

1. Protocol on the Use of the Petition of Concern

A political agreement shall be put in place with immediate effect with respect to a protocol that limits the use of a petition of concern to:

- **Matters of national identity;**
- **Matters which relate to the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland; or**
- **Matters which relate to the constitutional structure and institutions established under the Good Friday Agreement.**

The protocol would also require that, where a Petition of Concern is tabled, this should state the ground or grounds upon which it is being tabled and the nature of the detriment which is perceived as arising from an affirmative vote on the matter.

This would fulfil the commitment in 'Fresh Start' to introduce changes to the Petition of Concern mechanism (Section F, Para. 58). This would also preserve the mechanism for use in the circumstances for which it was originally envisaged.

2. Tackling the legacy and ongoing impact of paramilitarism

The parties in the Executive commit to a robust programme of action to end all forms of paramilitary activity, based on the report of the three-person panel. This programme will be led by the Department of Justice, supported by other Departments as appropriate, and adequately resourced to meet its targets. This programme will include a protocol on how the state and its agencies engage with actual or legacy paramilitary structures at the community level. This will be completed by the end of June 2016, in line with the 'Fresh Start' agreement.

Recognising the importance of the maintenance of all public space as shared, the final conclusions of the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition will be completed and published within 12 months commencing from June 2016 and legislation to regulate the flying of flags will be introduced by the end of 2017 and will complete all stages by June 2018. No proposal will permit the display of the flags of paramilitary organisations.

This legislation would recognise that people may wish to fly flags in order to celebrate events, but such displays should be regulated including, but not limited to, duration of display and accountability in order to ensure that all public space should be shared and open to everyone.

This would not interfere with the right of people to fly legal flags from their own property, whether owned or rented.

The Executive commits to agreeing the current Executive Paper on the Lord Chief Justice's initiative on processing inquests at its first sitting. Further, the Executive Parties and the British and Irish Governments commit to conclude talks on finalising the details of the comprehensive package of measures set out in the Stormont House Agreement by the end of June 2016, and the UK Government will introduce any related legislation by the end of October 2016.

There is a diminishing window of opportunity to take advantage of UK resources. This commitment would be without prejudice to the final outcome of other discussions around finalising the detail and

commencing implementation of the comprehensive package of measures set out in the Stormont House Agreement.

3. Increasing Commitment to Integrated Education

Integrated education offers the prospect of a more financially efficient education system, as well as improved educational and social outcomes. It also provides an opportunity to invest in tackling disadvantage and develops the potential to retain local provision in the context of rationalisation of existing schools.

With effect from June 2016, the Executive commits to ensuring that no integrated school shall be obliged to refuse admission to any applicant, unless that applicant can be reasonably be accommodated at a different integrated school.

This will be facilitated by ensuring that through the Department of Education implement and enforces, as a minimum, the following administrative procedures by October 2016:

- All current Development Proposals to expand integrated schools and colleges will be approved. There shall be a presumption in favour of approving any future Development Proposals, including for nursery/reception provision at integrated schools.
- Adoption of a strategy to develop and increase the number of integrated schools, including the active promotion of transformation to all relevant stakeholders.
- Clear written guidance is issued from the Education Minister to the Department, Education Authority and other related bodies on the implementation of the Article 64 of the Education Order 1989 statutory duty.
- Area-based planning is revised to ensure that it incorporates processes which ensure meaningful community auditing and consultation. This will include the active presentation of the option of cross-sectoral, cross-community delivery of education.
- Ensure adequate pupil transport is available in order to facilitate parental choice.
- Before any DE-funded, non-integrated school is opened in future, a NICIE-managed local parental vote will be held to see whether local parents would prefer an integrated school.
- Before any DE-funded school is closed, a NICIE-managed local parental vote will be held to explore whether local parents would prefer a local integrated option to such closure.

In addition, the Executive commits to introducing integrated education legislation into the Assembly by the end of January 2017, and ensuring this Bill completes all stages by January 2018.

This Bill will give every parent the entitlement to send their child to an integrated school, and will establish the necessary actions to make this reality.

At a minimum, this will include:

- Placing the requirement on the Department for Education to have in place and implement a strategy to develop integrated education, and to facilitate its periodic review and renewal.
- Formalising the requirement for community audits as outlined above.

- Reforming the criteria for the creation and maintenance of integrated schools, giving recognition to those children of mixed, other or no religious background.

This increase in provision is consistent with parental demand and indications from surveys.

This work shall be further informed by the work of the Independent Review Panel on integrated education which is due to report in June 2016.

4. Additional Skills Investment

The Executive will provide additional spending on skills of £244m over the next three financial years, with an additional £84m per annum then added to subsequent recurring baselines, thus ensuring sufficient additional investment in high level skills to help transform the economy and also enabling the Executive to continue to freeze tuition fees.

Spending should increase in line with the table below. This assumes the delivery of the additional £20m for skills, committed by the Finance Minister in January 2016. These investments will address the existing funding gap in higher education and allow for the expansion of investment in higher level skills in either university places or higher level apprenticeships. The scale of this investment is informed by the NI Skills Barometer. Additional investment in skills at this level is an inescapable requirement to ensure a pipeline of skills to make a lower rate of corporation tax a success. This investment would also enable the NI Executive to continue the policy of pegging tuition fees for local students at local institutions in line with inflation.

	17/18	18/19	19/20	Total
Reversing Balance 2015/16 Cuts	5	5	5	15
Structural Funding Gap in Universities	39	39	39	117
Additional Investment in Higher Level Skills	14	27	40	81
Total	58	71	84	244

5. Addressing Economic and Financial Implications of a Divided Society

All Ministers will, by the end of October 2016, commission independent consultants to provide an assessment of what opportunities lie within their respective Departments (including Arm's Length Bodies) to redirect public expenditure away from the costs associated from a divided society and into more efficient programmes and services, and to address the underlying policy environment that creates distortions in public spending. These reports should be completed by March 2017. Following the outcome of this work, Departments will develop and commence implement a strategy to address the cost of division within 6 months of receiving their report.

This work would involve an independent review commissioned by each Department, informed by the report commissioned by DFP from the Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre, under the Stormont House Agreement, which assessed previous research in the costs associated with a divided society, and a series of recommendations on policy changes. The Terms of Reference for these reviews will be agreed by the Budget Review Group and monitoring the implementation of the subsequent strategies will be a standing item for the Budget Review Group which should meet quarterly to address this issue.