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**RE: Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland’s Past Consultation**

**Introduction**

*The Community Relations Council (CRC) was established in 1990 to lead and support change towards reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust.  CRC is an Arms' Length Body of The Executive Office, a Department of the Northern Ireland Executive and a catalyst for good inter-community and inter-cultural community relations work in the region. CRC assists in the implementation of The Executive’s Good Relations Strategy – Together: Building a United Community, and as the regional body for community relations we work to identify and develop effective approaches to* ***peace-building and reconciliation*** *in partnership with local people and organisations, and with central and local government. We believe the delivery of a peaceful, reconciled and interdependent society will be based on social partnership, the broader engagement of civil society and positive political leadership underpinned by priorities including fairness, equity, openness and diversity. Since its inception, CRC has developed significantly in its approach to this work, and in its support and implementation of actions and programmes that seek to proactively acknowledge and deal with the legacy of our conflict and the continued impacts of division to ensure a better quality of life for all in our society. We promote the benefits of good relations policies and practice at regional, local, community and institutional levels; advocating for acknowledgment of our interdependence; challenging sectarianism, racism and all forms of violence motivated by hate. We provide financial support, development and policy guidance for peace building and good relations through civic leadership, wide community engagement and the sharing of best practice.*

**Background**

For over ten years, prior to the establishment of the Victim Support Service, the CRC provided financial and development support in the form of grant schemes to those supporting victims and survivors of the conflict which were funded by OFMDFM (subsequently renamed The Executive Office) and the European Union’s Peace Programme. This was a volatile environment in which to work with many feeling hurt, pain, mistrust, fear, suspicion and anger that victims have not received true acknowledgement or recognition for the suffering they have had to carry. The challenge was to help build trusting relationships, to reduce the isolation felt by victims and survivors and to work towards their integration into the everyday life and fabric of our society.

CRC is therefore very aware of the wide range of knowledge and experience that has been developed on dealing with the past. In annex 1 CRC has outlined work relevant to the issues under consideration in this consultation.

For the purposes of this consultation CRC will concentrate its response to the draft proposals on areas that **intersect with our experience and work**, namely the Implementation and Reconciliation Group and the Oral History Archive.

The other proposed mechanisms, the Historical Investigations Unit and the Independent Commission for Information Retrieval, are critical to dealing with the past. These mechanisms must have the confidence of those seeking justice and truth via robust processes, personnel, transparency, accountability and proper resources.

In staying within our remit and competencies, CRC took the following approach to help inform the CRC Board’s policy comment and final submission:

* We reviewed previous responses made by the CRC on earlier Legacy consultation; reviewed CRC commissioned research on issues linked to the legacy of the past.
* CRC also undertook external engagement with a wide range of stakeholders to help inform the Board’s response. This included engagement with Community Relations practitioners, supported by CRC grant aid, involved in developing and delivering approaches and interventions on legacy related issues.
* In addition to this CRC attended a number of public engagement and consultation events linked to the NIO consultation and spoke to organisations and individuals who have a remit for dealing with the legacy issues.

**Summary of comments and recommendations**

1. It is crucial that victims and survivors, their representative bodies and support organisations, as well as those institutions and individuals who can provide expert evidence on human rights, criminal justice, oral histories and reconciliation issues are listened to when shaping the final structures and functions.
2. Implementation and Reconciliation Group
3. CRC is the arm’s length body of The Executive Office tasked with promoting reconciliation and peace building.
4. The proposals set out clearly the role of the IRG in relation to the work of other proposed legacy structures.
5. It is unclear how the IRG structure will engage with reconciliation work external to the current proposals.

Acknowledgement:

1. The IRG group and its functions need to be aligned to acknowledgement as a part of the wider, strategic goal of reconciliation which is a much broader task.
2. Acknowledgement should not be avoided and it is disappointing it is has been disregarded in the proposals and accompanying legislation.

