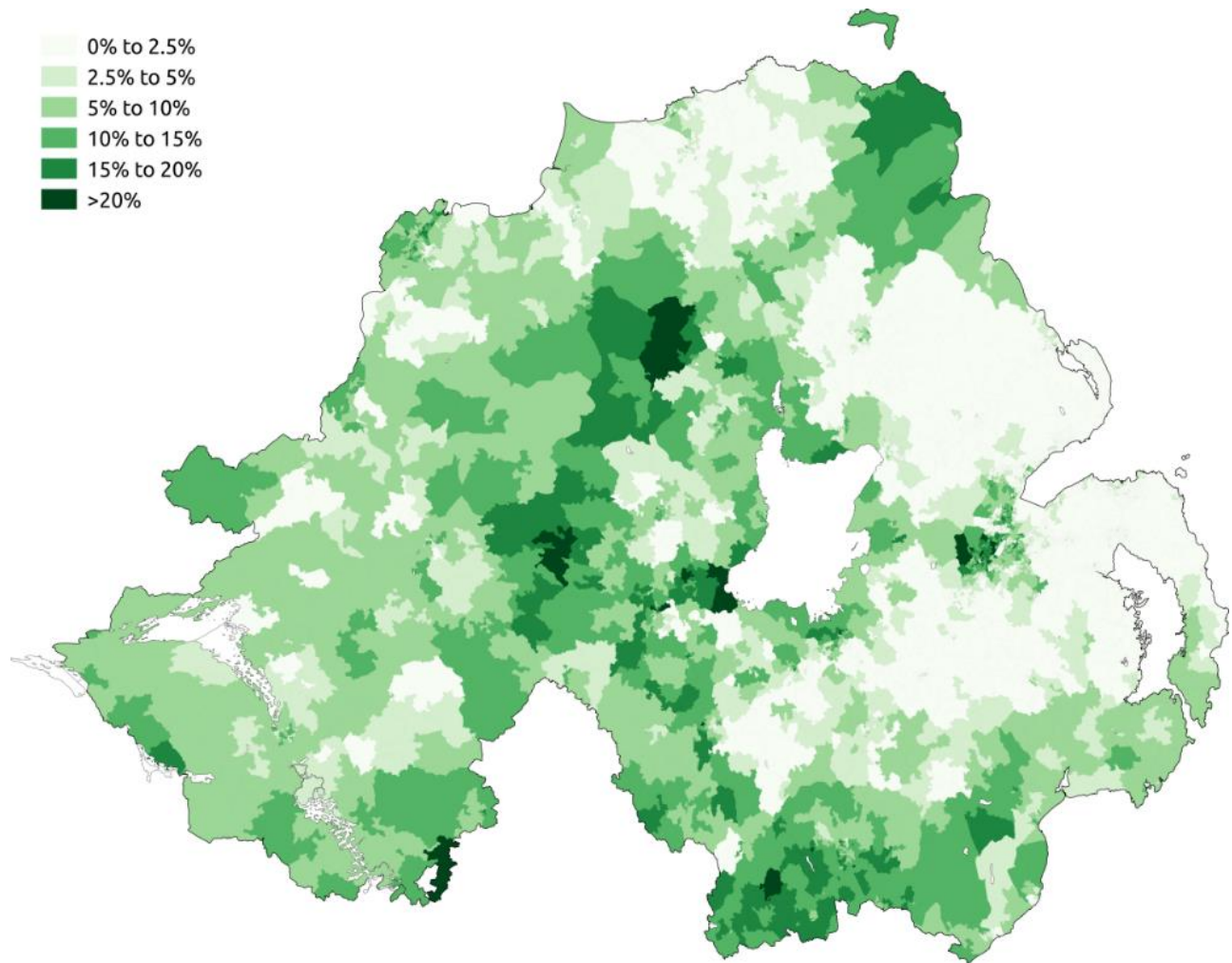


Nationalists should be blamed for the slow progress of the peace process in Northern Ireland

