

Are we
there
yet?

14



Dealing with the past
in and about
Northern Ireland



Finding ways to contend with our past and the constraints it places on our future will stand or fall on the commitment of those willing to take it forward. This call to action advocates that we have to move from struggling to find consensus around a 'perfect' set of proposals to optimal agreement and actual delivery, without further delay. It proposes that action is based on themes which are evident across a spectrum of research and initiatives including the Consultative Group on the Past and most recently the Panel of the Parties (Haass-O'Sullivan) process.

For more than a decade, Healing Through Remembering (HTR) has based its work around the following themes identified through a public consultation in 2002:

- Acknowledgement
- Commemoration
- Day of Reflection
- Living Memorial Museum
- Storytelling
- Truth Recovery

This document, *Are We There Yet?*, outlines our proposals on each of these themes based on our reflective engagement, experience and work in this area over the last 14 years. They are therefore a culmination of gathered insights and evidence from research, dialogue, debate and pilot activities.

They are offered as an honest critical assessment of where we as a society should be in terms of the dealing with the past challenge. They are offered for discussion, debate or endorsement; we see them as potential for positive development in a range of areas on this issue. In *Are We There Yet?* each proposal has been informed by a listed set of guiding principles and values. The complexities of each proposal are outlined as benefits and challenges with an accompanying rationale for the actual proposal; then the requirements for implementation are summarised.

It is our well-founded, sincere hope that these proposals will assist in the development of practical and effective solutions so that our failure to deal with the past does not continue to destabilise our political structures and our peace process. It is time for action.

The Board of
Healing Through Remembering



Acknowledgement

Proposal: Develop an agreed process that allows for groups/organisations to make statements of acknowledgement relating to their role in the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. This process will have an element of genuine engagement with the potential audience, demonstrate sincerity of intent and a commitment to a peaceful future.

Guiding principles & values

- Acknowledgement requires the truthful naming of wrong(s) that were deliberately or negligently committed and the recognition of those harmed by such wrongs.
- Truth recovery, prosecutions, commemorations, apologies, actions which are designed to facilitate reconciliation – these and other processes may all form part of individual and collective acknowledgement of past abuses.
- Apologies may have a particularly important role to play in acknowledgement. Apologies should also name hurt(s) deliberately or negligently inflicted; admit individual, organisational or collective responsibility for such hurt(s); include statements of remorse or regret related to the wrongful act(s) or omission; promise non-repetition; be delivered with due respect, dignity and sensitivity to the victimised.
- The heaviest burden of acknowledgement rests on those, either paramilitary or state actors, who were directly involved in violence and/or human rights abuses. However, acknowledgement is also a broader collective process which may also involve not only those who were directly involved in the perpetration of past abuses but also those who were complicit in such abuses, either through their action, words or silence, or those who denied that such abuses had in fact occurred.
- Effective acknowledgement statements involve a process which engages both the organisations or constituencies involved and the intended audience in the drafting of statements. They are part of a wider effort to demonstrate a sincerity of intent and the avoidance of hurt.
- Statements of acknowledgement and/or apology can have value and promote greater understanding, and a more broadly shared view of the past, and may assist those who have been most directly affected by the conflict. Public acknowledgement of the various roles played in the conflict allows for a greater engagement with the wider debates on the value of dealing with the legacy of the past.

Benefits & Challenges

Benefits

- The process should be open to all who either through their, actions, inactions or statements may have contributed to the instigation, escalation or maintenance of the conflict.
- Can provide fuller knowledge about the past.
- Can facilitate the taking of responsibility for actions/inactions in the past.
- Can have positive impact on victims/survivors.
- Can enable processes of truth recovery.
- Can provide those involved in the conflict with the opportunity to make or renew a commitment to healing and reconciliation.

Challenges

- Forms of acknowledgement could have a negative impact, as competing views on the past are likely to be contested.
- Identification of the different audiences who might benefit from the production of a statement of acknowledgement.
- Sequencing - when is acknowledgement best delivered - before or after truth recovery?
- Statements of acknowledgement or apology will never meet the needs of all of those affected by the conflict.
- Risk of contributing to an on-going “blame game”.
- A tendency on part of some to link acknowledgement with expectation of forgiveness.

Rationale

Acknowledgment of responsibility and roles in the conflict is often sought by those affected by the conflict or as an aid to re-establishing trust and building new relationships. Statements of acknowledgement should be recognisable as sincere, should name the hurt caused and those damaged as a result, should engage with those previously hurt or wronged, should be delivered with appropriate dignity and should demonstrate a commitment to a future without violence.

