

**Healing Through Remembering
Submission to Consultative Group on the Past**

24 January 2008



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1. INTRODUCTION

This submission outlines the work and views of the Healing Through Remembering (HTR) Project. It includes what we hope are informed and constructive comments which will assist understanding of how best to progress the complex and difficult issue of how society deals with its conflictual past.

HTR is an extensive cross-community project made up of a range of individual members holding different political perspectives. This includes people from loyalist, republican, British Army and police backgrounds as well as individuals from different religious backgrounds, victims' groups, academics and community activists. They have come together over the last eight years to focus on the issue of how to deal with our conflictual past. This submission was written following a one-day meeting of the membership of the organisation called together specifically to address the issue and draw on our knowledge and experience of work in this area. Given the diversity of the organisation and the strong feelings and emotions generated by the subject matter, the day involved an honest discussion and exchange of views. The resulting submission is the agreed position of the membership of HTR.

This submission is not the final word on how to deal with the past as it is still an unfolding process, but we hope our lessons from engaging in this debate with a cross-section of society are useful for the wider process. In addition, this document is complemented by a range of reports which discuss most issues it raises in detail. Attached to this submission are the following reports:

- "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". Legal Opinion. (2006)
- "All Truth is Bitter (2000)
- "Without Walls: A report on HTR Open Call for Ideas for a Living Memorial Museum of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland" (2008)

By way of background, the HTR project began when it carried out a wide public consultation on the issue of dealing with the past and published its findings in June 2002. In this report a set of recommendations were made. The recommendations are outlined in this submission, as well as the current work of the project which aims at implementing the recommendations.

In addition this submission outlines a number of key principles which are regarded as vital to any initiatives in dealing with the past. These principles arise directly from the experience of the individuals that make up the organisation, i.e. from the work that they have individually been involved in as well as their participation in HTR. These principles have been identified as crucial to the successful operation of any processes. They are not simply a list of values, but we feel,



they also provide a framework for how a process can be designed that can ensure rational and structured debate, and a sound process for dealing with the past.

In practice, all our recommendations, and the work we are currently undertaking, are inter-related. We strongly believe they should be seen as an ensemble rather than as isolated activities. The realisation of the recommendations will take time, and each option can only be developed following inclusive discussion and when the time is right for that option. That said we believe the areas that the HTR Initiative focuses on (i.e. truth recovery, living memorial museum, storytelling, day of reflection, commemoration) provide a framework for how best to deal with the past. This submission outlines the work HTR has done to date, what this work has demonstrated, and how this can assist in offering a way forward.

We believe the recommendations and focus of HTR provide a framework for dealing with the past in an integrated, consensual and effective manner.

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2. BACKGROUND TO HTR

In February 1999 Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI) and the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) jointly invited Dr Alex Boraine to visit Northern Ireland. Dr Boraine, at the time Deputy Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, met a number of groups and individuals to discuss the experience of—and the lessons learnt from—South Africa and to consider any bearing they may have on the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. The essence of these discussions was captured in a report entitled *All Truth is Bitter* launched in March 2000.

All Truth is Bitter recommended that it would be a useful exercise to hold wide-ranging discussion to explore and debate ways of examining the past and remembering so as to build a better future. To this end—and on the initiative of the individuals and organisations who first invited Dr Boraine to Northern Ireland—a number of individuals were invited to form a Board. After much discussion, in June 2001 a group of individuals formally agreed to become the Healing Through Remembering Project Board. The Project was formally launched on 8 October 2001.

The vision of the project was:

An acknowledgement of the events connected with the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, and in so doing, individually and collectively to have contributed to an understanding of, and the healing of, the wounds of society.

The specific mission of the project was:

...to identify and document possible mechanisms and realisable options for healing through remembering for those people affected by the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Building on a range of previous and current local, national and international initiatives, including discussions with experts, the Project will undertake a range of in-depth discussions with organisations, communities, politicians and individuals on the issues of truth-telling and healing.

Consultation Process

The key task of the Healing Through Remembering project was to undertake a consultation process on how Northern Ireland, and those affected both in and beyond Northern Ireland, could remember and deal with the past, and in so doing move towards healing. The purpose of the consultation was to produce a document outlining a range of options for dealing with the past and truth recovery, to be submitted to the British and Irish Governments and Office of First and Deputy First Minister, and the public. To undertake the consultation the Board agreed on the following primary question for the consultation:

How should people remember the events connected with the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, and in so doing, individually and collectively contribute to the healing of the wounds of society?



So far as possible the project endeavoured to ensure that as many voices as possible were heard through the consultation process. To this end the project was interested in attracting a wide a range of views from the general public, as well as from organisations and individuals with a specific concern with dealing with the past. All were invited to make a submission to the project either in writing, or through the project website.