Reconciliation Definition:

1. There is no definition of reconciliation within the proposals.

IRG Membership:

1. A structure comprised entirely of nominees from political parties and the two governments is not appropriate because of the difficulty of the issues from a political perspective.
2. CRC want a structure that is inclusive of voices across our society – including women and victims.

Code of conduct:

1. Confidence will be a major issue for the IRG.

Academic Report:

1. CRC welcomes the proposal that the academic report must be independent, free from political influence, and thus securing public confidence.

Resources:

1. There is no information relating to the resources of the IRG. CRC seeks further detail regarding the provision and use of resources to ‘*promote*’.

Timeline:

1. Reconciliation as a whole is a long-term goal that may take decades. That aspect of reconciliation that includes acknowledgement and dealing with the past will take longer than five years.

Implementation and Reconciliation Group recommendations:

1. Detail how the work of the IRG will take place within the structural and systemic context of what the Executive Office and its arm’s length body are currently leading on.
2. Revisit proposals and legislation with a view to incorporating Statements of Acknowledgements into the final legislation and the work of the IRG.
3. Include a working definition of reconciliation in the legislation.
4. IRG membership should be reflective of wider society, independent of political interference, and recruited through an open appointment process.
5. Clarify how women and other categories will be represented on the IRG, as well as the other legacy structures, and take action to urgently address these omissions.
6. Develop and adopt of a Code of Conduct, embedding values of collaboration and consensus, in order to support the work of the IRG – agreed and adopted in advance.
7. CRC does not favour a restricted list of publications for the production of the academic report and recommends a flexible approach concerning the current list of resources.
8. Clarify who will undertake a review of the work undertaken by the IRG itself to ‘promote reconciliation’.
9. Clarify the timeline for the work of the IRG and allow flexibility for adjustment.
10. After five years incorporate the work of the IRG into existing structures and frameworks.
11. Oral History Archive (OHA)
12. The OHA is a positive proposal. It’s processes and accountability mechanisms must be robust to generate a culture of civic engagement – both for the depositing of testimonies but also for accessing and learning from the archive.
13. The experiences of victims and survivors are central to any oral history archive.
14. Need to engage the whole of wider society if the full picture about our past is to be acknowledged.
15. Barriers to engagement must be minimised and encouragement given to hear new voices that have previously felt unable to come forward.
16. What resources will be made available to complete the new work?
17. How will those already involved in this work at community level will be invited to support these processes?
18. Will PRONI develop guidelines for future oral history collection processes in collaboration with external organisations given the expertise in other non-governmental organisations?
19. NIO should clarify self-appraisal function of Deputy Keeper and the role of the steering group in the production of the Annual Report.
20. OHA interim report to the IRG is a welcome proposal but there is a need to clarify what the IRG can do with the interim report e.g. make recommendations.
21. There is a vast amount of expertise and knowledge within NI on oral histories. NIO and future OHA need to acknowledge current and previous work already undertaken by a range of organisations and collaboratively engage on processes and procedures.
22. The development of an historical timeline is a positive development.

Oral History Archive recommendations:

1. Appropriate counselling and support services should be made available to reduce and minimise any re-traumatisation.
2. Audits should be actioned of what exists and gaps identified to assist a targeted approach to communities previously left unheard.
3. The opportunity to collect a ‘community’ or a ‘collective’ experience regarding specific event (s) should be explored.
4. Clarify the accountability relationship between the Deputy Keeper and the Steering Group
5. Consider an international dimension to the OHA steering group to maintain links with global developments.
6. Engage and harness the skills and personnel of oral history practitioners – they hold the key to accessing existing oral histories, as well as unlocking the many untold oral histories.
7. The historical timeline project should include social scientists and historians, as well as reconciliation practitioners, to guarantee impartiality while bringing to bear wide ranging expertise and experience

**General Comments on dealing with the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past**

CRC welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation. CRC has previously commented on consultations relating to the legacy of the past. These submissions are available upon request[[1]](#footnote-1).