1. Nationalists are dishonest and untrustworthy. For decades, they campaigned to have republican parties recognised as legitimate representatives of the Catholic community with a right to participate in the government of Northern Ireland. Finally, the Belfast agreement allowed republicans to join the executive on the condition that they pursue their objectives peacefully and democratically. Republicans were quick to enter the Belfast assembly and take ministerial positions, but their paramilitaries refused to give up their arms (decommissioning) for years. This led to multiple suspensions of devolved rule at the expenses of all parties and communities in Northern Ireland.
2. Nationalists are too demanding and never satisfied, even though unionists have conceded a lot. For example, nationalists constantly complained about police bias against them and distrusted the traditional Royal Ulster Constabulary because it was almost entirely Protestant. So, the Belfast agreement recommended the creation of a new police force, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, that welcomed Catholics among their ranks. Despite all these concessions, Catholics still distrust the police and refuse to join the force.
3. Nationalists insist on making preposterous requests that have a divisive impact on politics and society in Northern Ireland. For example, they demand a stand-alone Irish Language Act that would give the idiom equal status to English in Northern Ireland, despite the fact that only 10% of the population has some knowledge of Irish and almost nobody (0.2%) use it as their first language. Unionists have a duty to oppose such ridiculous demands.
4. Nationalists' commitment to peace is not sincere. Not only paramilitaries refused to decommission for years, but also dissident republican groups continue to exist today, and they pose a serious terrorist threat. For example, since 2012 the New IRA alone has been responsible for more than 40 attacks, some of which deadly, targeting prison and police officers, as well as for the accidental fatal shooting of journalist Lyra McKee during riots incited by dissident republican paramilitaries in 2019. Republican violence undermines efforts from all communities to move on from the past.
5. Nationalists want to take advantage of Brexit to advance their own agenda for Irish unity. They demand that a referendum about the reunification of Ireland be held because the majority of voters in Northern Ireland opposed Brexit. However, surveys clearly show that only around 20% of people want to join the Republic; moreover, only the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, member of the British government, can call a referendum on Irish unity. This demand obviously sounds as an existential threat to the whole unionist community.



The map shows the proportion of people aged 3 and above who can speak the Irish language according to the 2011 UK Census.



Mural from Chamberlain Street, Derry/Londonderry. It was painted in 2016. The “unfinished revolution” is that of the 1916 Easter Rising, represented by the Easter lily.



Poster advocating the reunification of Ireland to avoid the consequences of Brexit. In Northern Ireland, 55.8% of voters voted to remain in the EU.

With permission, Madam Speaker, I shall make a statement on the current situation in Northern Ireland. I first pay tribute to the way in which the new institutions have got on with their challenging tasks in the last two months. (...)

Late on Monday the latest report of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning was delivered to the British and Irish governments. (...)

With the appointment of contact persons by the IRA and UFF in December 1999, all the main paramilitary groups on ceasefire are now engaged with the commission, a significant advance. The commission's report points to a number of other positive factors. The ceasefires remain in place. (...)

However, the report also stated that there has not yet been any decommissioning of arms by a major paramilitary group. This is totally unacceptable. Notably in the case of the IRA, it has to be clear that decommissioning is going to happen. The commission believe that their conclusion, in their report of December 10th, that recent events gave the basis for an assessment that decommissioning will happen remains well founded. But they need further evidence to substantiate that conclusion. In particular, they need definite information about when decommissioning will actually start. (...)

Even at this very late stage, it is right that we and all the parties continue to see if there is a basis on which the institutions can continue to operate and decommissioning start. The institutions can only work on the basis of cross-community confidence. Without clarity over decommissioning, I have no doubt that this confidence will ebb quickly. All the parties must have certainty that all aspects of the Good Friday agreement are being implemented, without some being forgotten or overlooked. I believe that it is possible that a way out of the current difficulties may be found at this late stage. But if it becomes clear that because of the loss of confidence the institutions cannot be sustained, the government has to be ready to put a hold on the operation of the institutions. (...)

Even at this very late stage, I believe it remains possible to rebuild confidence in the institutions, to enable devolution and the other institutions to continue and to ensure that decommissioning starts. But, I stress, these three things are interdependent. We cannot partially implement the Good Friday agreement. It is all or nothing.

