

Submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs
Committee on the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy
and Reconciliation) Bill 2025.

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This document has been created by Dr Giada Lagana for the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

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About the Author and Scope

1. I am an interdisciplinary Political Scientist specialising in processes of political, social, and constitutional change in the United Kingdom and Ireland. I previously held a prestigious Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at Cardiff University's School of Law and Politics (LAWPL), before joining the department as a tenured Lecturer in Politics. I completed my PhD in Political Science at the University of Galway, Ireland.
2. I am currently a Research Associate on the international research project 'Post-Agreement Reconciliation(s) in Changing Political Eras: Comparing Northern Ireland, Colombia, and the Basque Country' led by the Mershon Centre for International Security Studies at the Ohio State University, USA. This written evidence, however, is submitted in a personal capacity. It draws on over twelve years of research on the Northern Ireland peace process, particularly in relation to Ireland's membership of the European Union (EU), wider debates on constitutional change in the UK and Ireland, and the role of public bureaucracies in peacebuilding.
3. This updated submission evaluates the 2025 Bill in relation to five key areas identified by the Committee:
 - The independence and governance of the Legacy Commission;
 - The treatment of inquests;
 - Rules on information disclosure and the proposed Information Retrieval body;
 - The legislation's potential to meet the needs of victims and promote reconciliation.

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Summary of Recommendations

This submission welcomes the recognition by both the United Kingdom (UK) and Irish Governments that the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 was not fit for purpose. The new 2025 Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill (henceforth the ‘2025 Bill’) represents an important corrective step. It rolls back some of the most heavily criticised provisions of the 2023 Act - particularly conditional immunity and the prohibition of inquests and civil claims - and reintroduces key elements of the 2014 Stormont House Agreement.

However, challenges remain. Unless reconciliation is clearly defined and embedded at the heart of the new framework, and unless victims are guaranteed meaningful independence and participation, the 2025 Bill risks becoming yet another managed compromise rather than a pathway to accountability and healing.

The following four recommendations are therefore proposed:

1. Embed and Define Reconciliation as a Core Purpose

- Ensure that reconciliation is explicitly defined and mandated within the statutory functions of the Legacy Commission.
- Incorporate clear commitments to truth recovery, acknowledgement, reparations, and bridging societal divides.
- Establish measurable indicators of reconciliation to align the UK’s approach with international best practice.

2. Guarantee Independence and Victim-Centred Participation

- Safeguard the independence of the Legacy Commission through transparent appointment procedures and international oversight.
- Strengthen information-disclosure processes by removing political control and placing decisions under independent or judicial authority.
- Embed victims’ voices at the centre of governance and decision-making, ensuring influence beyond advisory capacity.

3. Provide a Robust and Rights-Compliant Framework

- Establish realistic timeframes and ensure adequate resourcing for the Commission's work.
- Clarify the status of previous immunity decisions to prevent legal uncertainty and uphold compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- Institutionalise cross-border cooperation through permanent structures, ensuring that the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR) and Garda commitments are fully implemented and integrated.

4. Ensure Credible Implementation and Rebuild Trust

- Recognise that the principal challenge for the 2025 Bill lies in implementation, not design.
- Avoid repeating past failures rooted in fragmented delivery, overlapping jurisdictions, and weak accountability.
- Ground implementation in the principles of trust, independence, and participation.
- Create an independent monitoring panel, jointly accountable to Parliament and the Oireachtas, to provide regular oversight and public reporting.
- Embed trust-building into implementation to secure long-term legitimacy and genuine reconciliation.

These recommendations are grounded in evidence of what has and has not worked since the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (B/GFA). They are also informed by comparative experiences in transitional justice, which show that reconciliation requires independence, victim-centred design, and integration across political, institutional, and societal levels.¹

¹ Please see for examples: Teitel, R.G. (2000). *Transitional Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Aiken, N.T. (2009). The (Re)Construction of a Culture of Human Rights: Transitional Justice and Human Security, *Human Security Journal*, 8, pp. 10–18; Seils, P. (2017). The Place of Reconciliation in Transitional Justice: Conceptions and Misconceptions. ICTJ Briefing. <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Briefing-Paper-Reconciliation-TJ-2017.pdf> (last accessed on 3 October 2025); Hughes, J., & Kostovicova, D. (2018). 'Introduction: rethinking reconciliation and transitional justice after conflict', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41(4), 617–623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1406129> (last accessed on 3 October 2025).