The call for submissions was advertised in all the major newspapers. Organisations were also personally invited by letter to make a submission. All were also offered an opportunity to meet the project staff or have a facilitation session on the issues at hand. This opportunity was taken up by fourteen organisations. A number of seminars and background interviews were also undertaken during the life of the project. In summary:

A call for submissions was placed in 56 local newspapers
Over 400 organisations were personally invited by letter to make a submission
5000 project leaflets were distributed
The project website was visited 1940 times recording 39,934 hits

The Response

In total, 108 submissions were received by the project from individuals and organisations. The individual respondents included victims, ex-service personnel, ex-prisoners, students, academics and service-providers. The organisational respondents included victims' groups, NGOs, religious organisations, security personnel, artists and performers. The bulk of the submissions were from Northern Ireland, with some coming from England and the Republic of Ireland, and one from the United States of America. All submissions received were individually summarised by a member of the project consultancy team. These summaries were then collated under the themes that arose from the submissions and written up to be available as a resource to inform further reflection.

Summary of Submissions

Drawn together, the 108 submissions provided a varied range of opinions and insights into remembering processes that may help to address the legacy of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. While there was general support for remembrance, contributors also expressed many concerns over the practicalities, and whether remembering would increase division and violence, or bring healing.

Those who made submissions proposed fourteen different forms of remembering process:

- Storytelling and oral history
- Memorials
- Museums, exhibitions and art
- Public and collective commemorations
- Truth recovery processes
- Other forms of legal processes
- Community and intercommunity interactions
- Support for individuals and victims
- Research and social policy development
- Centre for remembrance



- A financial response
- Education and training
- Supporting current remembering processes
- Self-examination of institutions and apologies

We still believe at the broadest level this list provides an outline of key issues that need to be considered in any society attempting to deal with the past.

Recommendations

Many of the submissions endorsed the value of remembering and spoke of the importance of finding ways to move society forward. At the same time, others expressed their concerns about the potential pitfalls of remembering. Clearly, the idea of remembering also evoked an emotive response, suggesting that much hurt and unresolved pain is still present. Because of this the Board felt that they had a responsibility not only to reflect back what was said, but also to help chart a way forward. The Board came to the view that it was a sufficiently diverse and a large enough group to make a meaningful and unified comment on the various recommendations received. The members of the Board, as members of the wider community, felt they had a moral responsibility to be more than simply a passive reflection of a list of opinions raised in submissions. Therefore a series of potential future options are set out, which seek to remain faithful to the views expressed in the submissions.

The Board made six detailed recommendations. They form together a collection of mechanisms and strategies to promote healing through remembering. They are presented here in no particular order of importance and will need to be interrelated in their implementation, as they are complementary. Furthermore, each option is still some way off, and in order to succeed will require ongoing discussion and inclusive participation to succeed.

Recommendation One: The experience of the project has strongly impressed upon the Board how much remembering and commemoration work, is and has been, going on across our society, some of it well known, some unknown. This work must be supported and would benefit from being collated and co-ordinated through the establishment of a network of remembering projects.

Recommended: A network that will link together the diverse forms of commemoration and remembering work, learn from past and present initiatives, facilitate information exchange, and improve access and activity between those involved in commemoration and remembering work and society at large.

Recommendation Two: Storytelling and the archiving of stories about the conflict and its impact are important. Their importance lies not just in being a testimony to, and affirmation of, our individual and collective experiences, but because it is through such a process we come to know others and ourselves. Storytelling can be an important part of healing including the opportunity for acknowledgement. To work effectively this process requires broad community support transcending historical divisions so as to give voice to those individuals and communities who have suffered as a result of the conflict.



Recommended: A storytelling process known as 'Testimony'. Stories and narratives will be collected from all who wish to tell of their experiences of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. These stories—collected by those already undertaking this type of work and by community groups through a flexible but standard method—would form part of an archive housing the stories of the past and serving as a vehicle to learn lessons for the future.

Recommendation Three: We need temporal aids to remembering. We need time to pause, to think and to reflect. As such, the Board was persuaded of the need for a Day of Reflection to remember all those who have been affected by the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Reflecting on the past in a respectful and dignified manner can help us remember our hurts and acknowledge the hurts of others, in so doing remind us of the need to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and learn new lessons for the future.

Recommended: An annual 'Day of Reflection'. The day will serve as a universal gesture of reconciliation, reflection, acknowledgement and recognition of the suffering of so many arising from the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

Recommendation Four: We need structural aids to remembering. A permanent living memorial museum offers an important and tangible vehicle, where living active memories of events of the conflict can be accessed by members of society, including children and visitors. The living memorial museum would not only serve as a memorial to the those injured and bereaved in the conflicts of the past through housing a garden of reflection, plaques and other commemorative items: it would also contribute to the sharing of knowledge and sustain future learning and hope. The Museum could form part of a collective grieving and reflection process, at the same time being a memorial that can evolve, and is not static.

