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UNITED STATES UNITED IRELAND

Building a Green Wall

A letter from Ireland

a Chara,

I keep a steady stack of books to read on my desk. Currently making its way up through the pile is the newly published “Building a Green Wall – Irish America’s Resurgence Post-Brexit” by Kimberly Cowell-Meyers and Carolyn Gallagher. The authors are highly respected academics with whom I have worked through the painful Brexit process.

The book details how Brexit, the threat of a hard border being imposed across Ireland, and the undermining of the Good Friday Agreement galvanised a section of Irish American political and civic leaders into action.

While I have not finished the book, and I will write a full review when I do, I know the ending.

Irish America was central to ensuring the US Congress and the US Administration under President Biden were central in bringing the British Government back to the negotiating table with the EU to minimise the disruption of Brexit on the institutions and trade, and progress secured by the Good Friday Agreement.

That work reduced the damage of Brexit. It has been disastrous for Britain with a loss of influence and an economy in the doldrums. But Brexit is still with us and is undermining work across Ireland, between the island of Ireland and Britain, and between Britain and the European Union. It remains a managed but unresolved issue. An issue that will be front and centre when the Irish Government takes over the EU Presidency for the second half of this year.

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Martin, to raise the issue of Irish Unity as part of the Presidency.

A united Ireland would mean that all of Ireland would be a full member of the EU and so resolve part of the all-Ireland damage done by Brexit. A proposal that no doubt would make full sense to the EU and the English nationalists who forced Brexit on the people of the North.

In the opinion piece, Mr Sheahan reminds readers that Ireland had the EU presidency in 1990 and assisted negotiations to allow a reunited Germany into the EU despite the opposition of Margaret Thatcher. In the article, he called out the Taoiseach for the nonsense of pursuing a strategy trying to convince unionists opposed to unity to see the light and stop being unionists and become united Irishmen.

It was a surprising and refreshing take by an editor of the Independent. Unionism does not have a veto on Irish Unity. The Good Friday Agreement is explicit; it is a majority of citizens and not one section of the community that will determine the constitutional future of Ireland.

The Irish Government has a constitutional imperative to pursue unity and should prepare and plan to win the referendums promised in the Good Friday Agreement.

Throughout the Brexit process, Irish America was galvanised to protect the Good Friday Agreement. It was a force for good and delivered. The same approach can and should be developed to resolve the continuing issues of Brexit across Ireland and to implement the unity referendums of the Good Friday Agreement.

Have a great weekend.

Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

Irish Government must make Irish Unity a central feature of this year's EU Presidency

Sinn Féin has called on the Irish Government to ensure that Irish Unity is central to its political priorities and policy programme when taking up the Presidency of the Council of the EU in July.

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the Presidency programme.

Senator Murphy said, “The Irish Government’s Presidency of the European Union must make Irish unity a central political priority. Sinn Féin has set this out in our submission to the Government’s public consultation on the Presidency programme in December

“Polling by Amárach Research for the European Movement Ireland shows strong majority support, North and South, for a united Ireland within the European Union.

“It confirms that people want change, and they want a future back in the European Union. These figures reflect a growing understanding that the cost of Brexit – economically, politically, and socially – has been detrimental for the North of Ireland.

“The European Council’s 2017 statement in the context of Brexit stated that in the event of a united Ireland the state will automatically be within the EU.

“As we shortly approach the 30th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, we must recognise that the journey is moving now from one of peace to unity. What is needed now is leadership and preparation from An Taoiseach Micheál Martin on the issue. A border poll and referenda on Irish reunification cannot be ignored.

“It is essential that the groundwork begins now to avoid uncertainty and ensure a peaceful, democratic transition to a united Ireland within the European Union.

“A united Ireland within the EU must be a central political and policy priority of Ireland’s EU Presidency in 2026.”

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IN THE USA

DIASPORA MEET ON UNITY

By Greg O'Loughlin

Friends of Sinn Féin hosted a series of three Irish Unity People's Assemblies for the Diaspora in the Northeast of the United States in late October. These were the ninth, tenth, and eleventh Irish Unity People's Assemblies organized across the US over the last year, which drew more than 1,100 people in attendance from coast to coast. Previous events featured Sinn Féin speakers Pat Cullen MP, John Finucane MP, and Dara Hughes MP, with stops in Cleveland, OH; Columbus, OH; Pearl River, NY; Washington, DC; Cincinnati, OH; Nashville, TN; Chicago, IL; and San Francisco, CA.