Statement by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. Peter Mandelson, to the House of Commons, 3rd February 2000.

(...) With less than three months to go the implications of Brexit for the future of our island are enormous. (...) Brexit is bad for all Ireland and the highest price will be paid by the economy and people of the north. (...) And then there is the future of the Good Friday Agreement and of the political institutions in this part of the island. All this is now at risk. A hard border looms. If the British Government have factored into their calculations a hard border, then they must factor in a Unity Referendum as laid out in the Good Friday Agreement.

The route back for the north into the EU is clear. Irish unity is the route back to the EU. We will be meeting Boris Johnston in the coming days. We will remind him not only of the need to respect the wishes of the majority to remain within the EU. We will also remind him of his obligations under the Good Friday and subsequent agreements including the provision for a unity referendum. Brexit has re-exposed the folly of partition and reinforced the need for Irish unity. Sinn Féin makes no apology for promoting our vision of a united Ireland. (...)

Brexit will serve only to reinforce that partition and further damage our island. The people of the north – unionist and nationalist – knew this when they voted to remain in the European Union. This point has been conceded by the former British Prime Minister Theresa May who stated that she wasn't confident a referendum on Irish unity could be won by those promoting the status quo. Political unionism has lost its electoral majority in a series of consecutive elections. The nationalist people of the north have turned their backs on Westminster and increasingly look to Dublin for leadership. Brexit has forced increasing numbers of people, from all backgrounds, to look South. Every government prepares for the future – it is the proper and diligent thing to do. (...)

A growing number of people in the north, including many from a unionist background, are now considering their future in the context of Brexit. Many are now open to discussing the prospect of a new Ireland, an agreed Ireland and united Ireland. (...)

The choice is clear.

It is the choice between the narrow negative self-serving divisive decisions taken by little Englanders in Westminster.

Or a shared inclusive future in which we take our own decisions together in the interests of the people of this island.

Constitutional Change is coming. Preparation need to be made now.

'Dublin must plan for Irish Unity', speech by Mary Lou McDonald, then President of republican party Sinn Féin (SF), in Belfast, 30th July 2019.

Gerry Adams: 'No assembly without Irish language act'

The Sinn Féin president has said there will not be an assembly without an Irish language act. Gerry Adams was speaking as his party, the SDLP, Alliance, the Green Party, and People before Profit joined forces to call for an act.

UUP leader Robin Swann said his party would not "give a blank cheque to Gerry Adams for discrimination against non-Irish speakers".

The language issue has been a sticking point in talks to restore devolution. Northern Ireland has been without a functioning devolved government since January, when the coalition, led by the two biggest parties, the DUP and Sinn Féin, collapsed over a green energy scandal. Talks aimed at getting the power-sharing institutions up and running again ended earlier this year without agreement.

Mr. Adams said society should respect everyone's rights. "There won't be an assembly without an Acht na Gaeilge (Irish language act). The DUP know that, the two governments know that. (...)

However, Mr. Swann said equality and respect needed to be shown to all communities. "No matter how many times he (Gerry Adams) says otherwise, obligations to the Irish Language made under the Belfast Agreement have been fulfilled," said Mr. Swann.

Abstract from an article published on the BBC website on 30th August 2017.

**Text of Irish Republican Army (IRA) Statement About A New Grouping.
Derry, 26th July 2012**

"Following extensive consultations, Irish republicans and a number of organisations involved in armed actions against the armed forces of the British crown have come together within a unified structure, under a single leadership, subservient to the constitution of the Irish Republican Army.

The leadership of the Irish Republican Army remains committed to the full realisation of the ideals and principles enshrined in the Proclamation of 1916.

In recent years the establishment of a free and independent Ireland has suffered setbacks due to the failure among the leadership of Irish nationalism and fractures within republicanism. The root cause of conflict in our country is the subversion of the nation's inalienable right to self-determination and this has yet to be addressed. Instead, the Irish people have been sold a phoney peace, rubber-stamped by a token legislature in Stormont.