What is needed?

- Recognition of the sensitive and challenging nature of this proposal.
- An acceptance that while those (both paramilitary and state actors) involved in violence and human rights abuses bear the heaviest responsibility for their actions, other institutional actors in political, social and civic life also played a role in the events of the past and should acknowledge their role and its consequences.
- A programme of outreach to interested groups and individuals.
- Support for internal group/organisational processes in the formulation of statements.
- Consideration as to how groups/organisations could engage with potential audience in the process of developing statements of acknowledgement and apology.
- Sufficient time and resources are paramount to facilitate adequate internal processes that lead to a statement of acknowledgment and/or apology.
- Safe audience engagement process must be assured.
- A process whereby statements of acknowledgement and apology from different actors are properly co-ordinated, in order to ensure maximum benefit to those affected by the violence and abuses of the past.

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.

Commemoration

Proposal: All groups and organisations organising potentially contentious commemorative events or activities in the public space should ensure that they are run according to their own publicly available Code of Conduct.

Guiding principles & values

- Recognition of the value in developing a Code of Conduct to ensure the safe and respectful running of public commemorative events or activities.
- The Code of Conduct should be accessible and publicly available.
- The Code of Conduct should be devised and written by those organising or taking part in the event or activity.
- An understanding of views of other groups, communities and organisations should be factored into the Code of Conduct.
- Where possible there should be a consultation with those potentially affected by the event or activity.
- A commitment to urging all those taking part in the commemorative event or activity to follow the Code of Conduct.
- Recognition of the need for more inclusive commemorative practises.
- Respect for the shared nature of public space and recognition of the rights and responsibilities associated with using public space.
- An understanding of the particular needs and sensitivities of those most directly affected by the conflict.
- Recognition of the diversity in all residential areas (even so-called single-identity areas).
- Adherence to the rule of law.

Benefits & Challenges

Benefits

- Responsibility is self-managed, not externally imposed.
- Can allow for safer and more respectful commemoration.

Challenges

- Takes time and effort to create and agree the code.
- Difficulties in establishing acceptable and appropriate means to ensure application

Benefits

- Recognises sharing of public space.
- Appreciation of the underlying values and aspirations in others commemorative events and practices.
- Possibility of later engagement with others on the content and execution of the Code of Conduct.

Challenges

- Risk of leaving groups open to criticism by others.
- The changing or unstable contexts in which commemorative events take place necessitate ongoing review.

Rationale

This approach offers a self-managed way of regulating activities in the public space, leading to the creation of more respectful and inclusive methods of commemoration.

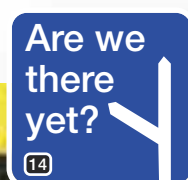
What is needed?

- Outreach to interested groups and individuals organising commemorative events or activities.
- Opportunities to develop meaningful exploratory and collaborative discussions with key commemorative bodies.
- Spaces for critical discussion.
- Sensitivity to role of victims/survivors.
- Examples of more inclusive and respectful commemorative practices.
- Recognition of the diversity in all residential areas (even so-called single-identity areas).
- Political and community leadership.
- An understanding of the parameters of the rule of law.

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A project supported by the PEACE III Programme managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by Pobal.



Day of Reflection

Proposal: Wider support for the 21st June to be annually marked as a Day for Reflection on the impact and effect of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

Guiding principles & values

- There is no date in the calendar which is not important or significant to someone affected by the conflict.
- The importance of remembering those who on a daily basis live with profound consequences of the conflict.
- Acknowledgement of the deep hurt and loss caused by the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.
- There is value in identifying a particular date in the calendar where people can collectively reflect on the dire impacts of the conflict on individuals, communities and the wider society.
- Such looking back is required in order that those previously hurt by the conflict, and society in general can look forward.
- Recognition that the 21st of June is already significant for many people who have participated in activities of reflection over several consecutive years.
- The value of reflecting on how our own current attitudes and behaviours have the potential to negatively impact on others and undermine good relations in wider society.

Benefits & Challenges

Benefits

- Can be an opportunity for individuals and groups to reflect.
- Can be an inclusive opportunity for all to reflect on the same day, but not necessarily together.
- Can link remembering to reflecting and looking forward.
- Existing support and engagement with 21st June as a Day of Reflection.
- Materials and resources are already available.

Challenges

- How to find appropriate ways to reflect.
- Sharing a day with people whose views or opinions one does not share.
- How to enabling people to see that we all played a role in the past, and that reflecting on that role can help us move forward constructively.
- To understand that many feel unable to engage with the Day of Reflection until their more immediate needs are met.