Recommended: A permanent living memorial museum. The Living Memorial Museum will serve as a dynamic memorial to all those affected by the conflict and keep the memories of the past alive. It will provide a diverse chronicle of the history of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, increase public awareness of the impact of the conflict, disseminate information and provide educational opportunities ensuring lessons are learnt for the future.

Recommendation Five: It is only on the basis of truth that reconciliation can take place. A formal truth recovery process should be given careful consideration. An important first step is acknowledgement. Acknowledgment by all, of our acts of commission and/or omission during the conflicts of the past needs to be forthcoming. Acknowledgement by all of what they did and what they did not do to prevent further conflict or contribute to healing, is the first and essential step toward any collective and beneficial remembering process or processes. This would lay the foundation for further exploring the feasibility of a truth recovery process. Finding the truth concerning past events is part of our corporate remembering. It is our strong impression that more than acknowledgement is needed, but the idea needs much more focused consideration.



Recommended: That all organisations and institutions that have been engaged in the conflict, including the British and Irish States, political parties and Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries, honestly and publicly acknowledge responsibility for past political violence due to their acts of omission and commission. This could be the first and necessary step towards potentially of a larger process of truth recovery. If acknowledgement is forthcoming inclusive and in-depth consideration should be given to the establishment of an appropriate and unique truth recovery process. In order for this to develop a team comprised of local and international expertise should be established—using a fair and transparent method—to explore the specific feasibility of such a process.

Recommendation Six: In order to ensure the implementation of the Healing Through Remembering recommendations a body to oversee this work is needed. It should also assess where the progress of each recommendation can be supported, as well as monitor and evaluate the implementation of each recommendation. Such a body could also provide a basis for learning and developing ideas derived from the initial consultations and from other schemes, local, national and international. It can also become a beacon and a point of contact for individuals and groups elsewhere in the world who are searching for ways of dealing with their own past.

Recommended: A Healing Through Remembering Initiative managed by a representative Committee that will be a visible expression of society's commitment to move forward while remembering and learning from our violent past. The Healing Through Remembering Initiative will have primary responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the recommendations of the Healing Through Remembering Report and monitoring progress, thus ensuring a future.

The six areas, we believe still remain relevant as the essential components of an integrated approach to dealing with the past. That is, if we consider the issue of dealing with the past, we need to address all of these in an integrated way and not merely cherry-pick from the list of recommendations.

HTR Initiative

The Healing Through Remembering Initiative (HTRI) is pursuing each of the recommendations of the HTR Report outlined above. A separate sub group has been formed to deal with each recommendation, modelled on the original HTR project in terms of diverse membership and operation. Currently there are about 110 individuals directly involved in the organisation. This includes people from loyalist, republican, British army and police backgrounds as well as individuals from different religious backgrounds, victims' groups, academics and community activists.

The overall management of the project is co-ordinated by the HTRI Board of Directors which includes the Chair of each sub group. This ensures the sub groups can work freely and with independence while linked to each other in their various activities. The current activities of each sub group are summarised in the next section.



3. CORE PRINCIPLES TO AN APPROACH TO DEALING WITH THE PAST

In the course of our considerations on this very important issue we reflected on what we had learned as an organisation over the past eight years. It was clear that the key lesson is that dealing with the past is a process which must be informed by core principles. We therefore offer the following principles, distilled from our experience and learning. They guided and informed HTR in maintaining an inclusive process, getting consensus between groups, and at times, addressing very difficult issues. They continue to do so. Our experience shows that only through a sound framework grounded both in process and in principles, can practical solutions be sought.

We have identified the following core principles and offer them to the Consultative Group on the Past as the foundational structures on which we deal with our conflictual past. These are not merely a list of values to adhere to – but rather embody a framework for what needs to be put in place in order to deal with the past.

Commitment to a better future

This principle is based on the need to learn from the past so that conflict is not repeated. To build a future that is peaceful, politically stable, and benefits generations to come we must deal with the past. We need to acknowledge what happened and to learn from it (although different people might take different lessons). In order to address individual and collective needs, to build relationships that rehumanise people and heal the divisions, an honest analysis of the past is necessary. We need to understand what brought us to the point of conflict, what exacerbated and perpetuated the conflict and what facilitated the building of peace. Additional benefits would be the capacity to share our learning and experience with other contexts where conflict – or the potential for conflict – is present.

Not forgetting

This principle is based on the fact that we cannot ignore the past; it is not possible, neither is it desirable to forget. It is understandable that people want to avoid remembering painful events that may damage our current stability but our experience is that with support and a structured way forward it is not only possible to address difficult issues but also to use remembering in a positive and constructive manner. We live in a society where the threat of re-emergence of conflict is still present. We need to ensure that this process prevents recurrence and protects future generations. The challenge is not to attempt to forget, but rather to find an appropriate way to remember. International experience has shown that forgetting allows the conflict to re-emerge in later generations.

