



MEDIA RELEASE

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CONVERSATION - IT'S KEY TO NEW PEACE PROJECT

A major cross-community project to help people discuss the legacy of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland was launched by Healing through Remembering (HTR) in Belfast today.

The outreach programme, called 'Whatever you say, say something', will offer individuals and groups the chance over the next two years to begin difficult conversations with the help of a trained facilitator who will aid the dialogue. The aim is that individuals and groups will find it easier to engage on issues relating to the conflict.

Speaking about the new initiative, Kate Turner, director of Healing Through Remembering, said: "This project offers a new opportunity for individuals and groups to meet and discuss the difficult issues around how we deal with the past. Most importantly, it offers this opportunity in a safe environment, where people can ask questions and debate the issues that matter to them.

Healing Through Remembering's ***Conversation Guide on Dealing with the Past***, will be available to interested groups as a resource.

Ms Turner said: "The dialogue that takes place within the local communities, as part of this project, is important, not just for those participating, but also for all of society. How we deal with the past shapes the future, not only of this generation but also of those to come.



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A project supported by the PEACE III Programme managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Community Relations Council/Pobal Consortium.

“This is why we’re encouraging people to take this opportunity to be part of facilitated discussions that meet their own local needs related to dealing with the past and remembering.”

Trained facilitators include: Joe Blake, who has worked in the voluntary and community sector for over 20 years; Will Glendinning, who has been involved in community relations and reconciliation work since the 1970s and Martin Snoddon, who has worked in a number of conflict zones throughout the world including the Balkans, Central America, Middle East and South Africa.

Mr Blake said: “These conversations will allow the difficulties of living through conflict to be acknowledged and for experiences to be shared. Some people have blocked out experiences, even everyday ones and have difficulty in discussing them, despite a desire to do so.

“Many feel that others are not interested in what happened to them. Dealing with the past allows their experiences to be shared with and acknowledged by others.”

The discussion groups and workshops will offer a platform for any groups and/or organisations - to feed their views into existing HTR projects as the organisation considers how society can build a more peaceful future.

Speaking about the existing projects and how this new initiative will help to shape the future, HTR board member Alan Wardle: “Healing Through Remembering has always said that there is no single treatment for the healing process in Northern Ireland, but we see this Peace III-funded project as forming an integral part of the process of remembering, reflecting, informing and educating.

“We are also meeting with political leaders, and key institutions and organisations including victims’ groups, NGOs, political parties, religious organisations, statutory bodies, ex-combatants, security forces, artists and performers.

“Links will also be developed with international organisations. This is a new opportunity for every voice to be heard and we are delighted to be launching the project today.”

For more information on the outreach programme, please contact Angus Lambkin at Healing Through Remembering on 028 9023 8844.

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For further information please contact either:

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. **Alan Wardle** is the director of Shankill Stress and Trauma Group, an inclusive victims/survivors organisation based in Belfast. He has participated in international training delivery programmes, in both Kosovo and Croatia, delivering conflict management theories as well as mediation models. Alan also sits on the Belfast District Policing Partnership, supporting communities to engage more affectively with policing issues.
2. **Joe Blake** is an independent consultant who has been working in the statutory, voluntary and community sector for the last 20 years. He has a particular interest in working with local community groups in the field of good relations. He is currently a council member of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and represents Comic Relief in Northern Ireland.
3. **Claire Hackett** has been working in the fields of conflict resolution and dealing with the past at Falls Community Council for the last nine years. She helped to set up the Dúchas oral history archive and currently works for the Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium which has recently been developed from grassroots republican and loyalist interface work. She is chair of the Storytelling Sub Group of Healing Through Remembering.
4. **Martin Snoddon**, Director of Northern Spring, is a Trainer and Consultant who specialises in training on conflict resolution and dealing with the past by addressing the legacy of violent conflict through process facilitation on conflict related issues. Martin works within all sections of society and has extended his experience through work in numerous international conflict settings.
5. **Will Glendinning** is a former chief executive of the Community Relations Council, now working as a consultant on cultural diversity, community relations and transition from conflict. Will was also an Alliance Party councillor for a West Belfast ward in the Belfast City Council, 1977 to 1987 and from 1982 to 1986, he was an elected member of the Northern Ireland Assembly. In the early 1970s he served in the UDR in Co. Armagh.

6. There are currently five HTR sub-groups who explore and debate potential suggestions, including a Living Memorial Museum, a Day of Reflection, Truth Recovery, Commemoration, Acknowledgement and Storytelling. We hope that these wider discussions will question, inform and further shape these debates.
7. Healing Through Remembering (HTR) is a cross-community organisation that considers how to deal with the past relating to the conflict. Its membership includes people from diverse backgrounds including loyalist, republican, army, and police backgrounds as well as from different faith backgrounds, victims and community groups and academic institutions.
8. HTR has received funding from the European Union's European Regional Development Fund through the PEACE III programme managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Community Relations Council / Border Action Consortium.
9. HTR has undertaken a range of consultations, commissioned research, held conferences, led seminars and workshops to both gather public opinion on how to deal with the past as well as inform those not engaged in the debate. Reports of the above activities include:
 - All Truth is Bitter (2000);
 - Healing Through Remembering Report (2002);
 - Storytelling Audit: An audit of personal story, narrative and testimony initiatives related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2005);
 - International Experiences of Days of Remembrance and Reflection (2005);
 - Storytelling as the Vehicle? Conference Report (2005);
 - Day of Reflection: A Scoping Study (2006);
 - A Day of Private Reflection: Discussion Paper and Proposal (2006), Making Peace with the Past: Options for truth recovery regarding the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2006);
 - Making Peace with the Past Executive Summary (2006), Acknowledgement and its Role in Preventing Future Violence (2006);
 - The Viability of Prosecution Based on Historical Enquiry (2006), Without Walls: A report on the Open Call for Ideas for a Living Memorial Museum of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2008);
 - Artefacts Audit: A report of the material culture of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2008);
 - 21 June 2007 Day of Private Reflection Evaluation Report (2008).
 - Healing Through Remembering: Momentum and Change (2008);
 - At the End of the Day... Commemoration - Forward Thinking into the Past (2008).