

Thirty Project

Ideas | Solutions | Recommendations
Executive Summary - March 2023



THIRTY

About the Thirty Project

The Thirty Project was modelled on the concept of a citizens' assembly and engaged with ninety people over a series of focused weekend residential. The project, at its core, was about trusting people to arrive at solutions for some of our most difficult problems. The model of citizens' assemblies have worked well in other places such as the Republic of Ireland. Whilst our process is not tied to formal democratic process we feel that the contribution that people make could move the conversations forward.

Holywell Trust was successful in securing resources for the Thirty project through the Central Good Relations Fund of The Executive Office and the International Fund for Ireland. Four residential weekends were held in January, February and March 2023 examining the themes 'Good Friday/Belfast Agreement: Civic voice 25 years on', 'Education: Towards a system that works for everyone' and 'Legacy: Reconciling the past with a future focus'. These sessions were facilitated discussions where participants heard input from guest speakers before deliberating on possible solutions to increase the civic voice in Northern Ireland.

About This Report

This report contains the solutions and ideas proposed by the participants in the Thirty Project over four residential programmes. The ideas presented here are those that were developed and voted on by the participants as recommendations to make positive changes to each of the themes being addressed.

A fuller, more detailed report of the process, will also be available.

Thirty Methodology

Recruitment

To recruit citizens to take part in the project Holywell Trust issued an open call for interested and concerned individuals. All those interested submitted an expression of interest form and based on the information provided, participants were selected to reflect the diversity of society. The open call was promoted through a number of channels including social media, email, local press, direct invitation and promotion through our partner groups.

Process

The process for all residentials was the same and followed the following format.

- An induction workshop (delivered both online and in person) to allow participants to start to get to know one another, receive information on the upcoming residential and a preparation pack.
- Each participant prepared for the residential by reading the information contained in the pack. This included policy documents relevant to the theme being discussed.
- The facilitation of a residential for the participants where they heard expert input on the topic being discussed and had the chance to formulate solutions and recommendations on the theme. These were agreed or voted on by all participants.
- An Influencing workshop held on 29th March 2023 to share the solutions and recommendations made by the participants with key stakeholders and decision makers. Some findings from the discussions also formed part of the input at the Peace Summit on 3rd March, facilitated by lead partners The John and Pat Hume Foundation and Community Dialogue.
- Videos were also made capturing the discussion and engagement at the residentials and these will be shared widely as well as a podcast.

Recurring Themes and Observations

There were a number of themes common to all of the discussions at the Thirty Project residential.

- Key principles – through all of the conversations a number of key principles were discussed. These included:
 - Inclusivity
 - Equity
 - Inspiration
 - Safety
 - Supports all
 - Respects & celebrates diversity
 - Ambitious
 - Holistic
 - Supportive
- Drive for change – there was a real desire for change amongst all participants. The citizens that took part in the process expressed their frustrations at the fact that the NI Executive (at time of writing) is not functioning. They also were clear that it is their overwhelming desire that the politicians should be working together to support the whole community.
- Commitment to supporting the whole community – the participants took a whole society approach to dealing with each of the issues.
- Desire to build a positive future – there was an expressed desire among participants that this place should be better for generations to come. All

were committed to making positive contributions that they believed could help to have a positive impact on this place.

- Addressing division and segregation – reducing divisions in society, both physical and felt, was a key consideration for the participants. It was felt that divisions that currently exist should be addressed if we are to make the structural and systemic changes required.
- Importance of the community and voluntary sector – it was stressed by many participants that the community and voluntary sector is crucial to building a stronger future for this place and that the groups should be resourced to support people.

Civic Voice: Derry – Londonderry

Good Friday / Belfast Agreement: 25 years on
21st & 22nd January 2023

Solution – Write to all MLAs and councillors to seek support from politicians for an updated formal process for hearing citizens' voices.

Round 1		Round 2		91% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
19	3	20	2	

Solution – Regional and locality based collectives feeding civic voice through local authorities (including Participatory Budgeting).

Round 1		Round 2		91% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
22	0	20	0	

Solution - Build on existing networks and community organisations to increase civic voice.

Round 1		Round 2		95% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
18	1	21	1	

Solution - Wider community conversations on civic voice should be held in a range of settings to increase awareness, understanding and engagement.

Round 1		Round 2		95% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
21	1	21	1	

Solution - Review Government policy consultation processes with a view to fostering inclusive and participatory ways to increase civic voice on public policy.

Round 1		Round 2		100% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
20	0	22	0	

Solution - Mentor informed policy making (including a 'lived experience' Buddy Scheme for senior civil servants).