Whether we choose to adjudicate the past, collect the stories of the past without judgement, support those who have been hurt in the past, or reconcile with the past, we do not have the option of ignoring it. This issue has been difficult to address when we are trying to maintain equilibrium in the present. Remembering and commemorating those who died or were injured in the conflict is recent memory and many still carry the suffering and hurts of the past as a real challenge in the present.

Antagonisms remain despite the long established political settlement. There is pain, grief, anger and disappointment. The legacy of the conflict continues to have a detrimental impact on individuals, families and communities. The continuing lack of justice, lack of information, conflicts regarding remembering and commemoration, coincide with high levels of deprivation, poor mental health and segregated communities.

Collectively this has a corrosive effect on lives and society.

CRC is fully aware that dealing with the past – truth, justice, acknowledgement, remembering, healing - is difficult; but it is vital that we face it for the sake of victims and survivors, their families and the future of our whole community.

The processes for dealing with the past must be compliant with democracy, human rights principles and the rule of law. A successful process should also oblige the various mechanisms that are developed to fully engage with those who are going to access and depend on them. This will require a co-designed process. The structures must have the confidence of the individuals and families engaging with them; they must be open, transparent and human rights compliant; they must ensure appropriate support mechanisms for those who use them; and they must be able to fulfil their obligations.

**Implementation & Reconciliation Group (IRG)**

*The role of the IRG in reconciliation*

The proposals state that the IRG will:

 *‘take steps as it considers appropriate to promote reconciliation and may include supporting and encouraging other persons in the promotion of reconciliation’.*

Reconciliation and good relations is a function – policy, legislatively and legally – of The Executive Office which five years ago produced the Northern Ireland strategy for reconciliation, Together: Building a United Community. The Community Relations Council is the arm’s length body of The Executive Office, tasked with promoting reconciliation and peace building. It is important to place the work of the IRG within this context to ensure it is rooted and aligned to other structures and contributing to the overall reconciliation effort.

The reconciliation element of the work of the IRG must take place within the structural and systemic context of what The Executive Office and its arm’s length body are already leading. However, there is no precise detail as to what work the IRG will undertake regarding the promotion of reconciliation. CRC is seeking clarification on this aspect of the proposed work of the IRG and looks forward to discussing how it will link to the legal, policy and legislative arrangements already in place.

*Statements of acknowledgement*

CRC is of the opinion that the IRG group and its functions need to be aligned to acknowledgement as a part of the wider, strategic goal of reconciliation which is a much broader task. Reconciliation is societal and systemic while acknowledgement puts a focus on the hurt of victims through many activities undertaken during the conflict by State and non-State forces which lies within the scope of the Stormont House discussions. Acknowledgment is powerful, and has the potential to make a transformative contribution to the wider reconciliation process that benefits everyone especially victims but also combatants and wider society.

Statements of Acknowledgement[[2]](#footnote-2) were proposed in theStormont House Agreement (SHA) ‘In the context of the work of the IRG: the UK and Irish Governments will consider statements of acknowledgement and would expect others to do the same’.

CRC is disappointed and shocked that these statements of acknowledgment commitments are not included in the current NIO proposals nor the draft legislation.

The report by Pablo de Greiff, Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation andguarantees of non-recurrence, suggested that *‘All actors involved in violations and**abuses committed during the Troubles should consider an**acknowledgement, which could be issued simultaneously’***[[3]](#footnote-3)**.

Acknowledgement is an important aspect of recognising the hurt and damage done to an individual, a family, a community and society. Statements of acknowledgement have the potential to create a long-lasting impact on the reconciliation process.

CRC fully appreciates the complexity and challenges of acknowledgment, however, such statements would be indicative of the commitment at all levels to the serious work of reconciliation.

Acknowledgement should not be avoided and CRC strongly recommends a revisiting of this SHA proposal with a view to incorporating it into the final legislation and the work of the IRG.

