

European Parliament Election 2019

Candidate: Neil Patrick McCann

Independent

Election Manifesto

1. Citizens Forums and Citizens Assembly

Purpose: To dialogue vital cross community issues of past, present and future and so to renew and activate the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly and executive.

We in Northern Ireland are at an impasse and have been now for some time, in the vacuum of no government for two and half years since the collapse of the Executive and the legislative Assembly. The land has no representation and has been poorly represented by the Secretary of State in the London cabinet which in any event has not adopted direct rule. Governance is left to the civil service and the police service. We are fortunate that the citizenry has given such assent as may be implicit in a moderate conduct of the usual social interactions, business, schooling and entertainment. 'There but for fortune' as the old song goes. My response to the impasse and to the question of where to now for Northern Ireland is to promote the means to provide a map, a map for the future of this mighty community and for its governance. It draws inspiration from the great Seamus Heaney's seminal work *The Republic of Conscience* where he outlines the dignified features of an ideal country and the standards of respect and decency, vibrancy and even normality found in that future mythical place. As the departure from the intense conflictual and violent attacks that characterised the troubles was brought to birth by a process, the Peace Process, so is the next stage to be conducted by a process. When the affairs of folk come to impasse then we must talk to each other, all of us or at least a sufficiently representative number of us. That's where we are at.

We need to talkabout Northern Ireland, about the relationships between us here, all groups and creeds, tribes and former tribes.

To this end I propose a Dialogue for the Future of Northern Ireland. This is the process that will lead to clarification as to where we want it all to go and to manage effectively the various steps that will occur along the way, not all of which are predictable. If elected as an MEP I will organise and secure funding for such a process. I will extend invitation to each of the MEPs to collaborate in this measure and the support of councils throughout the north and reconciliation groups and border bodies, and the signatory governments of the UK and Ireland.

The proposal is for a series of Citizen Forums to take place in five locations in the north, Belfast, Derry, then possibly three more of Coleraine, Armagh, and Omagh. Participants will be chosen by random subject to oversight to ensure that none is dominated by any one of the two main politico-cultural groups. The sessions would be monthly and initially for a day. The Dialogue will be professionally facilitated by teams of experienced and trained group workers and publicly funded. They will report to a co-ordinating group who will present the findings and recommendations to the governments and to the public. Individuals of high calibre and experience would be entrusted with the guidance of the process. These may from the Judiciary, former civil servants, politicians, community activist and labour organisations. It would be advisable that these be supported by respected individuals from public service outside Northern Ireland.

The Dialogue Process will be subject to ongoing intermittent review and may be extended after the initial period. The agenda will be fully open to all matters of public and social concern for governance and community life in Northern Ireland and participants will be required to commit to certain ground rules so as ensure that its aims are progressed and done so with some urgency. The determination of the Future of the governance of is an urgent matter and particularly so when considered in the context of political changes in other parts of the UK and Europe. A Citizens Assembly for the entire of Northern Ireland can be considered in the context of such progress of the dialogue and in the course of time would be desirable. This can be organised on similar lines as the Citizens Forums and would serve to refine and implement the work of the Forums. The detail of procedures and degree of authority is for further consideration in the light of all the circumstances which will prevail when this comes to be considered. The dialogue would also be valuable in responding to

any intensified proposals to move the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and specifically to engage fully with the entire community of Northern Ireland any moves toward create a united state on this island.

2. Ireland to underwrite part of NI Social Welfare payments

As part of its involvement in the Belfast Agreement I suggest that the Irish Government would provide annual financial support in an amount related to annual welfare payments to Irish citizens in Northern Ireland. The amount would be in the region of €0.5bn possibly to commence in the year 2020.

3. Northern Ireland to remain as part of a reformed EU

EU Reform Programme:

- Greater efficiency and smaller Parliament
- Creation of Fair Trade Policy
- Urgent action on Climate Change and Paris Accord
- Institute of Research and Development
- Cultural programme and increase in Erasmus places

4. Economic regeneration for North

Keep subsidies in NI farming and move to green agriculture
International Tariff-Free Industrial and Trade Area in the west to include in particular Derry/Londonderry and Strabane. The optimum free trade area would be to designate the entire of Northern Ireland as a Free Trade area.
Larne to Dublin East Coast Digital Hub and Transport Corridor
More joint tourism promotion under Tourism Ireland.

5. Review of education and cultural policy in favour of 'One Community' schools and Cultural support for all traditions, department of Communities change to Bureau of Community and Culture.

6. Earth Urgent Action

- Increase in efforts to halt global warming
- research and develop renewable energy and sustainable living
- protection of wildlife and bee population,
- Protection from nuclear pollution