footage of the event can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT4lj94yHjE&t=46s>

The report of the event can be accessed here: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/RIGHTS\\_IN\\_A\\_NEW\\_IRELAND\\_REPORT\\_BEARLA.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/RIGHTS_IN_A_NEW_IRELAND_REPORT_BEARLA.pdf) [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/RIGHTS\\_IN\\_A\\_NEW\\_IRELAND\\_REPORT\\_GAEILGE.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/RIGHTS_IN_A_NEW_IRELAND_REPORT_GAEILGE.pdf)



## IRISH UNITY & THE ALL ISLAND ECONOMY

The Commission on the Future of Ireland has hosted two discussions on Irish Unity & the all Island Economy.

### BELFAST

The 1st event Took place on 28th June 2024, in the Europa Hotel, Belfast. The meeting was chaired by Cathy Gormley-Heenan - Academic and the panel for the event was Pearse Doherty TD, Conor Murphy MLA and Caoimhe Archibald MLA .

Key themes throughout included fiscal devolution, corporation tax, Brexit, north south cooperation, the cost of unity and planning for our future.

Footage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qKCFxwJpwg>

Report: [https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/ECONOMY\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/ECONOMY_REPORT_FINAL.pdf)

[https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Economy\\_REPORT\\_GAEILGE\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/Economy_REPORT_GAEILGE_FINAL.pdf)



### TYRONE

The 2nd event took place on 22nd November 2024, in Canavan's, Garvaghey, Tyrone. The meeting was chaired by Dr Anne Devlin- Economist and the panel for the event was Pearse Doherty TD, Conor Murphy MLA, John O'Dowd MLA and Caoimhe Archibald MLA. Key themes covered were Brexit, regional imbalance, the A5 road project & investment in infrastructure and the growth of the all island economy.

Footage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSjTPr-BGG0>

The report will be available soon on [www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland](http://www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland)



# FRIENDS OF SINN FÉIN

Hundreds of members of the Irish-American community gathered to discuss their role in securing Irish unity in both Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio in October 2024.

These events were designed to hear from members of the diaspora as part of the Commission on the Future of Ireland's work being undertaken by Friends of Sinn Féin USA. Other events are being planned for 2025. This will also include events in Canada.

Speaking at the event in Cleveland guest speaker Dáire Hughes MP said:

"Irish unity requires an Irish government to plan, prepare, and advocate for unity. That is what a Sinn Féin-led government in Dublin would do. An Taoiseach, Simon Harris, should stand up for Irish unity at home and in the White House.

"The Irish government needs to hear the voice of Irish America.

"To effectively prepare, the Irish government must establish a Citizens' Assembly on Irish unity and use its resources to lay out a vision of a new and united Ireland.

"They also must work with the British government to set a timetable for referendums and a plan for an inclusive and respectful discussion on the future.

"The US was essential in reaching the Good Friday Agreement. It also acted to safeguard progress when the British government sought to impose a hard border across the island as part of Brexit.

"Since its signing, the US has acted as a strong guarantor of the agreement.

"The agreement provides for Irish unity referendums. If you support the Good Friday Agreement you support the democratic right of the people to have their say. It is now time for that right to be vindicated.

"The US should continue to act as a guarantor of the agreement, ensuring its full implementation, including unity referendums."



# LEADERSHIP REMARKS

“The People’s Assemblies initiative can make an important contribution to the debates on the future of Ireland. This is our home place. All of us who live here. Let’s make it a better home place for everyone. I am working to build a society not of Orange and Green, but a rainbow of colours and multiculturalism which reflects who we are and what we stand for today, and that embraces our diversity. We want more than the reunification of our island – we want the unity of our people. We want a future which consigns sectarianism to the past and in which all of our citizens - Irish, British, northern Irish or none of these - can live together in peace and prosperity. It can be done. But even if you disagree, let’s talk about it. We can have an Ireland where no one is left behind. We have it within our grasp to create a peaceful, united, democratic Ireland.”

- Michelle O’Neill MLA- Leas Uachtarán Shinn Féin



“We have seen people gather in rooms and halls and down the island. We have heard very different views, very different perspectives. We have heard different challenges. And we have heard some genuine concerns. All of that is good. That is what respectful dialogue is all about. We need to not alone respect difference, but we need to embrace it. Because it is through difference that we are going to test our ideas. We don’t need to be afraid, any of us, whatever our perspective, of the challenges that are ahead. And we should look to the future only with hope and optimism. I have thought very deeply about what modern Irish republicanism is offering. What are we saying? What are our values? If I was to choose two words that sum up what we as Irish republicans are standing for in the here and now I would say hope and change. That is what we are offering to people all across the island.”

- Mary Lou McDonald TD Uachtarán Shinn Féin





“Despite the pivotal role women have played over the course of Irish history, too often their voices have not been heard. “In the new Ireland women must have an equal place in society. Since the imposition of Partition our island has been forced to operate with one hand tied behind our backs. Partition has disadvantaged women all over Ireland. Children on both sides of the border wait years for healthcare and our elderly wait days on trolleys as services suffer due to chronic underinvestment. Constitutional change is now fixed on the political horizon. Conversations are happening across the country – in our places of work, in our universities, as we drop our children at the school gates and at the match on Sundays. There is now an urgent imperative for the Irish Government to establish a Citizens’ Assembly to begin the work of planning for the future. It should agree with the British Government to set a firm date for the unity referendum provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. This is an exciting time for us all; filled with opportunity and hope for a better future.” - **Lynn Boylan MEP**