Non-conformist republicans are being subjected to harassment, arrest and violence by the forces of the British crown; others have been interned on the direction of an English overlord. It is Britain, not the IRA, which has chosen provocation and conflict.

The IRA's mandate for armed struggle derives from Britain's denial of the fundamental right of the Irish people to national self-determination and sovereignty – so long as Britain persists in its denial of national and democratic rights in Ireland the IRA will have to continue to assert those rights.

The necessity of armed struggle in pursuit of Irish freedom can be avoided through the removal of the British military presence in our country, the dismantling of their armed militias and the declaration of an internationally observed timescale that details the dismantling of British political interference in our country.

Signed Army Council ... IRA."

The statement from the IRA was released to *The Guardian* newspaper on 26th July 2012. Three of the four main dissident republican terror groups in Northern Ireland merged and claimed their commitment to the pursuit of an all-Ireland republic. The Proclamation of 1916 is the document claiming Ireland's independence from the UK; it was read before the start of the Easter Rising against British rule in 1916.



Crowds attending the funeral of Bobby Storey, major member of the IRA, in June 2020. The funeral was highly controversial because the large number of mourners participating did not respect social distancing to reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission. Unionist parties called for an investigation, but PSNI chose not to prosecute anyone. DUP leaders demanded the resignation of PSNI's Chief Constable and accused the force of giving a special treatment to republicans.



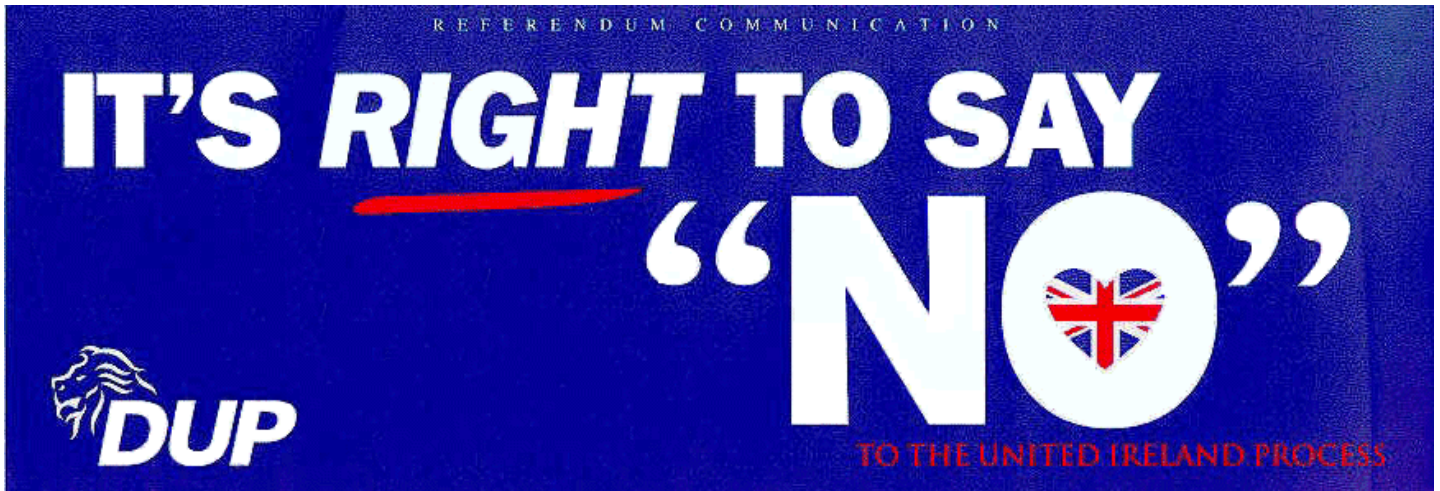
Poster from the republican Hugo Street, West Belfast. The poster questions the extent to which the police force has changed after the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was reformed as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The traditional RUC officer in bullet-proof vest is on the left; the modern officer on the right is more heavily protected. In the centre, the PSNI emblem overlays the old RUC one.



Mural in Belfast portraying journalist Lyra McKee, shot dead by the New IRA during riots in Londonderry in April 2019. The words are extracted from a letter McKee wrote to her 14-year-old self and talking about her struggles as a gay teenager in Northern Ireland.

