



## Political progress can be made

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This is our sole reason for participating in this committee. We want to see the re-establishment of the power-sharing executive and the other institutions laid out in the Good Friday Agreement in the short time ahead. We will not be drawn into any talking shops and we have told both governments this in no uncertain terms.

Sinn Féin is up for a political deal and putting the peace process back on track – we have been for quite some time. We will not be sidelined or distracted in this by DUP intransigence.

We attended the meeting of the Preparation for Government Committee to test the DUP on their credentials.

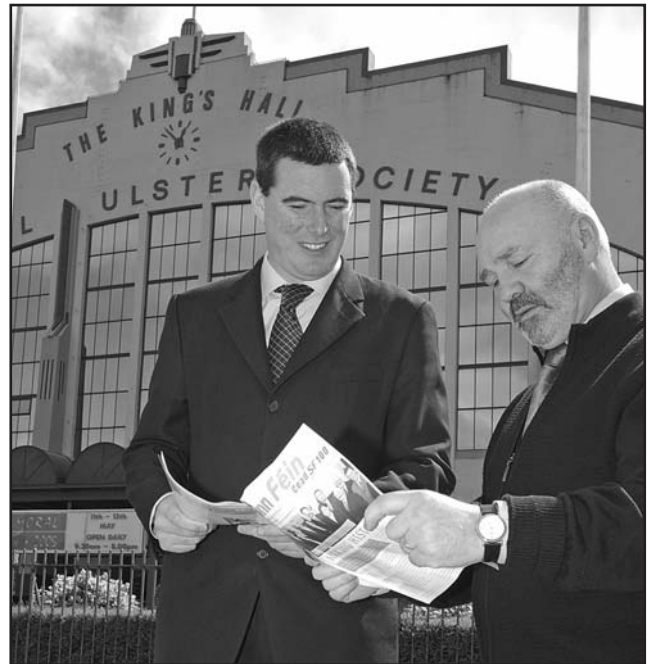
Either they would signal their willingness to move forward on the basis of equality with the rest of us, or they would once again flounder on the rock of intransigence and sectarianism.

While we do not profess to have all the answers, we did call it right on the Peter Hain assembly. Our refusal to take part in meaningless debates presided over by direct-rule ministers were always going to be a non-starter.

Not for the first time in their history, the SDLP allowed themselves to be sucked into a meaningless talking shop designed to placate the unionist parties.

It seems that the meaningless debates have been dropped – at least for the time being – thus removing from the SDLP the need to take the difficult decision and quit acting like Ian Paisley’s crutch.

It is our view that we need to see the maximum pro-agreement consensus in the time ahead if we are to successfully



• Alex Maskey and Stiofan Long

defend the GFA and attempt to lock the DUP into the power-sharing institutions agreed seven years ago and endorsed by the people of this island.

It seems to me that nobody other than Ian Paisley actually believes that power sharing on the DUPs terms is an option. This in itself is a good thing.

So Sinn Féin will move forward with the belief that early political progress can be made if the parties apply themselves and are committed to achieving a sustainable future

where local parties can make local decisions regarding health, education, water charges and rural planning.

If the DUP is not willing to step up to the mark then that can be quickly established. If that is the case then the two governments have little option but to bring the curtain down on this assembly, stop the salaries and move ahead speedily with implementing all of the other aspects of the Good Friday Agreement.

## Comhgairdeas – An Droichead

Tréaslaíonn muid don Droichead príomhdhuais Ghlór na nGael a bhaint ar ócáid cheiliúrtha bhliantúil. Don chéad uair tharla go raibh an ceiliúradh seo I bhFoirgneamh Párlíamainte Stormont.

Bronnagh an curadhmhír ar An Droichead

as a shaothar ar son na Gaeilge agus an Chultúir. Ar ghlacadh leis an duais dó, dúirt Stiúrthóir ar An Droichead, Pilib Ó Ruanáí faoina dtodhcaí, “mothaíonn muid go bhfuil tionscnamh den scoth againn ach ní ligfidh muid ár maidí le sruth. Tá pleanann againn ár gcuid oibre a fhorbairt

sa dóigh go mbíonn eagrais uile-chuimsitheach gairmiúil againn”.