*The definition and scope of reconciliation*

In addition to the concern about strategic alignment in relation to the reconciliation element of the work of the IRG, CRC also notes that there is no definition of reconciliation within the proposals. The IRG will require a clear and transparent set of principles to work under; a system that can deliver on reconciliation and an institutional framework that is engaged with others involved in this work. This is critical as the role of reconciliation in dealing with the past has been debated (as other concepts have been, for example acknowledgement). Reconciliation is always a voluntary act but beyond this there have been varying views about what it should involve. CRC commissioned research in 2004 to develop a clearer definition[[4]](#footnote-4) and understanding of reconciliation. The research was undertaken by B. Hamber and G. Kelly and identified five key strands.

Acknowledging and dealing with the past was one of the strands identified along with four others:

1) Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society

2) Building positive relationships

3) Significant cultural and attitudinal change

4) Substantial social, economic and political change.

It is this strand – acknowledging and dealing with the past - that we suggest the IRG should prioritise as its contribution to the wider reconciliation agenda.

*Membership of the IRG*

CRC firmly believes that a structure comprised entirely of nominees from political parties and the two governments is not appropriate given the real and perceived politicisation of these issues in recent years.

CRC believes that a more broadly based membership is a more inclusive way to represent the range of perspectives in our society. In its submission to the Consultative Group on the Past CRC recommended:

 *‘the setting up of a small but widely cast standing Commission that will regularly report on the progress our society has made towards the goal of a society at peace. Such a body would make recommendations on new steps to be taken as society matures, ensuring that the process of dealing with the past is measured, appropriate and open ended and removing any fears that the truth can be buried for ever’.*

CRC also said the Commission *‘should be publicly supported but clearly independent of political interference and with its own resources and support.  It would be accountable and recruited through an open appointment process’.*

This continues to be our position.

Appointees should be recruited via an open public appointment process, therefore guaranteeing impartiality and transparency in the process and securing the expertise of a diverse and representative group.  It is crucial for the success of this body and its perceived independence that it is able to appoint individuals who are free to hear/review material/research/reports that may challenge perceptions of the past.

Crucially, given this is the first significant attempt in policy terms to link the work of reconciliation with the work of victims, truth, justice and information retrieval work, the voice of victims and survivors must be included independent of any perception of political agendas.

In addition, CRC would like to highlight the UN Security Council Resolution 1325[[5]](#footnote-5) on women and peace (2000). It ‘reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security’. The NIO should clarify how women and other categories, including rural perspectives, will be represented on the IRG, as well as the other legacy structures, and take action to urgently address these omissions.

*Code of Conduct*

The proposals state that ‘*members of IRG must have regard to the need for them to work collaboratively and in such a way as to secure public confidence in the IRG’.* Confidence will be a major issue for the IRG – not only for the wider public image, but also for its relationship with the other structures, and more importantly for the individuals and families that are engaging with those other structures. Building confidence and consensus on such a sensitive issue is critical. It is therefore vital to appoint individuals who can demonstrate the capacity and willingness to work to this objective.

In addition to personal attributes, the development and adoption of a Code of Conduct embedding the values of collaboration and consensus building would help support the work of this body. CRC suggests that this code should be agreed before the IRG commences its work.

*Independent Academic Report*

CRC welcomes the proposal that the academic report must be independent, free from political influence, and thus securing public confidence. The draft proposals list a range of sources to be analysed for the production of the academic report. CRC does not favour a restricted list of publications, and recommends a flexible approach concerning resources. Additional material, not listed, may provide evidence of the wider context within which the legacy institutions are operating e.g. the CRC will shortly publish the fifth Peace Monitoring Report. Sources of similar independent research, would provide additional valuable information, supporting a wide analysis of progress towards or away from reconciliation.

It is not clear from the consultation document whether the academic process will involve a review of the work undertaken by the IRG itself to ‘promote reconciliation’.