“So what does a new Ireland look like as opposed to a united Ireland? Quite often the debate is about absorbing the 6 county state into the existing structures. This is a genuine opportunity to create something new and better which recognises the very significant British identity in Ireland and engages with that in the vital preparation, and in terms of the constitutional make up of the new Ireland to give due respect and place for people who don’t feel comfortable with an Irish identity. That’s the difference between just having a united Ireland, this dialogue is a genuine attempt to reach out and I know that this question is much deeper than finances and I know there’s much more to what unionists think and feel about their place and the future and the sense that we can buy unionism into a united Ireland is disrespectful to people within the unionist tradition because that’s not their primary motivation for their outlook. We have to make the space for change as comfortable as possible. The tide of demographic change will not be stopped and neither will the growing opinion that the current constitutional framework is detrimental to us economically, politically and socially. So there’s an onus on those who want change to engage with those who don’t feel the same way.” - **Conor Murphy MLA**



## SNAPSHOT OF COMMENTARY

“Two systems and two approaches on one small island does not help planning. Going forward all island approaches to the issues that people are raising will also involve us collectively bringing forward different solutions. We need to go forward with hope and we need to take people with us. It is a time of transition and we need to be mindful of perspectives and the stories of each other.”- **Sinead Hughes (Health professional) Armagh People’s Assembly**

“Switching London rule for Dublin rule with no changes would not be in our best interests. So, a more decentralised Ireland is the way forward. We now have a blank page to start over and build whatever type of society we want to see for our kids and grandkids.”- **Trevor Birney (Film Producer) Fermanagh People’s Assembly**

“The Irish government needs to be pushed to put in place what a United Ireland would look like. The border has been there for too long.”- **Toni Forrester (CEO Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce) Donegal People’s Assembly**

“When we have conversations about unity, I think it is important that we start off recognising that not everybody shares the same position. We do come from a very divided past, but when I look at the young people here and I look at my own children, I know that they see life completely differently. What I would suggest is to have a constructive, respectful, opportunistic conversation about unity”.- **Ian Marshall ((Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy at QUB & former Senator)) Armagh People’s Assembly**

“By 2050 there will be 10 million people living on the island of Ireland. It will be a young and diverse population. A united Ireland unlocks massive potential for these people, so the plan has to be shaped to provide for their

needs.” - **Irial Mac Murchú ( CEO of Nemeton TV) Waterford People’s Assembly**

“This island is a home to us all. The conversations we have must include the opinion of unionists from the outset. We need places at the table so that all voices can be heard. From all backgrounds people are questioning – Is there something better? People are more concerned about education and healthcare than they are about flags. We want to create a home for all of us”. **Reverend Karen Sethuraman (Ireland’s Future) Armagh/ Down/ Louth People’s Assembly**

“A border poll is coming and migrants will be entitled to vote. The main issues for them are an NHS, which provides a good service and is free at the point of delivery, tax, the economy, and business interests, but most importantly Irish citizenship is a key issue.” - **Dr Raied Al-Wassan (NI Council for Racial Equality) Belfast People’s Assembly**

“There is an opportunity to teach young people how to live together and the value of living together and supporting each other. That’s the role of education- teaching children how to be, acceptance of self, understanding their own culture. The children we’re talking about now will be the key drivers of this change and we need to teach them good values.”- **Orla O’Dowd (Teacher) Lurgan People’s Assembly**

“‘Facts drive action as it creates awareness, and the collective benefits of a shared vision for prosperity and better opportunities for children growing up will inspire change’. - **Annette Kelly (Business Owner) West Tyrone People’s Assembly**

# SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

In October 2024, the Commission on the Future of Ireland launched social media accounts.

Since the launch, the Commission has reached over 150,000 accounts across our social media platforms.

Keep an eye on our Instagram, TikTok and X accounts for announcements regarding upcoming events:

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/commissiononthefutureofireland/>

**X:** [https://x.com/SF\\_Commission](https://x.com/SF_Commission)

**TikTok:** [SF\\_Commission \(@sf\\_commission\)](https://www.tiktok.com/@sf_commission) | TikTok



# UPCOMING EVENTS



The Commission on the Future of Ireland will continue to host People's Assemblies and sectoral events in 2025.

Preparations are already underway for People's Assemblies across Ireland including another Gaeltacht Tionól.

Sectoral events will include 'Irish Unity and the European Union', 'Irish Unity & Climate Change', further events at both the Balmoral Show and National Ploughing Championships and much more.....

Friends of Sinn Féin will host two People's Assemblies at the beginning of 2025 in New York and Washington. They also have plans in place for events in Canada and other locations across the states.

## **DATES & LOCATIONS TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON**

# CONCLUSION

The reunification of Ireland presents the single greatest opportunity to unlock the potential of our island, to deliver prosperity for all.

Ultimately, it is the people who will decide their future as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. But it is our responsibility to ensure that this decision is made through an informed and respectful process.

We need a mature and respectful conversation about constitutional change.

The Commission on the Future of Ireland has heard from a diverse range of voices and opinions.

We look forward to many more conversations in the time ahead.

## HAVE YOUR SAY- ABAIR LEAT!

Join the conversation about a New Ireland, how it can be achieved, and what it could look like.

Páirt a ghlacadh sa chomhrá faoi Éire Nua, conas is féidir í a bhaint amach, agus cén cuma a

féadfadh a bheith uirthi.

Tell us your thoughts by visiting [www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland](http://www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland) or by emailing [commission@sinnfein.ie](mailto:commission@sinnfein.ie)

Is féidir aighneacht scríofa a dhéanamh trí leathanach an Choimisiúin ar shuíomh gréasáin Shinn Féin [www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland](http://www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland)

Mar mhalairt air sin, féadann tú do thuairimí a sheoladh chugainn i bhfoirm ríomhphoist ag [commission@sinnfein.ie](mailto:commission@sinnfein.ie)

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