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KELLY COMMENTS ON TROUBLES LEGACY CONSULTATION GROUP

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SDLP MLA and Victims Spokesperson Dolores Kelly MLA has commented on the announcement of a Consultative Group to examine how best to deal with the legacy of the past. Speaking today, Mrs Kelly said:

“There is a real need for the needs of victims and survivors to be placed at the centre of government in the North. The main promise of the Agreement was a promise to victims and survivors. To date that promise has not been followed up on. This is something that must be addressed and delivered on. There is a clear onus on all those engaged in the troubles, including security forces and paramilitaries to tell all and hold nothing back about their role in our past. The rights of victims and survivors should not be brushed under the carpet in an exercise of political expediency. I hope that this consultative group will approach the matter in as open a way as possible and I hope that no doors will be closed in their face. They must not work independently of victims and survivors and it is clear that they should work for victims first and foremost and not on behalf of any government.

“I was disappointed to read Peter Hain's platform though in the Irish News, which talked of the British government's reluctance to fund dealing with the past. The timing of this is frankly worrying. Hiding behind the smokescreen of the treasury will just not do. There is no excuse to dismiss the plight of victims. The core responsibility in dealing with victims issues is the remit of the Office if the First and Deputy First Ministers, they may be able to work with a Victims Commissioner and other groups but they cannot abdicate ultimate responsibility for this. They must be key drivers in the process. The formation of this group must not cloud the need for that leadership.”

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