Not harming; and healing

This principle is based on the need to take care not to inflict harm, while recognising that some will feel hurt by whatever approach is taken. It is important that this principle is considered at all times – the value of actions must be considered in terms of the potential harm, while also realising that individual and societal healing can only take place once the full pain of the past is acknowledged. An honest indication of the potential for individual harm must be made clear and appropriate support mechanisms are established.

Inclusive, diverse and participative

This principle emphasises that it is vital that an inclusive approach to dealing with the past is adopted. This is an issue for all of society and across these islands. The approach must be participatory to enable everyone to have ownership so that the lessons learned can be understood and shared amongst the widest possible cross-section of society. All groups,



organisations and individuals must understand their part in the approach. This conflict affected and involved all sections of society, and the two governments, and that must also be true of all attempts to tackle this issue. A full range of voices and opinions must be heard if understanding is to be generated and mature relationships are to be built. The approach should empower people and create a shared sense of purpose while being realistic about the difficulties that inclusive processes involve.

Language/terminology

This principle outlines how the use of language must enable engagement not hamper or divert debate and dialogue. Terminology may change and develop over time due to changing context and the working out of suitable processes. HTR has learned much in this regard. For example, there was, when the project was set up, an ongoing debate about how to refer to the conflict that took place. There were those that favoured terms like 'war' and other used 'Troubles'. The result was a long (nearly two-month) discussion in order to reach a compromise and a term, albeit clumsy – 'conflict in and about Northern Ireland' – which is now used in HTR communication. In a similar vein, the term victim is contested, and we have opted for the OFMDFM presented in the Victim Strategy Document (2002) that allows an individual to self-define as a victim. Thus we have learned that resolving these issues is not easy. No one can prescribe language. Like so much else it needs to be negotiated and can also evolve.

Right to truth

This principle acknowledges that society has a right to the truth about the past. While we recognise there is no agreed legal framework for a 'right to truth' as a society, we need to acknowledge that it is a fundamental right of everyone. Truth is very important. Foundational principles to truth recovery are honesty, transparency and a willingness to engage. That said, it is also of course problematic and there can be multiple truths. There are different versions of what the truth involves. Yet truth recovery, to a limited degree for some, is still possible and should be a principle we hold dear. Truth plays an important part in healing divisions in society. While truth is an important issue it is also challenging. This is because while some people advocate that truth is achievable through a truth commission, others propose truth recovery can be an ensemble of various processes, and still others feel that there is already too much emphasis on truth recovery. In the current context, truth recovery is happening (e.g. the Historical Enquiries Team, public enquiries, court cases, etc.). This, however, amounts to a piecemeal uncoordinated range of structures, which may be delivering for some of those most affected, but is not contributing to the necessary task of society as a whole dealing with the past. We do not want to pass judgement on particular methods as these may work for some individuals, but the piecemeal uncoordinated approach impedes a collective understanding. Truth recovery needs a structured and comprehensive approach. If done selectively it can be damaging, especially if the timing is not right and barriers can hamper progress.

Structured and holistic approach

This principle involves the importance of following a structured and holistic approach to dealing with the past. The piecemeal approach currently operating in society does not serve our collective needs. There are many varied needs and issues – often conflicting – and so a structured comprehensive approach covering all the areas being addressed by HTR: i.e. truth recovery, living memorial museum, day of Reflection, storytelling, and commemoration – and perhaps some others – is needed. Even within each area, such an approach is important. There must be co-ordination between all the mechanisms for dealing with the past. Structure must ensure that there can be delivery and hopefully a conclusion to processes, while being sufficiently flexible to meet changing needs and circumstances. A multifaceted approach including the overlapping issues listed above must be further developed. There is no single solution. A range of integrated options is necessary to meet the needs of society and these must unfold over time.



Process – including discussions, debate, engagement, listening, learning, acknowledgement, flexibility – is important. In a divided society the process where each aim or aspect is attended to, is as important as the final product.

Flexibility

This principle outlines that an approach that is flexible is vital in order that diverse needs can be met. It is important that any approach is not time-bound but would allow those who wish to engage to be able to do so as soon as possible e.g. those who want and need to tell their stories, learn, share or be informed, since time is passing and matters of aging and ill-health must also be taken into account. An approach must adapt to changing needs and context, growing awareness, newly unearthed questions, issues and circumstances. The legacy of the conflict and the development of the peace process mean that some people only realise the personal legacy of the past as issues are addressed. Participation should be allowed as appropriate and may change and evolve over time. The approach must stay alert to the wider international context (e.g. foreign policy issues, the resonances and implications of language such as the ‘war on terror’, for example.)

Trust, transparency and engagement

This principle stresses that trust must be built at all levels and that honesty in engagement is vital to maintain trust. There is need for transparency in the formation and workings of all processes in order to build enough trust for processes to operate successfully and to ensure the best benefits for society. Listening to each other’s viewpoint while not necessarily agreeing with it is important – accepting that we have different opinions but can share them.