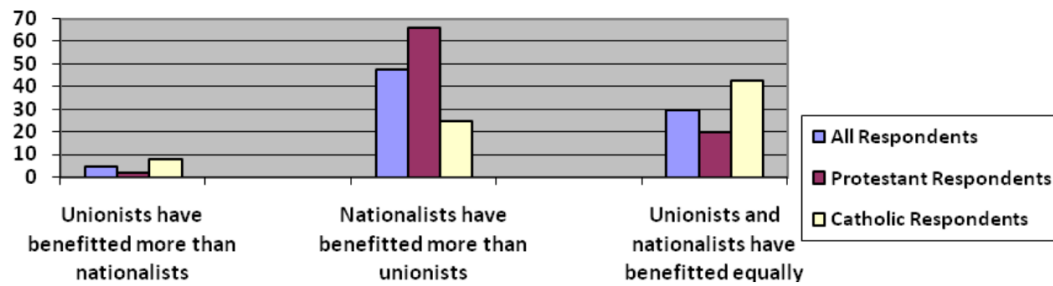
Unionists should be blamed for the slow progress of the peace process in Northern Ireland

1. Unionists refuse to come to terms with the idea of sharing power with Catholics and granting them equal rights. This is why a wide section of the Protestant community opposed the Good Friday Agreement, and 43% of the community voted against it at the referendum in 1998. Despite the Agreement had great chances to finally bring peace after decades of violence, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) campaigned against it. Since 1998, the DUP has become the most popular party among Protestants, and their reluctance to work with Catholics has undermined the progress of the Peace Process.
2. Unionists' attitude towards Catholics is inconsiderate and provocative. For example, they insist on commemorating Protestant history through a series of parades in the summer that often cut across areas inhabited by Catholics, who see these events as triumphalist and intimidating. The parades have often led to violent confrontation between the two communities. Nevertheless, Protestant organisations such as the Orange Order refuse to change routes and reject any restrictions on their parades.
3. Unionist parties supported the UK's withdrawal from the European Union even if they knew that this could endanger the Peace Process. Checkpoints on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic were removed as an important part of the Good Friday Agreement; with Brexit, that border came to divide the UK from the EU. By voting in favour of Brexit and refusing to countenance checks in the Irish Sea, unionists deliberately set out to restore a hard border and return to that past.
4. Unionists are ready to endanger the Peace Process to advance their own agenda by turning away from the Good Friday Agreement to force the reopening of negotiations over Brexit arrangements. The Loyalist Communities Council (LCC) has temporarily withdrawn its support to the Good Friday Agreement to express unionists' rejection of the Northern Ireland Protocol, included in the Brexit treaty. The LCC claims that the Protocol threatens the region's place in the UK because it leaves Northern Ireland in the EU single market for goods and introduces checks on products arriving from Britain. Unionists have no qualms about resorting to violence. Loyalist paramilitaries are behind the worst wave of street violence in recent years in Northern Ireland. Between March and April 2021, gangs of youth attacked police officers and vehicles with bricks, fireworks and petrol bombs. The disorders, which continued for ten days, happened in areas where loyalist organisations are very powerful, and children as young as 13 have been encouraged by adults to engage in rioting.



Poster by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) inviting voters to reject the Good Friday Agreement on the basis that it would eventually lead Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom.

The chart below shows the answers of all respondents and of just Protestant respondents, as well as Catholic respondents for comparison, to the question: ‘Thinking back to the Good Friday Agreement now, would you say that it has benefitted unionists more than nationalists, nationalists more than unionists, or that unionists and nationalists have benefitted equally?’⁵ All numbers are in percentages.



From Jessie Blackburn and Kacper Rekawek, Ten Years On: Who are the Winners and Losers from the Belfast Agreement?

https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/blackbourn_rekawek_08.pdf



Young people living in Protestant areas throwing missiles into the Catholic areas on the other side of the peace wall, March and April 2021.

