Storytelling

Proposal: Development of a network linking personal narrative and storytelling projects and archives related to the conflict. This will include support for repositories for stories and narratives thereby enabling wider audience engagement.

Guiding principles & values
- Care and respect for all involved including those who share their stories, those who collect them and those who engage with them.
- Increased sharing of learning between storytelling projects relating to the conflict.
- Encouragement for such projects to follow appropriate ethical principles in their work.
- Creation of opportunities for hearing stories that have been gathered.
- Recognition of storytelling as an active and inter-relational process in building peace.
- Recognition that stories take many forms including oral histories, written archives, audio, video, encounter projects and artwork.

Benefits & Challenges

Benefits
- Proper curating of stories for the sake of the participants, their families and future generations.
- Builds on extensive work already done in gathering and archiving materials.
- Can make space for those narratives not yet heard or made accessible.
- Can allow for a richer and broader view of the experiences of the past.
- Can enable sharing of learning.
- Can contribute to other mechanisms for dealing with past.

Challenges
- How to archive stories so that they are accessible.
- How to collectively archive the differing story formats and distinctive project origins.
- How to listen to stories and not just share one’s own perspective.
- How to ensure appropriate consent has been obtained and that stories have been gathered and curated ethically.
- There are stories that cannot yet be told.
- Ensuring confidentiality or embargoes are undertaken within the limits of the law.
Rationale
The existence of numerous examples of storytelling work being undertaken successfully offers the potential for wider learning, engagement and networking. A wide range of accounts being recorded and shared prevents a singular, exclusive narrative of the conflict becoming dominant.

What is needed?
• Support for the ongoing development of networking opportunities to share learning and the working through of practical and ethical dilemmas.
• Support for existing archives and maintenance and expansion of their potential audiences.
• Support for new and existing work which enables storytelling projects to share experience and learning.
• Development of listening opportunities, including incorporating existing projects into new initiatives.

This is one of a set of HTR proposals on dealing with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. HTR believes these proposals would be best implemented as a comprehensive response to ensure that a range of complex but interrelated needs are met.