Independence and political commitment

This principle emphasises that processes must be officially sanctioned at a political level while maintaining independence in terms of planning and operation. All political parties must commit themselves to dealing with the past in order to build a better future for all. Those who sanction the process must maintain an open, full and honest commitment to its processes. Issues of political will, efficacy, capacity and generosity must be explored. Politicians have a duty to act in the interests of their citizens and to show leadership.

Recognition and appreciation of existing work

This principle relates to existing work. There is already a wide range of remembering projects underway that look at dealing with the past in a way that will build a better society. It is important to enable these initiatives to continue in their work, and ensure they are seen as complementary to, and not in competition with, any other projects or approaches that may be proposed.

Realistic and hopeful goals

This last principle relates to goals. There needs to be a clear articulation of the *way* things can be done versus *what* can be done. While there is urgency in dealing with the past because with time the voices and experiences of a generation can be lost, there must also be recognition that there is no ‘quick fix’. While some elements may be time-bound, it is clear that some elements of dealing with the past will need to continue for at least a generation. Our experience has shown us that the complexity of these issues means that the timeframe must be constantly under review. We now realise that this is generational work, but with the potential of real benefit for current and future generations. It is important that the Consultative Group help society to achieve a realistic view of the processes necessary and the timeframe involved. At the heart of this must be the identification and upholding of hopeful goals.



4. AREAS ADDRESSED BY HTR

This section of the submission outlines, in summary, some of the work of the sub groups of Healing Through Remembering, lessons learned and recommendations emerging from the work of the project.

As was mentioned, five areas of work have made up the mainstay of the HTR approach, i.e.

- Day of reflection
- Truth recovery and acknowledgment
- Network of commemoration
- Living memorial museum
- Collective storytelling

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Day of Reflection

What has been achieved to date by Day of Reflection Sub Group?

- Publication of International Study on Experiences of Days of Remembrance & Reflection
- Publication of Local Scoping Study
- Publication of Discussion Paper & Proposal for A Day of Private Reflection
- Engagement with Focus Groups and a wide range of other interested parties
- Development of specific Day of Reflection website
- Development and circulation of promotional material
- Conference – October 2006
- Day of Private Reflection – 21 June 2007
- Heightening public awareness of the purpose of the Day of Private Reflection through the mass media
- Evaluation of 2007 Day of Private Reflection
- Plans for a Day of Reflection – 21 June 2008

Lessons Learned from the Work of Day of Reflection Sub Group

- Engagement with diverse groups and individuals even on difficult issues can substantially inform debate
- Facilitation of debate and discussion enables development of ideas
- Awareness of sensitivities is crucial to encouraging debate, ideas and activities
- Creating opportunities for people to meet their own needs, both enables people and encourages engagement
- There is a potential for wider society to take ownership of the Day of Private Reflection
- There was a hunger for a period of reflection that had not previously been identified

Suggestions regarding the wider issue of Reflection

- While the evaluation indicates a hunger for opportunities to reflect, organisations need to be assisted in bringing this forward for their members
- The value of advising, informing and providing resources rather than being prescriptive

Suggestions regarding the Recommendation for a Day of Reflection

- The Day of Reflection needs to continue as a private initiative for some years to come, evaluated annually which would inform any decision regarding the private or more public nature of the day
- Our international research indicates that the Day of Reflection should remain a community-based initiative and also be part of a wider social and political process. Once the day is established, community-based organisations and faith communities will be critical in moving the day forward into the future.
- Our international research also demonstrates that where processes of remembrance and reflection have been rushed or circumvented, certain individuals and groups felt alienated and/or excluded. Without appropriate and careful process the legitimacy of such a day is questionable and its efficacy is limited.



- The Day of Reflection should be a process that is given time and room to develop.

Integration/Interaction between the Areas that HTR Addresses

- **Storytelling** – it is recognised that individual stories are a useful and valuable tool to help people remember and reflect. The Day of Reflection creates the opportunity for people to remember and share their stories with others
- **Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement** – The focus of the Day of Reflection on individuals reflecting on their acts of omission and commission raise the issues of acknowledgement and truth recovery for participants.
- **Living Memorial Museum** – The museum would be a link to the past and aid acknowledgement and reflection. It could be an important space for individuals and groups on this day
- **Commemoration** – Remembrance and reflection are core components of any commemoration event. The Day of Private Reflection could help to inform commemorative events towards being more inclusive of and sensitive to the needs of others.

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Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement Sub-Group

What has been achieved to date by the Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement Sub Group?