Background Context

The 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (B/GFA) ended violence in Northern Ireland and established a framework of political accommodation grounded in power-sharing, constitutional compromise, and security reform. Since then, peace has broadly held, supported by EU-funded cross-border initiatives and civil society-led reconciliation projects that have strengthened cooperation across communities and borders.²

Yet the quality of peace remains uneven and fragile. The institutions created by the Agreement have faced recurrent suspensions, while Brexit has further eroded trust.³ Sectarian division continues through segregated housing, education, and cultural practices, and paramilitary influence remains entrenched.⁴ For many working-class communities, the *peace dividend* has been limited, marked by deprivation, poor mental health, and transgenerational trauma.⁵

These shortcomings are rooted in the Agreement's design, which prioritised political stability over transitional justice. Mechanisms for truth recovery, accountability, and victims' rights were absent, as reconciliation was expected to emerge organically through functioning institutions.⁶ As one former Northern Ireland Office (NIO) Permanent Secretary observed, reconciliation was viewed as

² Galvanising the Peace (2017). The future for conflict transformation in Northern Ireland. Retrieved from <https://www.communitydialogue.org/sites/default/files/Galvanising%20> (last accessed on 3 October 2025). Grey, A. M., Hamilton, J., Kelly G., Lynn, B., Melaugh, M. and Robinson, G. (2018). Northern Ireland peace monitoring report—Number 5. Community Relations Council Northern Ireland; Lagana, G. (2021). *The European union and the Northern Ireland Peace Process*. Palgrave Mcmillan.

³ Murphy, M. C. (2018). *Europe and Northern Ireland's Future. Negotiating Brexit's Unique Case*. Agenda Publishing; Murphy, M. C. and Evershed, J. (2022). *A Troubled Constitutional Future: Northern Ireland After Brexit*. Agenda Publishing.

⁴ Goldie, R. and Murphy, J. (2015). Belfast beyond Violence: Flagging up a Challenge to Local Government? *Local government studies*, 41(3), pp. 470-488; Cochrane, F. (2020). *Breaking peace: Brexit and Northern Ireland* Manchester University Press; Costello, R. (2022). 'To Be British, Irish, or Both': Understanding Language Rights as a Tool for Reconciliation in Northern Ireland. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 33(2), pp. 172-200.

⁵ All 30 interviewees consulted as part of the project 'Post-Agreement Reconciliation(s) in Changing Political Eras: Comparing Northern Ireland, Colombia, and the Basque Country' confirmed this assessment. The research covered all layers of Northern Ireland society, including former combatants from both communities, civil society leaders, and political representatives.

⁶ David Crabbe (a retired Civil Servant who served for 30 years in the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Irish Regiment during the Troubles from 1977 to 2007. Since 2007, he has been involved on a voluntary basis with several charities and other organisations dealing with the welfare of veterans), interview with the author, 20 January 2025.

‘a by-product of doing the right things,’⁷ rather than a policy goal. The pragmatic ethos of the negotiators produced institutions for conflict management, not transformative justice.⁸

As a result, many survivors still live with unacknowledged trauma, and families have yet to see justice. This enduring implementation gap - the failure to connect political settlements, international support, and grassroots peacebuilding - has left reconciliation fragmented and incomplete.

Civil society and supranational actors, particularly the EU through its PEACE programmes,⁹ have shouldered a disproportionate share of responsibility for fostering cross-community relations. These interventions generated important local gains but not systemic transformation. Northern Ireland remains defined less by reconciliation than by a ‘politics of truce’ that prioritises stability over deeper repair.

