

**Northern Ireland's 2016:
Approaching the
contested
commemoration of the
Easter Rising and the
Battle of the Somme**

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...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland

'Northern Ireland's 2016'

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Executive Summary

- Commemoration of historical events has important current political relevance in Northern Ireland where contested events from the past have the potential to both upset and enhance community relations.
- A significant body of academic research on historic and modern commemoration in Northern Ireland exists and academic researchers have considerable expertise to offer in assisting policy-makers and practitioners.
- Effective commemorative events will draw upon expertise from a wide range of disciplines, including history, political science, anthropology, sociology, literature and drama, geography and education.
- A range of best-practice guidelines for dealing with contested commemoration in Northern Ireland exists to benefit those charged with organising commemorative events.



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TBUC

“The decade we have just entered will include a number of potentially sensitive anniversaries which we can-not ignore within the context of this Strategy. The events of our past will inevitably have economic and social impacts for us now and the way in which these events are marked will also have a significant influence on our continued journey towards a united community.”



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Commemoration in 1966



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De-commemoration



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Commemoration in politics and society

- commemoration is about who we are and, as such, what we want in the future
- commemoration plays an important role in social cohesion
- a commemoration may be an effective reminder of painful conflicts of the past but it can also, and has, provided a call to arms



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The dangers of commemoration

“over again, we have been confronted by the reality that nothing is more socially uncontrollable and, hence, more dangerously politically than a people who believe themselves victims’ (David Reiff)

‘Those who control the present, control the past and those who control the past control the future’ (George Orwell)



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'if a large swathe of the pro-Union community is left demotivated, culturally vulnerable and socially and economically disempowered, then the danger is that the dead of one hundred years ago will return as ghostly mentors for those unhappy young men for whom combat on the streets is an analgesic for the pain of what's been lost' – Philip Orr



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Limavady Declaration

- * Embody and demonstrate respect to everyone involved;
- * Make the engagement of participants in transformative experience central to heritage philosophy and practice;
- * Use, recognise and name all expertise equally to ensure universal participation;
- * Ensure that the motivation and outcome of heritage practice is to do good with the widest section of society.

[Source: MINOM/Causeway Museum Service, Heritage Practice in Contested Spaces (2013)]



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CRC/HLF Principles

- 1 Start from the historical facts;
 - 2 Recognise the implications and consequences of what happened;
 - 3 Understand that different perceptions and interpretations exist; and
 - 4 Show how events and activities can deepen understanding of the period.
- All to be seen in the context of an 'inclusive and accepting society'.



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Key sources

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Northern Ireland
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