- Consensus within diverse sub group on developing materials to enable an informed debate
- Range of private meetings with key stakeholders to discuss their views on truth recovery and acknowledgement
- Commissioning research on truth recovery and on acknowledgement
- Publication of report offering options on truth recovery 'Making Peace with the Past: Options for truth recovery regarding the conflict in and about Northern Ireland'
- Publication of Executive Summary of 'Making Peace with the Past' as a more accessible version
- Publication of discussion paper on Acknowledgement
- Publication of legal paper 'The viability of Prosecution Based on Historical Enquiry'
- Holding of 13 public seminars to discuss 'Making Peace with the Past'
- Holding of 12 (to date) partnership seminars with a range of organisations to discuss 'Making Peace with the Past' options for truth recovery

Lessons Learned from the Work of the Sub Group

- Honest and informed debate is possible and necessary even among a group of people from diverse backgrounds
- Developing concrete options, no matter how diverse the group, is possible and worthwhile
- There is a need for acknowledgement by all organisations for their role in the conflict
- How and when this acknowledgement should be sought/delivered is an ongoing debate and discussion
- The seminars debating the report 'Making Peace with the Past' show that materials enabling an informed debate are welcomed and utilised.

Suggestions regarding Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement

- There needs to be recognition that the existing truth recovery mechanisms are meeting only a limited number of individual and societal needs.
- As stated in the principles above (section 2), there is a need for recognition of a right to truth by a society regarding the past conflict. How best to achieve this and build peace rather than create further division needs further debate and discussion
- Concrete options as outlined in the 'Making Peace with the Past' need to form a framework for how to approach truth recovery
- The Sub Group are currently addressing the five options in 'Making Peace with the Past' in order to create a limited number of more distilled options for further debate.

Integration/Interaction between the Areas that HTR Addresses

- **Storytelling** – there is need for clarification of when 'storytelling' and 'truth telling' overlap and diverge. Archiving of stories will be an additional element to the existing piecemeal approach to truth recovery.
- **Day of Reflection** – The focus of the Day of Reflection on individuals reflecting on their acts of omission and commission raise the issues of acknowledgement and truth recovery for participants.
- **Living Memorial Museum** – The museum will carry narratives and histories of the conflict. On what will these be based? The validity of the Museum is likely to be



detrimentally challenged unless there is an agreed societal narrative. Issues that emerge through truth recovery processes could be housed in such a museum.

- **Commemoration** – Commemoration activities are ways to mark and, where appropriate, honour significant events or people from the past. There has been a considerable increase in commemoration activities over the last ten years, largely within rather than across traditions. We need to acknowledge that in a society that has not dealt with the past in an inclusive and honest manner some commemorative activities may – intentionally or unintentionally – sow the seeds for future conflict.

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Network of Commemoration Sub-Group

What has been achieved to date by the Sub Group?

- A commemoration film series, held at HTR offices
- Two research papers defining commemoration, and looking at the parameters and key values of commemoration, what lessons can be learned from international contexts, and the role of commemoration in societies emerging from conflict.
- Roundtable event – “Considering Commemoration as a way of healing through remembering” held at the Institute of Irish Studies at Queens University Belfast
- Upcoming report and reflection on the roundtable event

Lessons Learned from the Work:

- Recognition that commemoration is happening and increasing in the current context.
- The lack of research material on the concepts and issues involved in commemoration
- The sub group had learned from international contexts about the challenges of commemoration processes
- Recognition that commemoration is linked to the work of the other sub groups
- The building of trust by refraining from telling people what to do but rather by offering leadership on the issue
- There is a need to take the debate to the grassroots level
- There is a need to clarify what networking involves in terms of commemoration

Suggestions regarding the wider area of Commemoration

- Existing commemoration projects to be supported via funding and/or political support
- More safe spaces needed for dialogue
- Identification of different forms and contexts of commemoration
- More inclusive forms of civic commemoration and celebration should be facilitated as contributing to social renewal.

Suggestions regarding the Recommendation

- To enable, inform and generate further dialogue and debate among groups, communities and individuals on issues relating to commemoration and how it relates to dealing with the past
- To facilitate processes which encourage mutual understanding and appreciation of the hurts, needs and commemorative thinking and practices of others.
- To develop educational resources as a basis for conserving a variety of accounts of history and a better understanding of commemorative expression, and to sustain open learning that will encourage respect, social vitality and reconciliation.
- To develop opportunities with other organisations concerned with commemoration and its role in social healing, for strategic co-operation, partnership in learning and research, and networking on projects of common interest.
- A diverse, viable commemoration initiative could be set up to oversee various projects and ensure these projects get the support needed, and network and learn from one another

Integration/Interaction between commemoration and the other areas that HTR Addresses

Storytelling – Recording people’s stories is a form of commemoration, as it is honouring an individual’s memory



Day of Reflection – Holding the Day of Reflection on June 21 2007 was a form of commemoration as it involved people taking part in a process which remembered, acknowledged, reflected on the past, and perhaps also allowed people to understand and experience the value of commemorate events and practices.

Truth Recovery and Acknowledgment – Commemoration events and activities are ways to mark or bear witness to the past. There has been a considerable increase in commemoration activities over the last ten years. In a society that has not dealt with the past in an inclusive and honest manner some commemorative activities may – intentionally or unintentionally – deepen sectarianism or alienation.