Round 1		Round 2		90% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
20	0	18	0	

Solution - Engagement of the British and Irish Government through Strand 2 and 3 of the Belfast/GFA - call for the full implementation of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Round 1		Round 2		100% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
22	0	22	0	

Solution - Speakers Corner - a new approach to increase civic voices in public spaces.

Round 1		Round 2		78% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
17	4	14	4	

Solution - Building a movement on Civic Voice (could include a festival/day) - a major campaign.

Round 1		Round 2		58% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
20	1	11	8	

Civic Voice: Belfast

Good Friday / Belfast Agreement: 25 years on
4th & 5th February 2023

Solution – ‘Community Champions’ and ‘Peoples’ Assemblies’ at localised level to increase civic participation and to meaningfully consult on a range of issues.

Round 1		Round 2		53% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
8	7	8	7	

Solution – To increase civic voice through the use of new/emerging technology – to capture a wide range of voices, including underrepresented groups.

Round 1		Round 2		87% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
13	2	13	2	

Solution - Curriculum change to increase civic voice - instil a knowledge and desire among children to become active citizens.

Round 1		Round 2		<p>87%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
15	0	13	2	

Solution - Engage people through workplaces and unions to have their say on key issues.

Round 1		Round 2		<p>73%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
12	3	11	4	

Solution - Citizens' assembly - tied to Northern Ireland Assembly processes.

Round 1		Round 2		<p>93%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
16	0	14	1	

Solution - Use arts to amplify community voice (Could include Forum Theatre and 'Food for Thought' Clubs).

Round 1		Round 2		<p>80%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
8	7	12	3	

Education

Towards a system that works for everyone
18th & 19th February 2023

Solution - Recognising the importance of early intervention to develop and fully implement a robust Northern Ireland wide Early Years Programme (0-5 years).

Round 1				<p>100%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
15	2	17	0	

Solution - Free school meals for all.

Round 1				<p>61%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
16	1	11	7	

Solution – Develop and implement a fully resourced newcomer strategy to support integration of children and their support networks into the education system.

Round 1				<p>94%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
16	1	16	1	

Solution – To develop and implement a fully resourced youth work strategy tied to the formal education system.

Round 1				<p>56%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
17	0	10	8	

Solution – To make all schools community hubs – places for the whole community beyond school hours.

Round 1				<p>64%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
14	3	11	6	

Solution – To support opportunities for young people to travel to participate in programmes that allow them to learn from other places.

Round 1				<p>56%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
17	1	10	8	

Solution – To develop and implement a fully resourced childcare strategy.

Round 1				<p>72%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
14	3	13	5	

Solution – To develop and implement a fully resourced Special Educational Needs (SEN) strategy.

Round 1				<p>83%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
17	0	15	3	

Solution – To develop and implement and fully resourced Special Anti-poverty strategy as a key mechanism for tackling educational disadvantage.

Round 1				<p>72%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
17	0	13	5	

Solution – End academic selection and make all required infrastructural changes to fully realise this, including an examination of second level educational structures.

Round 1		Round 2		<p>88%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
16	1	15	2	

Legacy

Reconciling the past with a future-focus
11th & 12th March 2023

Solution - Storytelling - Record the stories of those impacted by the Conflict.

Round 1		Round 2		<p>87%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
19	4	21	3	

Solution - Facilitate a future focused youth assembly on addressing the legacy of The Troubles.

Round 1		Round 2		<p>70%</p> <p>Participant support after second round of voting</p>
Yes	No	Yes	No	
16	7	16	7	

Solution – Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill to be paused to allow for alternative solutions to be explored with all relevant stakeholders.

Round 1		Round 2		100% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
24	0	24	0	

Solution – Legacy issues to be led on by both governments.

Round 1		Round 2		92% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
21	3	22	2	

Solution – All islands citizens assembly on legacy held.

Round 1		Round 2		58% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
15	8	14	10	

Solution – Increased education in schools and informal settings on the past to develop greater understanding of the Conflict.

Round 1		Round 2		96% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
22	2	23	1	

Solution – Carry out an audit of all existing services and provisions to arrive at a joined up approach to addressing legacy.

Round 1		Round 2		83% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
24	0	20	4	

Solution – To ensure that adequate and well resourced mental health supports are widely available to deal with the trauma and impact of The Troubles.

Round 1		Round 2		100% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
22	2	24	0	

Solution – That a recognition payment is made to all those directly impacted by the conflict.

Round 1		Round 2		83% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
19	5	20	4	

Solution – To develop and implement a fully resourced mechanism for conversations between victims and perpetrators.

Round 1		Round 2		67% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
16	8	16	8	

Solution – The report of The Consultative Group on The Past should be revisited and updated as forming the basis for dealing with legacy issues.

Round 1		Round 2		83% Participant support after second round of voting
Yes	No	Yes	No	
23	1	20	4	

Get in touch

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