This gap has repeatedly undermined legacy policy. The 2014 Stormont House Agreement sought to address it through a balanced legacy framework - including a Historical Investigations Unit and an Independent Commission on Information Retrieval -¹⁰ that combined accountability with victims’ rights. Despite broad consensus, it was never implemented, largely due to policy drift and political resistance, reinforcing victims’ mistrust.

The 2023 Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act then altered the landscape, creating the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR), introducing a conditional immunity scheme, and prohibiting new inquests and civil claims.¹¹ This

⁷ Anonymous 1, Interview with the author, Online, 14 December 2024.

⁸ The author of this report has conducted thirty-eight interviews with retired civil servants from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFA), as part of a book project funded by a Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellowship. The book, entitled *Civil Servants and Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland*, has been contracted by Oxford University Press (OUP) and is forthcoming in 2026.

⁹ For further detail, see the written evidence submitted by the author in February 2025.

¹⁰ Leahy, T., (2019) ‘The Irish Government and Dealing with Northern Ireland Conflict Legacy’, Full Report to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement’. Available at https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_the_implementation_of_the_good_friday_agreement/submissions/2019/2019-06-20_opening-statement-dr-thomas-leahy-lecturer-cardiff-university-justice-for-the-forgotten_en.pdf (last accessed on 3 October 2025).

¹¹ Committee on the Administration of Justice - An Coiste um Riarachán Dlí agus Cirt (CAJ), 2025 ‘What could substantive ‘root and branch’ reform of the ICRIR look like? and would it be enough?’. Policy Report, pp. 5. Available

approach appeared to prioritise expediency and the protection of state interests over reconciliation. The Act was widely condemned by victims' groups, human-rights organisations, the Irish Government, and international bodies for potential breaches of Articles 2 and 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR),¹² and for silencing victims.¹³

In October 2025, the UK and Irish Governments jointly acknowledged that the 2023 Act was 'not fit for purpose.'¹⁴ The new Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill (2025) therefore represents a corrective effort to restore legitimacy and credibility to legacy governance. It introduces welcome changes regarding the independence and powers of the Legacy Commission, reforms to inquests and information disclosure, and renewed cross-border cooperation. Yet significant challenges remain, particularly around implementation, independence, and the absence of a clearly defined concept of reconciliation.

at <https://caj.org.uk/publications/reports/what-could-substantive-root-and-branch-reform-of-the-icrir-look-like-and-would-it-be-enough/> (last accessed on 3 October 2025).

¹² As an example, please see the full copy of the letter from the US Congress condemning the 2023 Legacy Act: <https://boyle.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/boyle.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/boyle-et-al-letter-to-pm-sunak.pdf> (last accessed on 3 October 2025).

¹³ Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (2024). Bitter Legacy: state impunity in the Northern Ireland Conflict. Norwegian Centre for Human Rights. Available at: <https://www.jus.uio.no/smr/english/about/id/law/nipanel.html> (last accessed 3 October 2025).

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/northern-ireland-troubles-legacy-reconciliation-act-2023> (last accessed on 3 October 2025).

What Are the Key Changes from Previous Frameworks?

The 2025 Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill differs from the 2023 Act in several substantial ways and, in some respects, reverts toward the consensus model of the 2014 Stormont House Agreement. The following changes are particularly significant:

▪ **Ending Immunity**

The conditional immunity scheme introduced under the 2023 Act has been abolished. Individuals previously granted immunity will remain subject to review under transitional provisions, and no new immunities may be issued.

▪ **Restoring Civil Actions and Inquests**

Civil claims are reinstated, and Troubles-related inquests may now proceed, subject to an independent assessment process. These provisions restore access to judicial mechanisms that had been closed by the 2023 Act, although the Secretary of State retains limited powers to regulate resourcing and sequencing.

▪ **Reforming the ICRIR into the Legacy Commission**

The Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) will be restructured and renamed the Legacy Commission. The new body will operate under enhanced governance and oversight arrangements, including parliamentary reporting requirements, potential Executive-nominated members, and an international advisory panel to strengthen independence and transparency.

▪ **Revising Disclosure Rules**

The definition of sensitive information will no longer rest solely with the originating agency. The Bill introduces a statutory appeals process and requires that decisions on disclosure be subject to independent review. These provisions aim to reduce executive discretion and improve victims' access to information.