Dear Prime Minister,

THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL

I am writing to you as Chairman of the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC) which is representative of the main Loyalist Groups that supported the 1998 Belfast Agreement, and also as someone who served as one of the Ulster Unionist negotiators in the Talks that led to the Belfast Agreement.

I have no doubt that you are aware of the strong feelings in Northern Ireland regarding the imposition of the NI protocol but I wish to place on record the unanimous opposition of all the Groups that are represented by the LCC to the Protocol and our determination that it should be replaced.

We are concerned about the disruption to trade and commerce between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom that is occurring, but our core objection is much more fundamental. Throughout the Brexit negotiations HMG and the EU stated that it was paramount to preserve and protect the Belfast Agreement and its safeguards to both communities in Northern Ireland, indeed the clauses to the Protocol repeatedly quote those objectives. The operation of the Protocol however repeatedly breaches those objectives.

As signatories to the Belfast Agreement we entirely understand the strong representations from Irish nationalists that there should be no hard border on the island of Ireland. Equally, it should be self-evident that there should be no hard border, either physical or regulatory, between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The protocol however gives effect to the Irish nationalist position at the expense of the unionist position. This renders it in variance with the Agreement it purports to uphold and undermines the basis on which the Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC) agreed their 1994 ceasefire and subsequent support for the Belfast Agreement.

The LCC leadership is determined that unionist opposition to the Protocol should be peaceful and democratic. However, please do not underestimate the strength of feeling on this issue right across the unionist family. The only time I can remember such unanimity of opposition was following the imposition of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. Accordingly, I have been instructed to advise that the Loyalist Groupings are herewith withdrawing their support for the Belfast Agreement until our rights under the Agreement are restored and the Protocol is amended to ensure unfettered access for goods, services, and citizens throughout the United Kingdom. If you or the EU is not prepared to honour the entirety of the Agreement then you will be responsible for the permanent destruction of the Agreement.

The LCC is prepared to play a meaningful role in seeking a workable solution however a starting point has to be the acceptance that a hard border on the island of Ireland, or between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom has no cross-community support here and is therefore untenable. It must be patently obvious to you that the triggers detailed in Article 16 of the Protocol ie the extreme economic and societal difficulties now pertain and must be acted upon without further delay.

I have been instructed to write in similar terms to the Irish Taoiseach.

DAVID CAMPBELL
CHAIRMAN – LOYALIST COMMUNITIES COUNCIL

Orange Order chief Gibson says NI Protocol protests could be held during Twelfth

The grand secretary of the Orange Order has suggested protests about the NI Protocol could be a feature of this summer's Twelfth celebrations.

Mervyn Gibson also reiterated that “nothing should be off the table”, including collapsing the Stormont Assembly, to get rid of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Earlier this month, the Orange Order chief had suggested the incoming leader of the DUP should be “committed to removing the Northern Ireland Protocol by whatever means necessary”, including collapsing the Stormont Assembly.

Speaking to BBC Radio Ulster's Talkback show, Mr Gibson said taking away the threat of collapsing Stormont “takes away one of your major cards to play” in negotiations around scrapping the NI Protocol.

When challenged on whether the language used was helpful, Mr Gibson replied: “I am not saying it is helpful, I am talking about putting pressure - showing what it means to people and the strength of feeling. If people said: ‘No, let the Assembly trundle along and we'll keep the protocol then the protocol is still there’, I think people need to see how serious the unionist community are about getting rid of the protocol.”

Mr Gibson also revealed he has been part of conversations with European Commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic and accused the EU politician of ignoring concerns of unionists. “There needs to be something done about it [the protocol]. I think unionism is prepared to talk and negotiate and debate and have conversations about this, not to be dismissed.

“I told him [Maros Sefcovic] the Irish Sea border wasn't acceptable to the unionist community. I told him we need to look for alternative solutions. To be honest he just ignored me.”

He also suggested this year's Twelfth celebrations in July may involve protests about the Irish Sea border and said protests may become larger as restrictions ease.

“Will there be undertones of the protocol? Of course there will. Let's see where we are by then,” he added.

“I can see the protests about the protocol increasing. I can honestly, as Covid restrictions are lifted and more people will go out and join those protests.

