

For **Everyone**

Executive Summary

Alliance

THE ALLIANCE PARTY BLUEPRINT FOR AN EXECUTIVE STRATEGY
TO BUILD A SHARED AND BETTER FUTURE.



Foreword by David Ford MLA, Alliance Party Leader

This document reflects my party's conviction that the work of building a shared society is the single biggest challenge facing Northern Ireland and should be the central overarching priority for the Executive. Quite simply, we won't achieve what we want for Northern Ireland – economically and socially – if we don't address this critical issue.

But it won't be addressed by tinkering at the edges, or trying to simply manage the symptoms of the problem. For the first time in many generations we have an opportunity to move beyond that approach, to tackle the underlying pattern of segregation, exclusion, discrimination and threat. The ending of violence has given us an opportunity to tackle the underlying divisions of our society; history will not forgive us if we squander it. I want Northern Ireland to become a truly shared society where nowhere is out of bounds to anyone because of their creed, colour, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

For two decades Northern Ireland received huge international support to ease our transition from hostility to peace. Across the world we have proclaimed that our peace process is a model for others to follow. And yet almost nineteen years after the ceasefires of 1994, fifteen years after the Good Friday Agreement, eight years after the publication of the first 'shared future' strategy under Direct Rule, a meaningful, strategic approach to tackling our pervasive divisions has yet to be developed under, and embedded into, our devolved political structures.

We can wait no longer. The potential for unresolved issues to cause real damage to peoples' lives and to our future cannot be exaggerated. Every day that passes we miss opportunities: opportunities to bring our children together and shape their future differently; opportunities to nurture and celebrate diversity; opportunities to invest in a more efficient and effective approach to delivering public services, based on individual need rather than communal fears; opportunities to strategically regenerate and transform interface communities and hasten the day when the walls that separate them are removed; and opportunities to transform our economy.

That is why Alliance has pressed for action on a shared future – and it is why we are publishing this document as our blueprint for an Executive strategy to build a shared and better future for all. The Alliance Party doesn't have the authority to determine what must be an Executive-wide Shared Future strategy. But we do have the ideas and policies that such a strategy must include if it is to achieve what our community needs.



This document is not about rhetoric, spin, or empty gestures. It is about detailed analysis and effective action. That's the kind of substance a shared future strategy requires – analysis of the problems and policies and agreement on actions by which we will tackle them.

We now need the support of other parties and civic society, combined with funding and political leadership, to make it happen and we are keen to engage with others.

The time for looking backwards is past; so too is the time for being content at ending the worst of the violence. Now is the time to stretch ourselves to do more than we have done before, to act rather than talk. In short, it's time to deliver. This blueprint offers the opportunity and the means to do so.



David Ford Alliance Leader



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Our collective vision and understanding of a shared future is of:

A shared and integrated society free from intimidation and discrimination and fear, where every member is safe, has opportunities to contribute and participate and is treated fairly and with respect; a truly civic society, underpinned by the shared values of equality, respect for diversity, and a celebration of our interdependence.

In order to achieve this vision it will be necessary to take the steps detailed under the headings below and throughout the remainder of this document.

In parallel with this strategy, there is a commitment to produce a revised Racial Equality Strategy, a Sexual Orientation Strategy and a Single Equality Act. It is understood that the good relations duty should extend to all Section 75 categories.

Economics of a Shared Future

There is also an inextricable relationship between the creation of a shared future and the economic transformation of Northern Ireland. Any strategy for a shared future must recognise that continued divisions limit Northern Ireland's potential, and that the promotion of good relations will bring opportunities for enhanced economic and social progress. The Executive must put in place the mechanisms, policies and programmes to address the economic, social and financial aspects of division and to assist in the creation of a shared future.

- ✓ A practical and costed plan to tackle the financial and other cost implications of divisions within the next and following Programmes for Government and Budgets.
- ✓ All major policies will be proofed for their potential impact on sharing versus separation through Shared Future Policy Proofing.
- ✓ All Departments will conduct formal audits of their budgets and publish their assessment of the impact of societal division.
- ✓ All Departments will be obliged to actively encourage de-segregation and to promote cohesion, sharing and integration within their policies and spending plans.
- ✓ Shared future considerations will be fully integrated into all future departmental economic and social policies and programmes, including the next Economic Strategy.
- ✓ Resources will be made available to enable investments in resources support longer term reduction in hostility and the normalisation of sharing, either through the provision of shared goods, facilities and services to meet demand or to provide support and security for those making the choice to mix, share or integrate.
- ✓ New leisure, educational, health, social and community facilities will be built with an explicit objective to ensuring optimal and open public use.
- ✓ A comprehensive study will be commissioned into labour mobility in Northern Ireland, and provide further recommendations for action.
- ✓ There will be a comprehensive and pro-active focus on area planning and sustainable schools, and full appreciation of the financial and economic benefits, alongside the social and educational aspects, of shared and integrated options.