Guíonn muid gach rath, bláth agus beannacht ar An Droichead don tionscnamh seo. Adh Mór.

# Refusal to expand bus lanes can only result in more pollution

## Pollution the focus of Friends of the Earth meeting

Sinn Féin MLA Alex Maskey and Balmoral representative Stiofan Long recently held a meeting with Friends of the Earth. The meeting was held to discuss a number of environmental issues relevant to the South Belfast area. One issue, particularly relevant to the Balmoral constituency, on which there was common ground was the issue of 'Quality Bus Corridors' along the Lisburn and Malone Road's.

Speaking after the meeting Stiofan Long said, "The increase in traffic in the areas surrounding the Westlink has been clearly visible since work commenced on the upgrading project. Concerns have previously been raised with me by residents in these areas about

the potential effect that this will have on pollution levels.

"Our meeting with Friends of the Earth was useful in identifying common ground on this issue.

"Unfortunately, while cities throughout the world are increasingly investing in public transport, Belfast seems to be lagging behind.

"I believe that a number of steps could be taken to reduce traffic congestion and pollution. One such step would be the extension of bus lanes on the Lisburn and Malone Roads. Unfortunately it seems that Roads Service would rather save Road-space for private cars rather than tackle this issue.

"Recent estimates show



• Alex Maskey and Stiofan Long on the Lisburn Road

that Dublin has approximately 200km's of Quality Bus Corridors while Belfast has only

approximately 20 km's. Clearly, Belfast has a lot of catching up to do".

## Planning Madness Driving First-time Buyers Out of the Housing Market

Alex Maskey MLA

In my time as councillor and MLA for the South Belfast area I have had the privilege of being invited to many Residents Group meetings. Most recently this has occurred in the Deramore Park area where I, along with representatives of other Parties, was invited to speak on the issue of Planning. For me these meetings are not only a way for me to let people know what our policies are on such issues, but more importantly, they are a way for me to take on board the views of people in the constituency and assess how relevant our policies are to people like yourselves. Planning, undoubtedly, is one of the issues which is dear to many people in this constituency.

Recent statistics around the issue of first-time buyers, for me, highlights how crucial this issue is. The Publication of recent statistics showing that the number of first-time buyers in South Belfast is dropping highlights the urgent need for an examination of the impact that, not only developers and

landlords through the buy-to-let market, are having on house prices in South Belfast; but more importantly how the Planning decisions being made in Belfast are having a knock on effect of destroying our communities.

The lack of a coherent planning policy in Belfast is destroying many communities in South Belfast. As developers and landlords snap up houses, knowing that they will get the go-ahead from Planners to knock many of these properties down and build apartments in their place, the house prices are soaring.

While this may appeal to those trying to sell their homes, the reality for our communities is not as positive. Not only are apartments which do not fit in with the character of the area being built but the soaring house prices are creating a false economy. Many apartments lie empty. Many are rented out on short term leases. The knock on effect of this is that many of those on such leases have no long term interest in the community which they are



moving into.

This issue is linked in many ways to the issue around Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO's) which are causing so much difficulty at present.

Sinn Féin believes that there are two main issues to be tackled here. One is the need for more help for first-time buyers and the other is a complete overhaul of the planning madness which passes for a policy here.

### **Belfast City Council must do more to support the GAA**

Balmoral Sinn Féin representative Stiofan Long has said that recent figures released by Belfast City Council show the extent to which the council must go to support the GAA in Belfast.

Mr Long said, "Figures show that the council provides almost 100 soccer pitches at various sites throughout city. This is in sharp contrast to the six GAA pitches provided by the council.

"Gaelic games is the biggest sport in the city, both in terms of participants and spectators. Unfortunately, this is does not seem to be reflected in council policy.

"It is the intention of our Party to raise this issue with council officials. At present there is no club pitch for the GAA in South Belfast. This is an issue which we hope will be resolved in the near future".