▪ **Cross-Border Cooperation**

The Bill reaffirms joint commitments by the UK and Irish Governments to enhance legacy cooperation. This includes the establishment of a dedicated Garda unit, a statutory duty to cooperate on cross-border investigations, and the continuation of the ICIR pilot. While these measures mark progress, the cooperation framework remains temporary rather than permanent.

- **Time-Limited Mandate**

The Legacy Commission will operate for an initial five-year term, after which the Secretary of State may decide on its continuation or renewal. This limited timeframe has raised concerns about whether the Commission can realistically address the backlog of unresolved cases.

- **Reframing Around Stormont House**

The Bill explicitly draws upon the principles of the 2014 Stormont House Agreement, reaffirming commitments to truth recovery, justice, and reconciliation as guiding values for the new institutional framework.

Recommendations

This section provides in detail the evidential basis and potential benefits for introducing the recommendations discussed in the executive summary.

Recommendation 1: Embed and Define Reconciliation as a Core Purpose

As outlined in the author's previous evidence,¹⁵ the B/GFA prioritised stability and security but left reconciliation undefined, assuming it would emerge organically. Senior officials have since acknowledged that it was viewed as a by-product of institutional stability rather than a policy goal in itself. This omission created a long-standing implementation gap: reconciliation was pursued in fragmented and localised ways by civil society and international donors, without being systematically integrated into governance.

The 2025 Bill introduces reconciliation as a guiding principle of the new legacy framework, yet its treatment of the concept remains largely procedural and undefined. Reconciliation is invoked as an aspiration rather than a measurable outcome, with no statutory criteria to assess progress or ensure consistency across the Commission's work. This risks reducing the term to symbolic rhetoric rather than a policy objective with tangible meaning for victims and communities.

To be meaningful, reconciliation should be explicitly embedded in the Commission's statutory remit, supported by clear indicators such as participation, acknowledgement, truth recovery, and reparative measures. Establishing reconciliation as a defined and operational purpose would align the UK's approach with international best practice and demonstrate that the process is not only about procedural closure but also about repairing relationships and rebuilding trust.

Theoretical and practical evidence reinforces this view. Drawing on Hamber and Kelly's working definition and the EU PEACE programme experience,¹⁶ reconciliation entails interdependent

¹⁵ Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, UK Parliament, Inquiry on 'The Government's new approach to addressing the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland' (<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/135967/html/>; 13 February 2025).

¹⁶ Hamber, B. and Kelly, G., (2004) 'Reconciliation: A Working Definition', Belfast: Democratic Dialogue; Hamber, B. and Kelly, G., (2009) 'Beyond Coexistence: Towards a Working Definition of Reconciliation'. In Quinn, J., *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Post conflict Societies*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, pp. 286–310.

commitments: fostering positive relationships, acknowledging past harms, promoting attitudinal and cultural change, and enabling substantive social and institutional transformation. These elements should be operationalised in the Commission's statutory purpose, ensuring that the 2025 Bill becomes not merely a legal corrective but a mechanism for societal repair. By embedding reconciliation through truth recovery, acknowledgement, victim participation, reparations, and intercommunal dialogue, the Bill could deliver measurable progress, restore victims' confidence, and translate political commitments into sustained peacebuilding outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Guarantee Independence and Victim-Centred Participation

As victims' groups and international observers highlighted, the central weakness of the 2023 Act lay in the creation of the ICRIR,¹⁷ whose governance and appointment powers were concentrated in the hands of the UK Government. The 2025 Bill revises this model through several important reforms:

- Parliamentary oversight of appointments and reporting;
- Potential nominations from the Northern Ireland Executive; and
- An independent international advisory panel to enhance transparency and confidence.

These changes address earlier criticisms that the ICRIR lacked independence, but they still fall short of structural autonomy. The Secretary of State retains powers over appointments, funding, and guidance, meaning executive control continues to shape the Commission's direction. Without statutory safeguards insulating the body from ministerial influence, its decisions risk appearing politically contingent rather than impartial.