Rationale

A Day of Reflection is offered as an inclusive and positive experience that emphasises a commitment to a peaceful new society. It provides a voluntary opportunity for everyone in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and further afield to reflect upon the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, and the future that is before us. Independent research conducted over successive years has indicated that the pilot initiatives by Healing Through Remembering, focusing on the 21st of June as the Day of Reflection, have had a positive impact on those who participated.

What is needed?

- Support for the Day of Reflection from a wide range of participants, stakeholders and government bodies.
- That the Day is not seen to be owned or controlled by the interests of any one group/sector.
- That the Day is seen as offering a space and process of reflection by all.

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Living Memorial Museum

Proposal: The creation of a Living Memorial Museum which presents a diverse range of both the experiences and perspectives of the everyday experience of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland and the steps to peace. This museum will provide an opportunity to gain new knowledge and perspectives; and act as a signpost to other museums, memorials, tours and collections.

Guiding principles & values

- The Museum is primarily focussed on education and enabling learning from the past.
- Includes different perspectives and versions of the conflict and peace.
- Makes a contribution to building a better future and informing future generations.
- Records efforts at peace and peace work, as well as the conflict.
- Emphasis on the personal experience of people rather than historical facts.
- Complementary to other museums, memorials, tours and collections across society.

Benefits & Challenges

Benefits

- There is a steadily growing interest in how we present the past, especially to the next generation and visitors.
- Can draw on and can be informed by local and international experience.
- Can be a place to hear other views and perspectives.
- Can share the learning domestically, regionally and globally.
- Can learn from the wealth of international patterns and working examples.

Challenges

- Not everyone is happy to have different views and perspectives brought together in the same place.
- How to be honest about the past while being sensitive to the visitors' needs and different perspectives.
- How to avoid pitfalls of 'dark tourism'.

Rationale

A Living Memorial Museum offers a user friendly yet engaging step into the issues, and provides options to look further into the reality of protracted violent conflict and the challenges of peace. The Healing Through Remembering Everyday Objects Exhibition has shown that sensitive display of material can engage a variety of audiences and create space for reflection on the past, and learning for the future.

What is needed?

- Development of educational element – promoting fuller understanding of the lived experience of the conflict, and acknowledgement of the range of different views/experiences.
- Support for the idea that a diverse range of the experiences and perspectives of the conflict can be displayed successfully.
- Engagement with a range of interested groups, individuals and experts already involved in collecting, curating, educating and informing audiences about issues relating to the conflict.
- Identifying and obtaining appropriate space that can house materials, act as an educational resource and be complementary to other museums, memorials, tours and collections.
- Establishing governance system and personnel.
- The development of appropriate structures, policies, staff and operations.

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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.

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Truth Recovery

Proposal: Develop a comprehensive framework for truth recovery which can uncover as much information as possible to support people who have been most impacted by the past.

Guiding principles & values

- Truth recovery should prioritise the needs of victims/survivors.
- The aim of recovery of truth is to uncover as complete a view as possible about the past in order to ensure that such conflict does not re-emerge, and to encourage, as much as is practical, social and political reconciliation.
- The aim is not to allow one dominant narrative of the conflict; rather it is provide a context wherein competing narratives about the past can be examined, in order that that we learn from what occurred.
- Any truth recovery process will be consistent with international and domestic law.
- Any truth recovery process needs to be independent from the British and Irish Governments, combatant groups, political parties and economic interests.
- Truth recovery should be accompanied by appropriate reparations for those directly affected by the conflict.

Benefits & Challenges

Benefits

- Can improve on existing 'patchwork' of truth recovery mechanisms and create a coherent comprehensive structure to address truth recovery related issues.
- Can provide those involved in the conflict with the opportunity to make or renew a commitment to healing and reconciliation.
- Can open up space for reflection, and create opportunities with other mechanisms for dealing with the past.
- Can limit misconceptions and mitigate disagreements about what actually happened.
- Can attempt to prevent future cycles of violence based on grudges and manipulation.
- Can be part of a wider set of processes which assist a society in dealing with the legacy of the past.

Challenges

- Risk of 're-opening wounds'.
- Potential negative impact on the already fragile political and peace process.
- How to avoid further undermining of trust.
- Risk of reinforcing competing versions of history - criminalising individuals who were actively involved in violence - without tackling the systems and structures which gave rise to and exacerbated the conflict.