*IRG timetable*

Reconciliation as a whole is a long-term goal that may take decades. That aspect of reconciliation that includes acknowledgement and dealing with the past will also take longer than five years. That may add an onus on incorporating the work of the IRG in to existing structures and frameworks.

*Resources*

There is no information in the consultation about the overall level of resources of the IRG. In particular CRC seeks further detail regarding the provision and use of resources to ‘*promote*’. How will these resources contribute to the Executive’s strategic policy relating to reconciliation and peacebuilding? Will the IRG seek advice from the Executive and the CRC regarding work to be undertaken by the IRG to promote reconciliation?

**Oral History Archive (OHA)**

The OHA is a positive proposal, but must ensure processes and accountability mechanisms are robust to generate a culture of civic engagement – both for the depositing of testimonies but also for accessing and learning from the archive. The tone needs to be set from the outset of one of cooperation, partnership, trust, safeguarding, protecting, preserving, enriching, sensitivity, empathy, skilful.

Since 2012 the CRC and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) have been working together to promote an open conversation about how we remember our past in the public sphere. At the outset werecognised the need for shared values that might underpin our approach to remembering. In the end we came up with a set of principles:

1. Start from the historical facts;
2. Recognise the implications and consequences of what happened;
3. Understand that different perceptions and interpretations exist;
4. Show how events and activities can deepen understanding of the period;
5. See the act of remembering in the context of an ‘inclusive and accepting society’

The principles are simple but they set a challenge for all of us, whether we are organising a commemoration event or reacting to one. The purpose is not to make us all the same, in what we think or do, but to help us recognise that we are different and that we should be free to express our differences whilst being respectful of others. That is the underpinning social contract that will allow difference to flourish in a shared space. If we can come to an agreement about that, at all levels of society, we have the basis of moving forward without fear of loss of identity or culture.

In addition to the principles, CRC and HLF also made a practical contribution to the forthcoming decade of centenaries with a series of talks entitled “Remembering the Future” which examined the period from 1912 to 1923, a time that shaped many of our political and cultural allegiances today. Over the 10 weeks of the talks, we looked at many strands of our identity and the relationships that cross these islands which were, and remain complex and intertwined[[6]](#footnote-6).

In addition to the above, CRC’s 2007 research ‘Hearing the Voices – sharing perspectives in the Victim/Survivor Sector’[[7]](#footnote-7) explored issues such as acknowledgement and society, relationships, commemoration, memoralisation, and the trans-generational dimension of the conflict.

CRC believes that the stories and experiences of victims and survivors are vital if we are to create a truly human context in dealing with the past, therefore the experiences of victims and survivors should form the primary evidence of tragedy and are central to any oral history archive. CRC believes that opportunities exist for a real process of storytelling in public.

We are aware of good practice in facing the past in many groups across Northern Ireland. A number of groups have engaged in community enquiries. Others have established wide-ranging research projects, to collect and collate personal victim narratives, to enable their stories to be heard, for the living memory to be put on record and to embrace such recollections in the advancement towards community healing, growth in confidence and the empowerment of victims and survivors.

CRC is supportive of work already undertaken by groups, including the work of [Healing Through Remembering](http://healingthroughremembering.org/resources/reports/) (HTR) and [Towards Understanding and Healing](https://thejunction-ni.org/publications/) (TUH). Their experience and practice is based on long consideration and reflection, and are important organisations for reference and ethical guidance. However, for the full picture about our past to be acknowledged there is a need to engage the whole of wider society.

Based on our work in this area we have the following comments to make on the Oral History Archive (OHA), which we hope will be useful to the NIO:

*Engagement*

The proposals refer to ‘*Identifying other organisations which have made/make oral records, inform of possibility to including them in the archive’.* Is this an ongoing process of engagement for the lifespan of the OHA? Furthermore, whilst the OHA can receive records outside NI/Ireland, will it also involve a proactive outreach programme to source and encourage deposits.