The reinstatement of Troubles-related inquests is a welcome step, restoring a judicial avenue for families seeking truth and accountability. Yet the Bill still grants ministerial discretion over resources and sequencing, allowing political or administrative considerations to shape which cases proceed. Given chronic under-resourcing, inquest prioritisation must be transparent and victim-led, with independent oversight ensuring objective criteria and consistent support for families.

The Bill also merges the ICRIR's archives with a new Information Retrieval Office, creating a single repository for disclosure. This rationalisation is positive, but its credibility will depend on who controls access. The Secretary of State's continuing power to restrict information deemed 'sensitive' sustains perceptions of political management rather than impartial truth recovery. Disclosure decisions should rest with an independent or judicial authority, operating under transparent, reviewable criteria. Without this, truth recovery risks remaining bureaucratically constrained rather than transformative.

¹⁷ Committee on the Administration of Justice - An Coiste um Riarachán Dlí agus Cirt (CAJ), 2025 'What could substantive 'root and branch' reform of the ICRIR look like? and would it be enough?'. Policy Report, pp. 5. Available at <https://caj.org.uk/publications/reports/what-could-substantive-root-and-branch-reform-of-the-icrir-look-like-and-would-it-be-enough/> (last accessed on 3 October 2025).

Victims' participation also remains limited. Engagement has too often been confined to advisory forums without binding influence. International evidence shows that victim-centred processes—those granting survivors a real voice in governance, case selection, and oversight—are more likely to achieve legitimacy, durability, and social buy-in.¹⁸

Guaranteeing independence¹⁹ and participation would yield concrete benefits:

- Transparent, accountable appointments with international oversight would mark a decisive break from past state dominance.
- Independent disclosure mechanisms, overseen by judicial actors, would reduce politicisation and build trust.
- Embedding victims in governance structures would ensure the new arrangements are substantively, not symbolically, victim-centred.

In a context of persistent mistrust, visible guarantees of independence matter as much as formal ones. Appointments, funding, and disclosure must be credibly at arm's length from government if the Bill is to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of victims and the wider public.

¹⁸ Roelofs, P., (2019). Transparency and mistrust: Who or what should be made transparent? *Governance*, 32(3), pp. 399-589.

¹⁹ Colombia offers a recent, institutionalised model — with strong victim participation in the peace negotiations (2012–2016), the Victims and Land Restitution Law (2011), and the Commission for the Clarification of Truth. It's rich for analysing policy design, decentralised participation, and gender-sensitive justice (Brett 2025). South Africa, on the other hand, gives the foundational moral and political framing — the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a mechanism of public testimony, symbolic recognition, and nation-building through narrative. It's particularly strong for thinking about memory, performativity, and the limits of truth-telling without structural change.

Recommendation 3: Provide a Robust and Rights-Compliant Framework

The credibility of the 2025 Bill depends not only on its stated reforms but on the robustness of its implementation.²⁰ One of its most problematic features is the five-year time limit on the Legacy Commission. Given the scale and complexity of unresolved cases, such a restricted mandate risks being seen less as a commitment to justice than as an effort to pre-programme closure. Victims and survivors, many of whom have waited decades, are unlikely to view such a timetable as credible or compassionate.

A second concern is legal certainty. While reversing the 2023 Act's conditional immunity scheme is welcome, ambiguity remains over the status of existing immunities. Without clear guidance, this could invite new challenges under Article 7 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which prohibits retroactive punishment. To avoid fresh legal vulnerabilities, the Bill should include a statutory mechanism clarifying how prior immunities will be reviewed or revoked.

Cross-border cooperation also requires strengthening.²¹ The Bill is accompanied by renewed UK–Irish commitments to deepen coordination, including the continuation of the Independent Commission for Information Retrieval (ICIR) pilot and the creation of a dedicated Garda unit for information exchange. These measures recognise the conflict's all-island dimension and the need for shared responsibility. However, to ensure sustainability, such cooperation must be institutionalised, not ad hoc.