Rationale

International experience suggests that truth recovery is a key element for individual victims and societies to know about and coming to terms with the legacy of past violence and human rights abuses. While there exists currently a range of mechanisms doing aspects of this work in a patchwork way (e.g. Police Ombudsman, Historical Enquiries Team, Inquests and Public Inquiries), these are widely accepted as expensive, piecemeal, and broadly inadequate to the task of a holistic approach the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. It would be more effective to create a unified framework to deal with these outstanding issues. This would also provide a practical and symbolic expression of the willingness of society to deal with its violent past as part of the transition to becoming a more inclusive and peaceful society.

What is needed?

- Agreement on the process and format of the framework that will be constructed, including key role players and parties.
- Agreement to participate by as many as possible of the significant state, non-state, political and civil society actors.
- Draw on the wealth of knowledge and information provided by Healing Through Remembering in terms of options, as well as the work of the Consultative Group on the Past and Panel of the Parties Proposals (as of 30.12.13).
- A cost-effective, pragmatic solution that takes a victim/survivor-centred approach while also keeping in mind clear societal outcomes and domestic and international law.

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HTR Resources

The following are some of the resources and materials produced by Healing Through Remembering (HTR). They are available as hard copies from the HTR offices or as a downloadable PDF document/video file from the website www.healingthroughremembering.org/resources

General



Dealing with the Past?
An Overview of Legal & Political
Approaches relating to the conflict
in and about Northern Ireland
(2013)



The Report of the Healing Through
Remembering Project (2002)



Core Values and Principles for
Dealing With the Past (2013)

Acknowledgement



Acknowledgement Research
(2014)



Acknowledgement and its Role in
Preventing Future Violence (2006)

Commemoration



At the end of the day....
Commemoration - Forward
thinking into the Past (2008)

Day of Reflection



A Day of Reflection: Discussion Paper and Proposal (2006)



21 June 2010 Day of Private Reflection: Evaluation Report and Action Plan (2011)



DoR materials



A Day of Reflection: A Scoping Study (2006)



International experiences of days of Remembrance and Reflection (2005)



Living Memorial Museum



Evaluation of Response: Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict Exhibition (2013)



Without Walls: A Report on HTR's Open Call for Ideas for a Living Memorial Museum of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2008)



Evaluation of Process: Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict Exhibition (2013)



Artefacts Audit: A report of the material culture of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2008)



Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict Exhibition Catalogue (2012)



Everyday Objects Leaflet (2014)

Storytelling



The Stories Network:
Memorandum of Understanding
(2014)



Ethical principles for Storytelling
and Narrative Work (June 2009)



Storytelling As The Vehicle?
Conference Report (2005)



'Storytelling' Audit: An audit of
personal story, narrative and
testimony initiatives related to the
conflict in and about Northern
Ireland (2005)

Truth Recovery



The Viability of Prosecution Based
on Historical Enquiry:
Legal Opinion (2006)



Making Peace with the Past:
Executive Summary (2006)



Making Peace with the Past:
Options for truth recovery
regarding the conflict in and about
Northern Ireland (2006)

International study visits



HTR International Study Visit to
Bosnia and Serbia (2014)

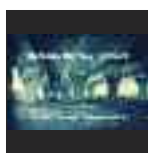


HTR International Study Visit to
the Basque Country (2013)



Belfast to Berlin Lessons in
remembering conflict (2011)

Short Films



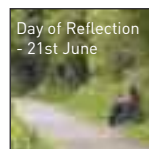
Building the Way Forward -
Documentary by Echo Gate
Productions on the HTR Project
(2014)



**When the summit is shrouded
in mist -** An introduction to
getting involved in difficult
discussions.



**Ordinary Objects Extraordinary
Times -** A series of short personal
films remembering the conflict.



Day of Reflection 21st June
A film to aid Reflection on the
conflict in and about Northern
Ireland.

Engaging with other initiatives



**HTR Index for 31 December 2013
Panel of the Parties**
(Haass/O'Sullivan) Document on
Flags, Parades, and Dealing with
the Past



**HTR Index to the Report of the
Consultative Group on the Past**



**HTR Table of Contents for 31
December 2013 Panel of the
Parties (Haass/O'Sullivan)**
Document on Flags, Parades, and
Dealing with the Past



**HTR Submission to the
Consultative Group on the Past**



**HTR Submission to the NI Panel of
the Parties (Haass/O'Sullivan)**
(October 2013)

Resources for Facilitators



**Conversation Guide on Dealing
with the Past**
(2008, 2010, 2013, 2014)



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