# Communities must be consulted on Residents only parking

Sinn Féin has demanded that communities throughout South Belfast be properly consulted about proposed residents only parking schemes.

This call comes after a number of residents and community groups in the Lower Lisburn Road area contacted the Party to express their fear that they could be left out of the scheme.

Speaking about the issue Balmoral Sinn Féin representative Stiofan Long said, "I have been contacted by residents living on either side of the Lower Lisburn Road who

are extremely concerned that their area will not be included in the proposed residents only parking schemes.

"I am in agreement with the residents in the area that this area does indeed suffer, not only from '9 to 5' commuter parking, but also from 24 hour parking problems caused by the large number of restaurants and bars in the area.

"Added to this, then, is the parking problems caused by overpopulation of the area as a result of the large number of HMO's in the

area". South Belfast MLA Alex Maskey has attended a number of meetings in City Hall regarding the parking schemes and gave a commitment to work to ensure residents' voices are heard. "It is my hope that further discussions will be held throughout the constituency. I would hope that this would provide residents with an opportunity to lobby for appropriate action in their respective area. It is my intention to work to ensure that this is the case", said Alex.



• Balmoral Sinn Féin representative Stiofan Long

## **Sinn Féin hold community briefing on the RPA**

South and East Belfast Sinn Féin have held a number of meetings to brief community and residents groups in the constituency, and to discuss the effects that the Review of Public Administration (RPA), will have upon their communities and the work that they are involved in.

Speaking about the rationale behind holding the briefings Alex Maskey MLA said "Everybody accepts that the Review of Public Administration, whatever the finalised details are, will have a major effect on community groups, residents groups, and, indeed, residents themselves. Probably the most important issue in this respect is the subject of 'community planning'. There is, however, a real lack of knowledge about the specifics of this. We have been contacted by a number of groups about this. We, therefore, decided to embark on a series of information evenings, or discussions which would allow us to explain the potential effects of the RPA, our position on the RPA, and to address any concerns which people may have about the RPA.

"Community Planning', in essence, will be the designing of a

grand plan, a community plan, for the city of Belfast. This will encompass almost everything that you can imagine from transport to housing, from the environment to community development. One of the real benefits will be that there will be an onus on statutory bodies and departments to work with the council. This means that departments will be obligated to work with the council. This is the empowering of local government, the empowering of the local people elected by the people to work on their behalf.

"For us, however, this does not go far enough. We believe, and are continuing to argue for, a statutory duty to be placed on councils to work with local communities and residents. Such a move would put the citizen at the heart of local government and make sure that 'Community Planning' truly represents the needs of the community".

"Sinn Féin will be trying to facilitate as many groups as possible in the South and East Belfast area. If we have missed your group please feel free to contact South Belfast Sinn Féin @ (028) 90243194".

## **Sinn Féin play host to Police chief**

Sinn Féin was proud to play host to Robert McBride, former ANC political prisoner now Police chief in Johannesburg's East Rand District, at a number of events held throughout Ireland last month.

In South Belfast the former death row inmate delivered the annual Bobby Sands lecture to 2,000 people in the Devenish complex and sat on a panel at the Wellington Park Hotel along with Dawn Purvis (PUP chairperson and independent policing board member), Jamal Iweida (Belfast Islamic centre, and Alex Maskey (South Belfast MLA) at a public meeting held to discuss the Fight for Human Rights in a Society in Transition.

McBride's current role as a police chief in South Africa, and former position as a political prisoner, meant that wherever he went the issue of Policing was never far away.

Speaking on the issue, with the benefit of his own experiences, Robert McBride insisted that control over policing must be wrested from London and devolved to the

North.

McBride highlighted the reality which most people accept when he stated, "The status quo can't persist. I'm sure republicans themselves will agree the way policing in the communities is being done now is not the ideal situation". He added, however, that the transfer of powers on security – including intelligence, justice and policing to local administration is critical saying, "Our liberation could not have taken place in a situation where the security forces were controlled by the old Apartheid regime...the powers of security and justice must be devolved from London to the North of Ireland. That is a big step which must be made".