Establishing a permanent statutory secretariat, jointly accountable to both governments, could coordinate disclosure, oversight, and case management. This would enhance transparency, reduce duplication, and signal a lasting commitment to shared implementation. Without such embedded structures, cooperation risks appearing contingent on political will rather than an enduring feature of post-conflict governance.

²⁰ Existing studies highlight the limits of weak implementation. See for example: Knox, C., O'Connor, K., Ketola, M. and Carmichael, P., (2023) 'EU PEACE funding: The policy implementation deficit', *European Policy Analysis*, 9, pp. 290-310; Lagana, G. and Pearce, S. (2025). The role of European Union (EU) metagovernance in supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland, *European Policy Analysis*. DOI: 10.1002/epa2.70009.

²¹ Leahy, T. (2023). 'Rigorous impartiality'? The UK Government, amnesties and Northern Ireland conflict legacy 1998-2022". In L. McAtackney & M. Ó Catháin. *The Routledge Handbook of the Northern Ireland Conflict and Peace* (pp. 31-49). Routledge.

Recommendation 4: Implementation and Trust

The central challenge for the 2025 Bill lies not in its design but in its implementation architecture. Over the past two decades, legacy policy in Northern Ireland has faltered less from conceptual flaws than from fragmented delivery and weak coordination. The multiplication of agencies and overlapping jurisdictions has diluted responsibility and limited victims' access to justice. Unless the Bill establishes a clear, transparent, and adequately resourced system of coordination, it risks perpetuating the governance fatigue it seeks to overcome.

Implementation must be guided by trust, independence, and participation - not as abstract values but as essential conditions for legitimacy in a low-trust post-conflict environment. A practical way to embed these principles would be through an independent monitoring panel, jointly accountable to Parliament and the *Oireachtas*, tasked with regular oversight and public reporting. This would signal that legacy implementation is a shared and monitored responsibility, not a closed administrative process.

Sustained trust also depends on visible accountability and continuity. Past initiatives have faltered when political attention waned or leadership changed. Embedding ongoing monitoring, transparent budgeting, and structured victim consultation into the Bill's implementation plan would ensure that the Commission's work remains credible and durable.

Without credible follow-through, even well-intentioned reforms risk reproducing technocratic peace: a process that meets procedural benchmarks but fails to restore relationships or legitimacy.

²² Implementation is itself a form of reconciliation: the way the process unfolds will determine whether it rebuilds or erodes trust.

A durable legacy settlement therefore requires not only legal reform but consistent, transparent, and participatory delivery. The Bill should institutionalise oversight, embed cross-government coordination, and allocate ring-fenced resources for monitoring and engagement. Only through sustained and credible implementation can the Bill move beyond procedural reform to become a genuine vehicle for reconciliation and democratic renewal.

²² Mac Ginty, R. (2012), 'Routine peace: Technocracy and peacebuilding', *Cooperation and conflict*, 47(3), pp. 287-308.

Concluding Remarks

I welcome feedback on these recommendations. The Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill 2025 marks a genuine attempt to correct some of the most problematic aspects of the 2023 Act and to reintroduce balance and credibility into the UK's approach to legacy issues. Its abolition of conditional immunity, partial restoration of inquests, and renewed cross-border commitments represent meaningful progress.

Yet, without structural independence, sustained political will, and a long-term vision, the Bill risks repeating the implementation failures that have undermined previous initiatives. The challenge now lies less in legislative design than in ensuring that the new institutions operate transparently, with adequate resources and meaningful participation from victims and civil society. Only a process that is demonstrably independent, rights-compliant, and anchored in reconciliation can deliver the legitimacy and moral authority required to address Northern Ireland's contested past.

The UK and Irish Governments now have a rare opportunity to build a legacy architecture that is not only legally sound but also socially meaningful. A process that combines accountability with reconciliation can help heal deep divisions, address the needs of survivors, and lay the foundations for a more durable peace.

If implemented with independence, transparency, and genuine cooperation, the Bill could transform a managed process into a shared journey toward reconciliation: a turning point that aligns law with legitimacy, and policy with peace.

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