It is important that barriers to engagement are minimised and encouragement is given to hear new voices that have previously felt unable to come forward. The OHA should also provide detail as to how they will engage with children and young people and ensure they are viewed as important voices in the storytelling and story sharing process.

Appropriate counselling and support services should be made available to reduce and minimise any re-traumatisation.  Furthermore, an important aspect of this approach is to ensure there is a clear understanding of what this approach will achieve.

Audits should be carried out of what exists and gaps identified to assist a targeted approach to communities previously left unheard; it is important that all voices and stories are heard and an important task will be to find ways of encouraging people to come forward.

The proposals refer to ‘personal experiences’. The opportunity to collect a ‘community’ or a ‘collective’ experience regarding specific event (s) should also be explored as it may have the potential to contribute to reconciliation. It could provide a mechanism for inter-generational memories to be collected and archived together to reveal the wider effect of an event on a range of people/groups of people.

There is no information provided about the resources that will be necessary to complete the new work. Are the current PRONI structures sufficient in relation to staff numbers, skills, capacity, and resources to collect archives from individuals? Alternatively, is it envisaged that those already involved in this work at community level will be invited to support these processes.

*Supporting/securing future collections*

CRC is seeking information on whether PRONI will be expected to develop guidelines for future oral history collection processes i.e. to future proof future archiving/collections by external organisations. It would be beneficial to do this collaboratively with external organisations given the expertise in other non-governmental organisations.

*The Deputy Keeper and the Steering group*

The legislation indicates the areas for which the Deputy Keeper has responsibility. Decisions relating to what records should be or should not be kept, as well as the validation of statements are complex and could potentially place the Deputy Keeper, as a public speaker, in an invidious position being asked to make significant judgements affecting peoples’ lives and reputations with little, partial or incomplete evidence.

The appointment of a steering group (possess experience of obtaining oral histories in and outside of NI) is a welcome proposal. Further detail is required on the appointment process, and it might be useful to consider an international dimension to this steering group to maintain links with global developments. CRC welcomes the creation of a steering group to work alongside the Deputy Keeper. However, it would be useful to clarify the relationship in more detail, for example, the Deputy Keeper must consult steering group on statement of functions, and when exercising functions must ‘have regard’ to any advice from steering group. CRC seeks clarification as to how the steering group would raise concerns about the carrying out of functions.

CRC has enlisted the support of a steering group/advisory group for a number of projects e.g. Decade of Commemorations and Peace Monitoring Report. This enabled CRC to bring an inclusiveness, expertise and critical thinking that was invaluable to the process and the product. CRC views these steering groups as a supporting structure, offering independence, checks and balances to processes and functions, a sense of partnership and expert guidance.

*Annual Report*

Accountability and transparency will be a critical aspect of the annual report. The documentation states that the Deputy Keeper will produce a report on the functions/organising archive, as well as the performance of Deputy Keeper in connection with the exercise of that function. Will the Deputy Keeper therefore be formally appraising their own position, or does the steering group have a role in this operation? Furthermore, what role does the steering group have in the production of the annual report?

Further thought needs to be given to what happens if we continue to have a suspended Assembly i.e. who will receive the annual report? Another area that would benefit from extra detail is the format of the annual report i.e. will it seek to provide information on themes/patterns – similar to what is expected from the report to the IRG? Will it highlight areas of concern, gaps, and recommendations for the next annual period?

*Report to the IRG*

CRC is pleased the Deputy Keeper is able to submit and interim report to IRG, and is not just restricted to a five year reporting procedure. However, it is currently unclear in the OHA legislation what the IRG can do with the interim report i.e. can it seek clarification? Can it make recommendations for the Deputy Keeper to consider for action? In addition, will the steering group receive the interim report/annual report and at what stage in the process?

