

## Legacy Structures in the Stormont House Agreement

The News Letter ran a story on the 19th June, highlighting the views of the UUP. The government intend to soon begin public consultation on proposals for the new institutions to deal with the legacy of the Troubles. They propose to do this regardless of whether there has been agreement at Stormont. The News Letter had asked the NIO to comment on reports that the DUP - Conservative talks will encourage public consultation on The Stormont House Agreement; the NIO actually pointed out that the Conservative Party's election manifesto contained a commitment to go to public consultation. The NI Secretary, James Brokenshire stated in April that the proposals are now "sufficiently developed that the next step should be to publish them for consultation" in order to listen to the views of victims. Listening to the views of the victims is altogether different from accepting their views as legitimate in any process. The consultation process must not merely pay 'lip-service' to our views, we are the people who can make this work, and want it to work. But there are misgivings.

Ulster Unionist leader Robin Swann stated "We seem to be charging headlong towards creating another layer of structures to try and ensnare former and current members of the security forces, whilst terrorists and their apologists run around with comfort letters in their back pockets."

Kenny Donaldson, speaking on behalf of IVU, said that unless his members can receive confidence that the new structures will give better satisfaction than the old ones, "we will not be giving our consent to politicians to make deals on the back of those we serve".

I have been pointing out for some time the dangers presented by the new Historical Investigations Unit (HIU) that is proposed to replace both the HET and take on the workload of the PSNI's Legacy Branch and the legacy work being done by the Ombudsman. This will be virtually a parallel police force with full powers, led by a Director who is a de-facto Chief Constable, reporting only to the Policing Board; the PSNI have no jurisdiction over their actions. Retired soldiers and police officers are being named in Article 2 Inquests forty years or more after the fact, giving no regard to the situation faced by them at that time. I anticipate that there is a potential for the HIU to be the vehicle that will then pursue those retired soldiers and police officers in the courts, whilst those who set out to kill have been exonerated by the government with HM Prerogatives of Mercy and On the Run Letters. Will the victims and survivors of terrorism receive thorough inquiries, or will they be merely be spectators to another weighted agenda?

The Stormont House Agreement in reality is 'Eames-Bradley for slow learners' without the 'blood money' pay-out. It has similar structures that leave one way of what they may, or may not produce. The Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR) is another arrangement that may have an intention to inform victims but in reality allows the perpetrators to produce a sanitised version of their past. The ICIR will be given the immunities and privileges of an international body and would not be subject to judicial review, Freedom of Information, Data Protection and National Archives legislation.

It is therefore essential that victims and survivors become fully engaged in the consultation process so that we can explore, question and interrogate those who propose that the Stormont House Agreement will represent our needs. We need to be fully informed before we can decide whether it merits our support.



# Advocacy for Innocent Victims Newsletter



AfIV Office (C/O SEFF), 1 Manderwood Park,  
1 Nutfield Road, Lisnaskea  
Co Fermanagh BT92 0FP

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**Dear Member,**

You are now probably aware that SEFF have successfully recruited three Advocacy Support Workers, and their biographies form part of this month's newsletter. The post in London has yet to be filled, and that recruitment process is now under way.

It is encouraging that the VSS had the confidence in SEFF and the AfIV service to provide the funds necessary to support our quest for truth and justice.

AfIV are now working with almost sixty families, and with the support of three new advocates, their needs can be fully represented, and new work can be taken on. I encourage you to continue to engage with AfIV and inspire others who may need our advice.

**Kind Regards**

**Ken Funston**

**Advocacy Support Manager**

For general Advocacy queries please contact the SEFF Office on (028) 6772 2242 or email [advocacy@seff.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@seff.org.uk)

To contact Ken Funston by email [ken.funston@seff.org.uk](mailto:ken.funston@seff.org.uk) or mobile 0783 4488635

The next Newsletter will have full contact details of the other three advocates in this space.



## Ann Travers

I was born in May 1969 in Belfast, just at the start of the "troubles". The youngest of six children, and blessed to have wonderful parents Tom and Joan. As a mother of 5 now I thank my parents for being such great role models.

That was all to change on the 8th April 1984 when the IRA attacked my parents and older sister Mary (age 23) as she walked home from mass. Mary was murdered by a single bullet in her back, the same gunman attempted to shoot Mum by placing the gun to her head but the gun jammed. A separate gunman shot Dad at close range with 6 bullets, Dad was critically injured but survived, living the rest of his life in both emotional and physical pain. The IRA and Sinn Fein justified the attack because Dad was a Resident Magistrate. The attack happened about 200 yards from our home, I was 14 when I came across the scene that devastated our happy family life.