Children and Young People

Too many people grow up without meeting or getting to know someone from outside their own tradition, cultural background or political opinion. It is vital that policy is directed to support a shared future in which every young person has worthwhile opportunities to engage with others from as early as possible we cannot delay intervention until adolescence.

Children growing up within divided societies continues to perpetuate division, this must be addressed, by getting to the roots of the problem facing our children and young people with real and meaningful action, not just papering over the cracks, tackling issues early on not relying on last minute intervention.

A range of measures will be undertaken to provide real opportunities for children and young people and promote a shared future, including:

- ✓ Developing an inter-departmental strategy to tackle youth alienation, sectarianism and racism, alongside detailed action plans developed in partnership with young people and youth providers.
- ✓ Taking a long-term strategic approach to working with young people outside school hours to promote a shared society.

A Shared Approach to Education

The Belfast Agreement promised “initiatives to facilitate and encourage integrated education.” Yet our education provision still remains highly segregated with the vast majority of children and young people still educated within a single-identity setting.

Shared education also offers a viable and necessary alternative which has been tragically underdeveloped over decades in Northern Ireland. Shared education can deliver a range of financial, social and educational benefits, including:

- ✓ Reducing the cost of maintaining around 85,000 empty school places.
- ✓ Directing funding towards pupils rather than the maintenance of the school estate.
- ✓ Allowing children to develop their own identity.
- ✓ Making it easier to standardise the quality of education and therefore to address inequalities.

With these benefits in mind the Executive will:

- ✓ Set a minimum target for 20% of children being educated in integrated schools by 2020.
- ✓ Make the process for schools transforming to integrated status easier.
- ✓ All future new school builds should be integrated, bar in exceptional cases.
- ✓ Introduce a Shared and Integrated Education Bill.
- ✓ Revise duty on Department of Education to encourage integrated education and extend to Education and Skills Authority.
- ✓ The potential for greater rationalisation and sharing within teacher training will be explored.



Sharing the Spaces in which We Live, Work and Play

Public Space

All public space in Northern Ireland should be open and shared, however, evidence shows that fear affects our basic choices such as where people live, what they wear and where they access basic public services. It is essential that we actively seek to create and foster shared neighbourhoods, workplaces and public amenities.

The Executive must work towards safe and open access to all public space in Northern Ireland, no-one should be afraid to go anywhere. It is important to recognise that sharing space does not mean neutral space, rather a place where everyone can celebrate their identities in a vibrant, inclusive manner.

In order to achieve this vision the Executive will:

- ✓ Demonstrate that future public investment will demonstrate that assets can be shared and open to everyone.
- ✓ Bring forward new procedures to ensure that regional planning policies and area plans take account of issues of access.

There will be an aspiration to the removal of all interface barriers over time, in collaboration and partnership with local communities. This approach should allow the setting of baseline targets for a minimal reduction of 20% in the number of interface structures over the next ten years, with a further 30% removed within fifteen years.

Housing

All housing – as well as the streets and all public space within every residential area – must be accessible and welcoming to all, irrespective of background, without any risk of intimidation or threat. In practice, however, segregation in housing continues to represent a significant barrier to the growth of a more united community.

People's decisions over where they live should be made based on location of the provision not on fear of living elsewhere. We must work to remove 'fear' as factor within peoples housing choices.

The Executive will therefore commit to the following actions:

- ✓ Setting and delivering a target through proactive and inter-Departmental programmes, that by 2025 all evidence of threat, intimidation and exclusive claims to territorial monopoly by any group or cause will be eliminated in Northern Ireland and mixed and shared housing must be considered normal throughout the region and at all levels of income.
- ✓ Commissioning a landmark "Shared Housing Review" of housing provision in Northern Ireland undertaken by a commission of experts to produce detailed recommendations by 2014.

Flags

The Belfast Agreement settled the deeply divisive question of nationality. This has profound implications to the question of flag flying in Northern Ireland. In particular, it insists:

- 1 In matters of state sovereignty, Northern Ireland is and remains part of the United Kingdom, until or unless people decide otherwise.
- 2 In matters of nationality and culture we have divided and overlapping identities.
- 3 In matters of esteem all must be treated with dignity and in a spirit of equality.

With this in mind the Executive must:

- ✓ Agree that the Union Flag is flown over public and civic buildings in Northern Ireland on designated days as defined by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- ✓ Carry out a consultation on the possibility of developing shared symbols for Northern Ireland.