*Recognition of existing work*

CRC reiterates the need to recognise current and previous work already undertaken by a range of organisations. Serious efforts must be made to ensure their learning, relationships with individuals and communities, practice and expertise is utilised. CRC has supported a number of groups engaged in storytelling. There is a vast amount of expertise and knowledge within NI on oral histories and CRC strongly recommends the NIO, and those responsible for the OHA, engage and harness these skills and personnel – they hold the key to accessing existing oral histories, as well as unlocking the many untold oral histories.

*Historical Timeline*

CRC is convinced that historical clarification is a positive development.  The aim should be to address the roles played by key actors and institutions in the conflict, in the context of universal norms of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This would help to ensure (though cannot guarantee) that the past is never repeated and that a useable narrative is developed, including for the teaching of ‘the troubles’ as history, on which a shared future can be built.

This project should include social scientists and historians, as well as reconciliation practitioners, to guarantee impartiality while bringing to bear wide ranging expertise and experience.

This approach will complement the parallel process of oral histories.

*Historical Investigations Unit and Independent Commission for Information Retrieval*

Justice and information retrieval is hugely complex and sensitive, and there are many views as to what it should look like, and what it can deliver for victims and survivors.

It is therefore crucial that victims and survivors, their representative bodies and support organisations, as well as those institutions and individuals who can provide expert evidence on human rights and criminal justice issues are listened to when shaping the final structures and functions.

The key issue for CRC is that processes and structures are fit for purpose, they must be robust, open, transparent, and ensure those dealing with individuals and families are highly skilled and trained, and able to signpost to additional support if needed. The system must seek to make things better, and not traumatise individuals and families all over again.

**Conclusion**

The past is a hugely complex issue that has previously suffered from a number of false starts, and unfortunately, many of those impacted by the past have been left angered, disappointed and disillusioned by previous experiences.

It must be different this time.

We hope the suggested structures do not suffer from over-complexity and the potential for legal challenge. However, there is risk and complexity associated with running information retrieval processes whilst legal remedies also remain available.

It is critical the NIO pays attention to the range of views, evidence and opinions coming through in this consultation. It is critical these views shape the architecture and operations – this will go a long way to building trust and confidence.

CRC hopes that our comments are helpful to the NIO when formulating the final legacy institutions.

**ANNEX 1**

Over the years, CRC has been responsible for and involved in a range of work and interventions focusing on Addressing the Legacy of the Past. Below is a sample of activity being undertaken by organisations currently funded by CRC.

**CRC CORE GRANT SCHEME**

1. The **Junction/Holywell Trust** provides a safe space for cultural activity enabling it to build partnerships and networks across the community. The Junction continues its work on Ethical and Shared Remembering on a regional basis. The partnership is also working collaboratively using theatre to address the past by allowing people, through local and international artists, to shares their experiences, promote healing and reconciliation.
2. The **North West Play Resource Centre** has a strong record of developing arts initiatives in partnership with a wide variety of statutory and community/voluntary sector agencies with the aims of promoting a wide range of personal/social benefits including community relations development, social inclusion and personal development. Their current programme of activity, including the Theatre of Witness, uses a range of artists with significant experience of using arts activity in conflict areas/areas of social breakdown to promote healing and reconciliation within Northern Ireland/Border Counties. This involves delivering workshops with victims of the Troubles to create performance pieces in which participants re-tell their own stories using theatre, music, film and imagery.
3. **Reconciliation, Education and Community Training (REACT)** continues to rise to the challenge of dealing with contentious issues on an inter and intra community basis and encourage those affected by the legacy of the conflict to move forward, through the facilitation of community dialogue and encouraging participation in development programmes. REACT responds to a wide variety of issues affecting relationships within and between communities e.g. neighbour disputes, bonfires, flags, parades to providing opportunities for people from different communities to come together and learn about each other’s history, culture and identity. They also work with Confederation of Ulster Bands & Armagh Bands Forum on cultural identity, and deliver a Royalists & Loyalists programme (Decade of Centenaries Event programme on cross-community basis).
4. **Institute of Conflict Research** are delivering a long-term training and development programme ‘Back to the Future’ that addresses the legacy of the Past through arts and heritage based activities.
5. **Forthspring** delivers anOCN accredited ‘Understanding the Troubles’ course; they are also engaging with people about their direct experiences of the conflict with the aim of linking them to the Accounts of the Conflict online repository.
6. **Kabosh** works within the cultural sector as a company leading the way in original creative approaches to community relations work e.g. touring of plays ‘The Green & the Blue (exploring experience of police on both sides of the border during the Troubles) & Those You Pass on the Street (issues of forgiving in post-conflict society).
7. **Corrymeela** is committed to reconciliation through healing of social, religious and political divisions that exist in Northern Ireland and throughout the world. Corrymeela’s Legacies Programme involves teacher training and direct work with young people to address legacy issues to promote reconciliation.
8. **Youthlink** is a partnership of the four larger Churches working together to develop excellence in youth work and ministry, enabling young people and youth practitioners to be agents of transformation in a divided society. Currently their work involves developing and disseminating new curriculum materials on addressing the legacy of the past, designed for teachers and youth workers.