This run of events included stops in Hartford, CT; Boston, MA; and Philadelphia, PA. Special guest Mairéad Farrell, TD for Galway addressed hundreds of supporters and activists from all over the region.

Late autumn in New England can feel like a movie set. Vibrant foliage, fall festivals, pumpkin patches, and apple orchards abound as Mairéad made her way from city to city accompanied by Sinn Féin's Representative to North America Ciarán Quinn and Friends of Sinn Féin's Executive Director Greg O'Loughlin. The setting was bested only by the energy and engagement at every stop where the crowds that gathered jumped right into the work of planning and preparing for a new and united Ireland.

In Hartford, more than 150 activists gathered

at the Irish American Home Society to hear from Ms. Farrell and to work in small groups at their tables in order to make plans and organize action. A rare weekend afternoon event made it possible for families to participate, and featured pipers, a local Irish dance school, and a reception after the work to help solidify the connections made.

The fireside chat portion of the event was hosted by Tricia McIvor, who led Míaréad through a series of questions that had been suggested by registrants. It was a highlight of the series, and it provided the audience with an opportunity to learn more about the role of activists in the work.

Later in the week, more than 100 people convened at the home of the Boston Firefighter's Local 718, Florian Hall. Boston's host for the fireside chat portion was none other than long-time activist and Irish Republican Kathleen Savage. Kathleen and Mairéad not only answered the many questions suggested by the attendees, but also worked their way through a myriad of topics and events that provided a special review of Boston's long history of support.

Activists young and old jumped at the chance to discuss the actors and the work involved in creating a new and united Ireland and to make plans for next steps.

More than 100 people came out to

Philadelphia's Commodore John Barry Arts and Cultural Irish Centre in spite of pouring rain and flood warnings. The room filled quickly and the warmth of the greetings and of the gathering quickly vanquished the cold, raw evening.

The fireside chat in Philadelphia was hosted by Terry Welsh, Pennsylvania's Chair of the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians Freedom for All Ireland Committee and was a great conversation. Afterwards, attendees were eager to engage with the small group work and discussion questions. Philadelphia has been a center of Irish Republican activism in the United States for decades and the crowd was ready, willing, and able to dive into the deep end of organizing and next steps.

All of these events were made possible by the work of volunteer activists and supporters. The progress made and the work to be done on the horizon is clearer than ever and that is thanks to the dozens of volunteers, hosts, donors, and activists.

Plans for events next year are already underway. In the meantime, it is clearer than ever that Irish America is ready to work for a new and United Ireland and to be part of the generation that makes it happen!

Greg O'Loughlin, Executive Director, Friends of Sinn Féin

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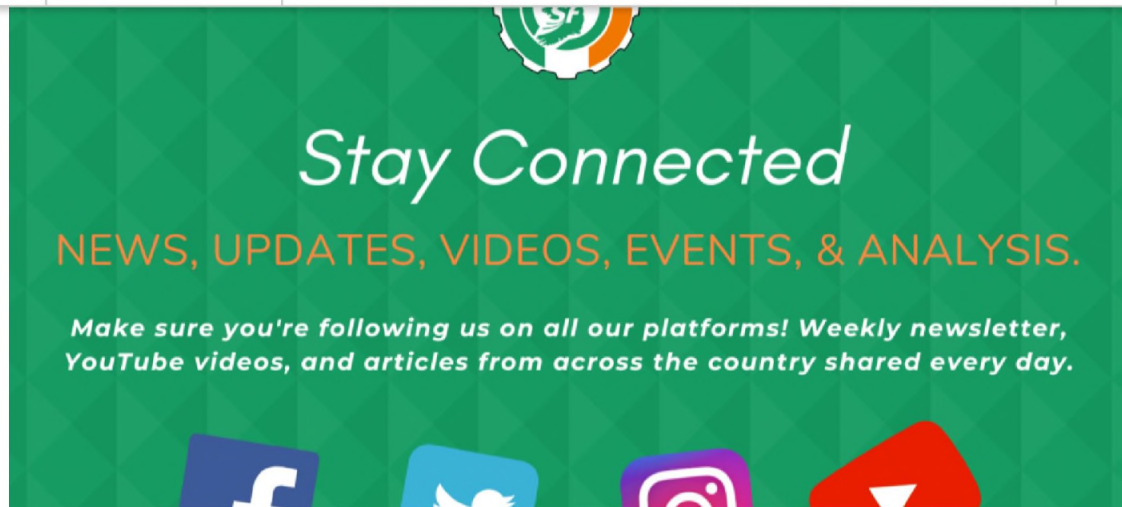
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