Whilst this will effectively deal with the official display of National symbols, there should be zero tolerance of paramilitary symbols, there is no place in a normal society to celebrate a culture of violence and intimidation.

The inappropriate use of national symbols is also an issue. People have the right to display any legal symbol from their home. It must be recognised that this does not extend to street furniture.

There is a need for work between Government and statutory agencies to regulate the display of flags and to take enforcement when it is required. A number of steps could be taken to this including:

- ✓ All flags/emblems on the public highway should be subject to clear regulation by statutory authorities.
- ✓ All permanent emblems should be subject to planning consent.
- ✓ Flags and other celebratory material could be displayed in a regulated, time bound manner by application.
- ✓ This approach would sit consistently with the idea that all space in Northern Ireland is shared and cannot be claimed by anyone permanently or exclusively.

A Shared Culture

We are committed to a vibrant, lively society where everyone is free to celebrate their identity or identities whilst respecting the rights of others

The Executive will lead a new conversation and take actions to ensure culture is a source of enrichment for all.

To ensure this process develops the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure should:

- ✓ Develop a framework of principles for inter-cultural dialogue and diversity so spending decisions are informed by shared future considerations, this must be passed to all DCAL's arm's length bodies.

Parades

The Executive will establish a working group on parades and protests which involve all political parties and representatives of civic society with terms of reference which:

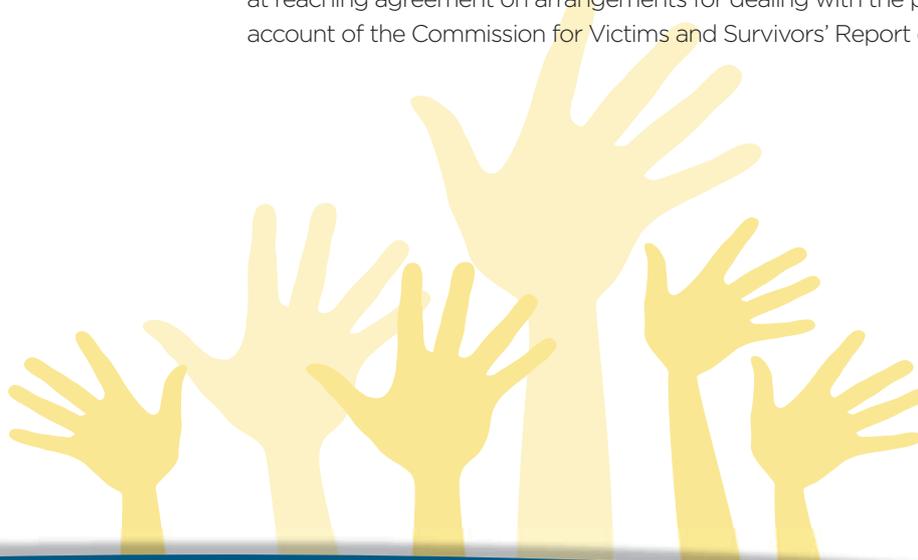
- ✓ Complies with all appropriate Human Rights requirements.
- ✓ Is compliant with the requirements to provide and protect shared space in all parts of Northern Ireland.
- ✓ Includes recommendations on mediation and arbitration.
- ✓ Establishes a mechanism for binding arbitration in disputed cases which commands full political support.
- ✓ Regulates and assigns responsibility for the behaviour of all those participating in parades and protests including agreement on penalties and consequences for future participation.
- ✓ Produces a draft code of conduct for parades and protests.

Pending any Agreement on an alternative, the parties will give their support to the Parades Commission.

Dealing with the Past

In order to complete the process of reconciliation and to build a shared future we must resolve the issues and address the hurt that remains in society as a result of the past.

In order to deal with the past and its legacy it is essential the Executive will engage with the British and Irish Governments to agree terms for a cross-party talks process, aimed at reaching agreement on arrangements for dealing with the past. This will take account of the Commission for Victims and Survivors' Report on Dealing with the Past



Delivering a Shared Future – Implementation of the Strategy

The Executive will establish a Shared Future Ministerial Panel, comprising all members of the Executive, and attended by senior representatives from a range of statutory agencies and community partners.

The Executive will also develop the work of the Community Relations Council into a dedicated, standing, regional Shared Future Council

Within the Review of Public Administration, Councils will be required to consider the potential good relations consequences of all investments as part of the process of community planning. Councils will develop 'Shared Future Plans' to demonstrate how their interventions are fair, open and effective in both addressing emergent community tensions and their longer-term causes.

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