In 2011, the only person ever convicted for her involvement in my sister's murder was appointed as Special Advisor to the then Sinn Fein Culture Minister. This had a devastating traumatic effect on me. It was the trigger that brought back over and over again that sunny spring morning in 1984. The lack of consideration towards victims or understanding of their grief and life experience astounded me. I lobbied all of the political parties (except Sinn Fein) and raised awareness of trauma and victims of terrorism's needs through the media. Working along with the TUV the 'Spad' Bill or "Ann's Law" was born in June 2013; the first real recognition of victims rights.

In 2012, I was appointed to the Victims and Survivors forum, where I and my colleagues advocated on behalf of victims, meeting and consulting with many different stakeholders including the Secretary of State, the Lord Chief Justice, Chief Constable, Police Ombudsman, The Legacy Unit, Politicians and academics to name a few. I remained there until March 2017.



I'm so delighted to be joining the SEFF family in this very exciting role of Advocacy Support Officer. I am passionate about victims rights, not only the right to justice and accountability but also acknowledgement of hurt, and complex needs. SEFF have been very good to me and I look forward helping others through their personal journey of healing.

As you see from the biographies, the three new advocates bring three totally different CVs to the roles; certainly not clones, and it this all round experience both professionally and of life, that will give us that holistic view of the challenges that lie ahead.

It is intended that Wendy will be based at SEFF offices Lisnaskea, her email address being - [wendy.stewart.afiv@seff.org.uk](mailto:wendy.stewart.afiv@seff.org.uk)

Ann will be initially based at the SETWS offices in Moygashel, her email - [ann.travers.afiv@seff.org.uk](mailto:ann.travers.afiv@seff.org.uk)

Pete Murtagh will be at Decorum NI based in Bangor, email - [peter.murtagh.afiv@seff.org.uk](mailto:peter.murtagh.afiv@seff.org.uk)

They start in post on Monday 3rd July.

## Wendy Stewart

My name is Wendy Stewart and I live in Ballinamallard with my Husband and 2 daughters. I attended Ballinamallard Primary School, and later the Collegiate Grammar School in Enniskillen.

I attended the University of Dundee in Scotland for 4 years and gained an Honours Law Degree (LLB). I went on to successfully complete a postgraduate course, the Law Society Finals, at the College of Law in York.

My working life began in the Advice Sector where I worked as a Tribunal Representative. Over the years I have worked in the Welfare Rights Advice Centre in Enniskillen, Fermanagh Citizens Advice Bureau, and Omagh Independent Advice Centre. In 2002 I joined Victim Support NI, and I have spent the last 15 years advocating on behalf of victims of all types of crimes.

I am very much looking forward to joining the team at SEFF as Advocacy Support Worker in July.

## Peter Murtagh

Hi there, I am Pete Murtagh, 51 years of age, married with 3 grown up children. I was born in Belfast, brought up in Nottingham from the age of 4 till I was 18, hence my slight English twang. I returned to Northern Ireland in 1985 with the Army, and joined the RUC in 1988. I have served in many areas of Northern Ireland; including Armagh, Newry, Belfast and Omagh. I previously have successfully completed Diplomas in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning sector and as an Accounting Technicians.



In the RUC I attended scenes of terrorist attacks resulting in serious injury and death. In 1994 months before the first cease-fire my Brother-In-Law Jackie Haggan was shot dead by the PIRA at Dunmore Stadium; he was a serving Police Officer. I saw the devastation that such a loss causes to families, not just at the time but for the remaining lifetime of the bereaved.

I have had dealings with victims of Terrorism and Crime. I was based in Omagh at the time of the bomb in 1998, whilst not at the scene itself, many of my colleagues were first responders; I saw the traumatic effect it had on them, not to mention the families of those

killed and injured; many of whom I had dealings with in the aftermath. In 1999 I was one of the first phase of Police Officers to go to Kosovo, where I spent a year helping to establish a Police Service in a post war divided country. Within the Police I was trained as a Peer Support Officer to help colleagues who have attended traumatic scenes. Over the last few years I have gained some experience with Legacy issues and dealing with external investigative bodies.



I am very much looking forward to working within SEFF and helping Victims bring about the Truth, Justice and Recognition they deserve and have a right to expect.