Living Memorial Museum – A Museum for the conflict in and about Northern Ireland might, among other things, represent or include a commemorative space allowing people to consider events of the past, express emotion or understanding, or simply remember in an ambiance conducive to reflection.

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Living Memorial Museum Sub Group

What has been achieved to date by the Sub Group?

- Open Call for Ideas on what form a possible Living Memorial Museum could take, held July to October 2006 including seven public art workshops and six organisational workshops.
- Established a joint two-year fellowship with the Institute for Irish Studies at Queens University to carry out an artefacts audit of materials relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland
- A number of site visits have been carried out to enhance knowledge of best practice in a variety of museums, community collections and sites
- Publication of *Without Walls*, the report on the Open Call for Ideas (Feb 2008)
- Creation of a set of display books entitled *Open Call: A Catalogue of Ideas for a Living Memorial Museum of the Conflict in and about Northern Ireland* (Feb 2008)
- Upcoming launch of Artefacts website-based searchable database (Feb 2008)
- Upcoming publication of the Report of the Artefacts Audit

Lessons Learned from the Work of the Sub Group:

- The value in a consultation process (the Open Call for Ideas) that is as wide and comprehensive as possible
- Engagement with people and groups that are already involved in the museum and heritage sector is important to allow debate and discussion and to consider different opinions on this issue
- There is a growing interest in addressing the legacies of division engendered by the Northern Ireland conflict, and using the material culture of the conflict to tell stories, hold memories, commemorate, or learn lessons from the past.
- Museums and private collectors have actively acquired material through the conflict. , But networks and lines of communication between collections are very limited..
- Many collections are curated by small institutions, or individuals, who have limited or no funding.
- Many private collectors or collecting institutions (some of whom are the most significant collections) have little or no affiliation or communication with umbrella organisations or networks connected to more established museums.

Suggestions regarding the wider area of museum and memorialisation

- Contacts and information sharing between collections should be supported and encouraged. This could include the sharing of ideas on the best means to address certain themes and narratives in prospective exhibitions and displays.
- Organisations and individuals should be encouraged and supported in the sharing of information in relation to best practice in terms of collection management - the organisation, storage and conservation of material. Access to expert advice on collection management should be formalised and encouraged.
- Consideration should be given to examining international examples of museums which have addressed issues of division and conflict. This could include an examination of how museums are used to promote identity, and muster history as a political resource. 'Single identity' museums, as well as those which seek to represent a multiplicity of views, could be examined.
- Identification of possible sources of funding to: expand existing projects; develop new projects; provide training in collection management; and for the provision of conservation and storage materials.



- There exists a need for academic researchers, established museum curators, and community based curators and private collectors, to come together and explore ways in which the material culture of the Northern Ireland conflict may be used to illuminate the history of a divided society.
- Outreach to other sectors (youth and community groups etc.) should also be considered.

Suggestions regarding Recommendation on a Living Memorial Museum

The Sub Group recommends that there should be a Living Memorial Museum to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. It must be created in a manner mindful of the sensitivities of such an initiative.

Key principles including the following should be considered:

- It should have a strong educational element and remit
- It should primarily be accessible to those affected by the conflict while also having an educative value for young people, students, researchers and tourists
- It should involve and take account of key stakeholders including HTR, Northern Ireland Museum Council, National Museums of Northern Ireland.
- It should not be purely commercial initiative driven by commercial concerns – but rather should involve key stakeholders.
- It should evolve and develop over time to meet changing needs
- It should reflect the history of the conflict and the peace process
- It should be sustainable in terms of long term funding and official support.
- It should include the range of artefacts identified in the HTR-IIS Audit of Artefacts relating to the conflict.
- It should be in an appropriate and accessible location.

Integration/Interaction between living memorial museum and the Areas that HTR Addresses

- **Storytelling** – International experience would indicate that a Living Memorial Museum would by its very presence elicit stories and memories which will need to be respected. This necessitates a method of story collection being an integral part of the Museum structure.
- **Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement** – The museum will carry narratives and histories of the conflict. On what will these be based? The validity of the Museum is likely to be detrimentally challenged unless there is an agreed societal narrative.
- **Day of Reflection** – Many submissions to the Open Call for Ideas called for a Living Memorial Museum with a space or garden for reflection. Clearly, people thought it important to not only provide a space for artefacts relating to the conflict, but also to provide a space to reflect on those artefacts. Should people choose the Day of Reflection to visit the museum, the need for a space provided for this purpose needs carefully considered.
- **Commemoration** – A Museum of the Conflict in and about Northern Ireland might, among other things, represent or include a commemorative space allowing people to consider events of the past, express emotion or understanding, or simply remember.



Storytelling Sub Group

What has been achieved to date by the Storytelling Sub Group?

The subgroup has created forums for discussion and learning about the value and practice of storytelling.

Through a process of documenting existing projects the sub group has identified a course for a collective process of storytelling.