“Every unionist in Northern Ireland has a responsibility to get rid of the protocol.”

“We do not know how many guns, the amount of ammunition and explosives were decommissioned, nor were we told how the decommissioning was carried out. There were no photographs, no detailed inventory, and no detail on the destruction of these arms. To describe today’s statement as transparent would be the falsehood of the century”

Comment by Ian Paisley, founder and leader of DUP, at the news that the IRA's last remaining weapons had been put beyond use in September 2005. The news was confirmed by the decommissioning watchdog.

Nearly 90% of people who responded to a public consultation said they wanted the Union Flag to remain on City Hall 365 days a year. More than 95% of councils surveyed on the mainland fly the Union Flag 365 days of the year: so should we. The Union Flag is the flag of our country and is causing no offence or harm to anyone. Tell Alliance you want it to stay. At the minute Alliance are backing the Sinn Fein/SDLP position that the flag should be ripped down on all but a few days.

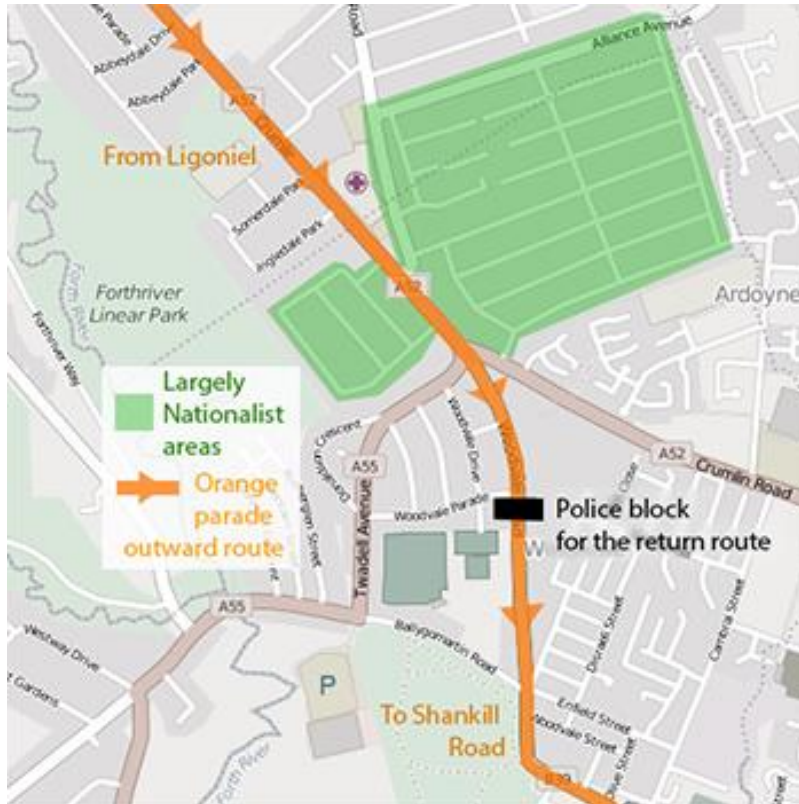
Let them know you want the flag to stay.

**Contact the Alliance Party and let them know
we don't want our national flag torn down from City Hall.
We can't let them make Belfast a cold house for Unionists.**

Leaflet circulated during the Belfast City Hall flag protests. In December 2012, Belfast City Council voted to limit the days that the Union Flag flies from the City Hall. The motion was backed by the council's Irish nationalists and the Alliance Party (a non-sectarian, neither unionist nor Irish nationalist party), while unionists strongly opposed the decision. Subsequently, attacks were made on Alliance Party offices and the homes of Alliance Party members, while Belfast City councilors received death threats.



A protest against the Northern Ireland Protocol, part of the Brexit Treaty, introducing checks on goods arriving from Britain.



Map of the route followed by the Pride of Ardoyne band as they parade as part of the 12th July celebrations.



Recent graffiti under a mural in Belfast. The "No Surrender" slogan derives from the 1689 Siege of Derry and is associated with unionism. During the Troubles, "No surrender" appeared on loyalist murals implying opposition to the IRA.