South and East Belfast Sinn Féin would like to thank Robert McBride for taking the time to visit the area and attend these events.

# Rate payers not getting value for money

Balmoral Sinn Féin representative Stiofan Long has hit out at the recent 19 % increase in domestic rates saying that it will further drive up the cost of living and push greater numbers of people into poverty. He also warned that along with a number of other measures including water charges and electricity and heating cost increases that there will be long-term consequences for the local economy and that rate payer were clearly not getting value for

money.

"Stealth taxes are the hallmark of the British Labour Party government", said the Balmoral representative, "It is an approach which hurts people on low and fixed incomes and is bad for the small and medium businesses that are so crucial to our economy.

"The 19% increase in the domestic rate will drive up the cost of living and push even greater numbers of people into poverty.

"Across a whole range of areas British direct rule ministers are putting in place measures, including water charges, that will compound the problems created by high energy costs and high insurance costs that will have a long-term detrimental impact on the economy.

"When we had a functioning Executive we were able to successfully cap both business and household rates increases because we could see

what the impact of such super inflation busting increases would be. British direct rule clearly has a very different agenda driven by Whitehall.

"While British direct rule is driving up rates it is also cutting the money available to local councils in crucial areas such as waste management. This approach is very worrying when it is proposed that a number of functions will be moved to local government."

## Is Venezuela setting the standard for other countries?



• Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez

The contribution of the housewife to society has remained largely hidden and unrecognised for centuries.

Not so in Venezuela. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has recently passed legislation recognising the importance of the role played by housewives in society, recognising that without them our society would not function. This legislation will ensure that housewives receive a wage of at least 80% of the minimum wage for their work.

Could President Chavez be setting the standard for other countries in the future?

# Malone Sinn Féin Active in your area

This past year has seen Sinn Féin continue to grow throughout Ireland.

Republicanism is more popular than ever and last year 15,000 people marched in a 'Make Partition History' rally through Dublin City centre.

This growth in the popularity of Republicanism has been matched by a growth in the membership of Sinn Féin. This has seen branches being formed throughout the country.

This growth has also been reflected in the South Belfast area with the formation of a number of new cumainn.

The most recent branch to be formed is in the Malone area.

If you are interested in joining Sinn Féin in the Malone area then fill out the form below and return it to South and East Belfast Sinn Féin.



## Labour Party Position Raises Questions For SDLP

Sinn Féin has long campaigned on the issue of representation for northern nationalists in Leinster House. After much pressure the Irish government finally gave a commitment to move forward on the issue.

February, however, saw Bertie Ahern attempt to shy away from this commitment citing opposition in Leinster House led by Labour leader Pat Rabbitte amongst others.

Since Pat Rabbitte has become leader of the Labour party in the South and Mark Durkan took over the reins of the SDLP in the North both have made much of their sister party relationship. The Labour party played key roles in recent SDLP election campaigns. One would assume then that the SDLP have a degree of influence over Labour policy on Six County issues.

However, Pat Rabbitte has been

leading opposition to Northern representation. At the same time the SDLP have publicly claimed to support Northern Representation.

So, either the SDLP's public position on Northern Representation is a lie for public consumption or they enjoy no influence over the Irish Labour party. Either way this issue raises serious questions for the SDLP.

## Join Sinn Féin

HELP SINN FÉIN TO BUILD AN IRELAND OF EQUALS

If you would like to join Sinn Féin fill in the form and send it to:  
**South and East Belfast Sinn Féin, Unit 3, 174-178 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 2ED.**

Name:.....

Address:.....

Tel/E-mail:.....

Age:.....

## Sinn Féin: Working for YOU!

Sinn Féin is an activist based Party intent on giving you the best representation possible. If you need advice or have a problem, no matter how big or small, feel free to contact us at :

**Unit 3,  
 174 Ormeau Rd,  
 BT 7 2ED.**

**Tel: (028) 90243194**

**Opening hours: Monday 10am - 5pm**

**Tues - Fri 10am - 2pm**

**e-mail: sinn.fein@btconnect.com**