A range of published reports and internal documents has been created:

- Storytelling Audit: An audit of personal story, narrative and testimony initiatives related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.
- Conference in November 2005 entitled 'Storytelling as the Vehicle?'
- Conference report 'Storytelling as the Vehicle?' including discussion paper from the Storytelling subgroup
- Seminar in 2006 entitled 'Storytelling Helpful or Harmful?'
- Internal paper on international examples of story collecting
- Internal paper on principles and good practice
- Internal report on collective storytelling process.
- Development of storytelling bibliography/literature review

Lessons Learned from the Work of the Sub Group

- Storytelling is a long term process for individuals, communities, institutions and societies moving from a conflict.
- Storytelling, narrative and testimony work involves a range of different methods.
- People will continue to do storytelling but organized story gathering and sharing can support this in a structured way if it is grounded in good practice.
- There is a gap around the gathering of institutional storytelling as part of the healing process. Storytelling is an integral part of the other avenues for dealing with the past identified by HTR: commemoration, truth recovery and acknowledgment, day of reflection and living memorial museum. If any of the other avenues is neglected then an essential part of storytelling is lost.
- It follows that storytelling should not be thought of as an alternative to truth recovery.
- Stories are being collected, but many constraints mean that not all stories collected are archived.

Suggestions regarding the wider area of Storytelling

- Existing projects benefit from the sharing of practice and from opportunities to learn about each other.
- There is a need to provide technical support to projects wishing to record stories and to provide archiving support for projects which record stories.
- There is a need to evaluate the impact of storytelling and support the development of good practice.

Suggestions regarding the Recommendation on a Collective Storytelling Process

- The subgroup recommends a collective storytelling process which would involve existing and potential projects in a network which would be linked to an archival hub or archival circle.
- The collective process should be official and publicly funded and should also work from the bottom up and build on existing work. The process should have a global framework.

Integration/Interaction between storytelling and the areas that HTR addresses



- **Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement** – there is need for clarification of when ‘storytelling’ and ‘truth telling’ overlap and diverge. Archiving of stories will be an additional element to the existing piecemeal approach to truth recovery.
- **Day of Reflection** – It is recognised that individual stories are a useful and valuable tool to help people remember and reflect. The Day of Reflection creates the opportunity for people to remember and share their stories with others.
- **Living Memorial Museum** – Clearly there is a need to consider the relationship between an archive of stories and the Living Memorial Museum. International experience would indicate that a Living Memorial Museum will by its very presence elicit stories and memories which will need to be respected. This necessitates a method of story collection being an integral part of the Museum structure.
- **Commemoration** – Recording people’s stories is a form of commemoration, as it is honouring an individual’s memory



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5 CONCLUSION

There is no single solution for the process of dealing with our past. Processes of remembering, reflecting, informing and educating must be sustained for another generation at least. All have a part to play in dealing with the memories of the past. This has been and will continue to be a painful and difficult task, however it should not paralyse us and prevent us from moving on, but encourage us to avoid further damage, seek solutions and create a better future. The recommendations presented here, and the work begun by HTR, should not replace what is already in place and what is developing in other sectors. It is our belief that the initial HTR recommendations, and the work of the sub groups, taken as a whole can usefully complement current initiatives that should continue to be supported and developed. Each of the six recommendations and the work of the sub groups are presented separately above – but holistically they provide a basis and a way forward for dealing with the past.

The work of HTR stands or falls on the commitment of those who are willing to take it forward. While the Healing Through Remembering Board and the members are committed to ongoing and long-term work of the organisation, the process is much larger than they alone can offer. The Northern Ireland Assembly, British and Irish Governments, and local political leadership, must endorse the need to deal with the past and will need to provide a conducive environment for this to happen. This needs to be founded on the principles outlined in this submission. Civil society – communities, community groups, churches, individuals and organisations – needs to do the same and to engage in the debate as many are currently doing, whilst continuing to develop their own ideas and solutions. Their ongoing work should be supported.

We believe it is essential that steps are taken across the board, in addition to ones we are pursuing, to develop a network of commemoration and remembering projects; a storytelling initiative ; a day of reflection; a living memorial museum; and that acknowledgement, especially by those actively involved in the conflict, institutions and the governments, is forthcoming. The establishing of the truth about the past, to the degree this is possible, is a right, and mechanisms to pursue this in a structured and consensual way should be sought. This altogether should provide the foundation for dealing with the past.

To translate the HTR recommendations and work done to date into dynamic and unique practices and methods for dealing with the past in a spirit of tolerance and respect will require a willingness to take risks. Those involved with HTR sub groups, Board and wider membership have taken risks and have engaged the issue in a constructive and productive manner. We offer our experience as set out above and importantly the principles we believe are necessary in building any approach or process to deal with our past. We want our society to grasp the opportunity of remembering in a constructive way, to enable us to move into a new future built on a shared acknowledgement of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. We, as an organisation are committed to assisting in taking this process forward.

24.01.08