**DECADE OF CENTENARIES**

The Decade of Anniversaries refers to the period of the Home Rule Crisis and the Ulster Covenant Campaign in 1912 through to Partition and the establishment of two parliaments in Ireland in 1921/22.  The Community Relations Council and Heritage Lottery Fund organised the first 'Remembering the Future' conference that took place on 21 March 2011.  This began a continuing conversation about the issue of remembering in public space.  To support this CRC and HLF developed and promoted a widely endorsed set of principles.  A series of conferences and resource fairs were organised with partners.  Publications and videos developed include Remembering the Future 11 Session Lecture Series, a Toolkit of case studies, videos and publications on the three conferences.  We produced these in order to promote balanced understanding of difficult history, using the historical facts and drawing on different narratives. Resources are available on this [page](https://www.community-relations.org.uk/decade-centenaries) and [Creative Centenaries](http://www.creativecentenaries.org./resources).

**RESEARCH**

The Community Relations Council has commissioned research, published and highlighted other’s research. The following is an example of this work.

**General**

1. Community Relations Council (2011), *Towards a Shared Society,* Community Relations Council.
2. Community Relations Council (2008), *What Made Now in Northern Ireland*, Community Relations Council.

**Dealing with the past**

1. Community Relations Council (2013*), Remembering the Future, Understanding our Past, Shaping our Future*, NICRC and Heritage Lottery Fund.
2. Community Relations Council (2013), *Decades of Anniversaries – Toolkit*, NICRC and Heritage Lottery Fund.
3. Neil Jarman (2012), ‘Hope and History: Looking Backwards to Move Forward’, *Shared Space* Issue 14, Community Relations Council.
4. Máire Braniff (2012), ‘After Agreement: The Challenges of Implementing Peace’, *Shared Space* Issue 14, Community Relations Council.
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1. CRC submissions to the Panel of the Parties submission; Eames Bradley consultation; NIO consultation [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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3. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence on his mission to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. November 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **RECONCILIATION.** Our working hypothesis is that reconciliation is a necessary process following conflict. However, we believe it is a voluntary act and cannot be imposed. It involves five interwoven and related strands 1) Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society 2) Acknowledging and dealing with the past 3)Building positive relationships 4) Significant cultural and attitudinal change 5) Substantial social, economic and political change. <https://www.community-relations.org.uk/publications/working-definition-reconciliation> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/#resolution> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The recordings of the talks and many other resources can be found on the webpage of the Community Relations Council (www.nicrc.org.uk). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Sara Templer and Dr Katy Radford were commissioned by CRC to undertake research into the opportunities and challenges victims and survivors face in the context of developing shared working in terms of policy and practice.  [↑](#footnote-ref-7)