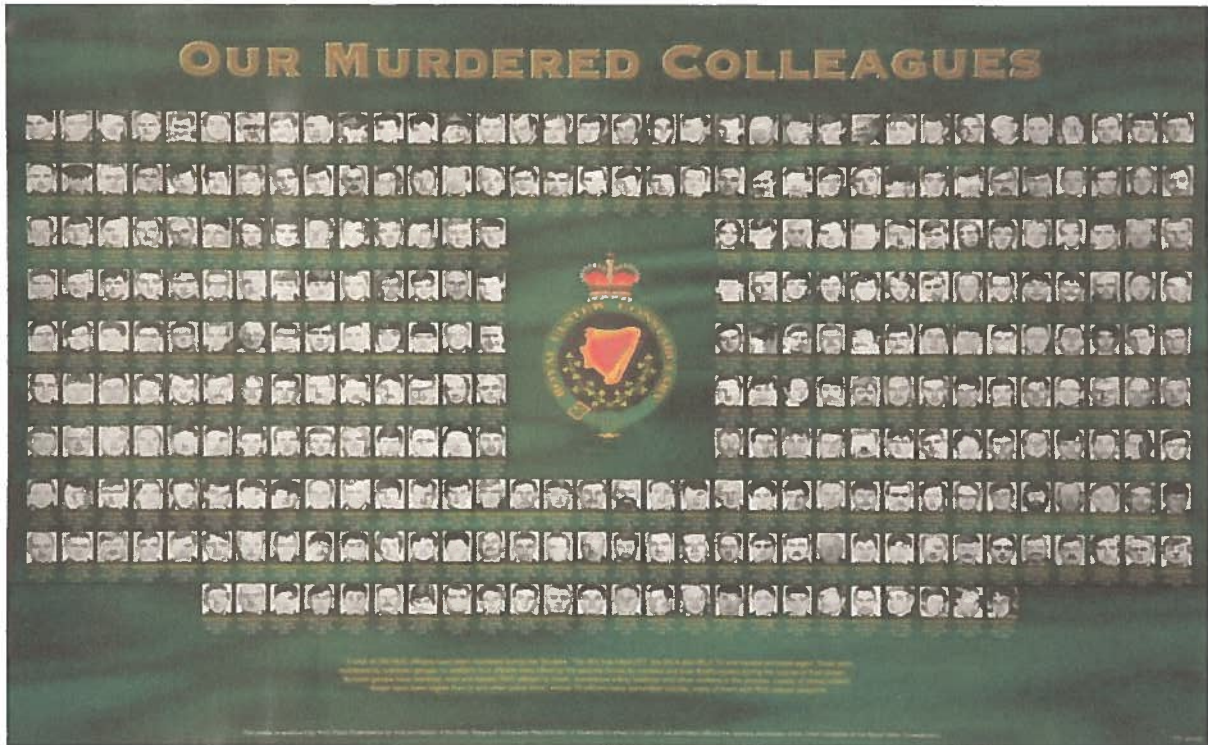




**Response of the Royal Ulster Constabulary
George Cross Foundation to the Northern Ireland
Office Consultation Paper on the
Draft Northern Ireland
(Stormont House Agreement) Bill**

LEST WE FORGET



The Chairman and Trustees of the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation wish to dedicate this response to the memory of those officers and their families who sacrificed so much during the period of "the Troubles" that is dealt with by the Draft Bill. The Foundation is mindful of its mandate, established in law, for the purposes of "marking the sacrifices and honouring the achievements of the Royal Ulster Constabulary". These sacrifices, including the murder of 302 officers, and achievements shall never be forgotten.

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation was created by virtue of Section 70 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 for the purpose of ‘marking the sacrifices and honouring the achievements of the Royal Ulster Constabulary’ and is comprised of a Chairman and five Trustees. This response paper represents the considered views of the Chairman and Trustees in relation to the proposed new institutions as outlined in the Northern Ireland Office Consultation Paper on the Draft Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill. Our many stakeholders (listed later) have been encouraged to submit group and individual responses to the Draft Bill’s proposals with reference to their own specific remit, objectives and constituents. However, we also aim to reflect many of their main concerns based on feedback received.

We are given a mandate in law – to mark the sacrifices and honour the achievements of the RUCGC. Anything that is counter-productive to our task; causes distress to the bereaved, victims and our stakeholders; and, is deliberately aimed at damaging the reputation of the RUCGC will be resisted and opposed. Unfortunately, the current proposals are causing disquiet and distress and do little to convince us that they will in any way support our task. In fact, we see many negative aspects regarding how individual former RUCGC officers will be treated and are concerned that the new proposals facilitate those who wish to deliberately disrespect and denigrate the reputation of the RUCGC.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary has earned a worldwide reputation for delivering a quality police service despite being severely tested during a bloody sectarian conflict. It was awarded the George Cross, the highest UK civilian gallantry award, and the courage of many individual officers received fitting recognition with awards and commendations for bravery and professionalism. In 2001 the Force was incorporated into the new Police Service of Northern Ireland. Those recommending the changes formally recorded in their findings the outstanding contributions made by the RUC and recommended that they should never be forgotten. The Foundation is concerned that the new Draft Bill’s proposals seem to have forgotten the role the RUC played in standing up to terrorism from all quarters and its proposals are now heavily weighted against officers who gave their service in the most difficult of times.

In “A New Beginning – Policing in Northern Ireland”, the Report of the Independent International Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland (locally known as the Patten Report), the authors recorded their “recognition of the dedication and sacrifice of officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary” P100 17.8.

Their report recognised that, “The tragedies of the past have left a deep and profoundly regrettable legacy of suffering. We must never forget those who have died or been injured, and their families.”P1 1.1.2.

It is a priority for the Foundation that those personal sacrifices are not, in any way, forgotten, diminished or undervalued or the Force’s substantial achievements, accomplished in an extremely dangerous and challenging context, are overlooked or revised in a denigrating fashion.

The Patten Report continued “. . . we can best honour them through a fresh start, in which we firmly dedicate ourselves to the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust, and to the protection and vindication of the human rights of all.”P1 1.1.2 The Foundation believes that these words and sentiments, particularly about human rights, should apply equally to police officers (serving and retired) and their families.

SUMMARY

The Foundation’s work is primarily targeted towards marking the sacrifices of members of the RUCGC, supporting their families, honouring the achievements of the Force and consulting with a wide range of stakeholders who represent the wider “RUCGC family”. Our stakeholders comprise of victims and survivors such as the bereaved and injured plus voluntary groups and associations who look after the interests of former officers and their families. They include: The RUCGC Widows Association, The RUCGC Parents Association, The Disabled Police Officers Association, The Northern Ireland Retired Police Officers Association, The RUCGC Benevolent Fund and Local Police Voluntary and Welfare Groups. Therefore our stance regarding the legacy proposals revolves around two key questions: “Do they contribute positively or negatively to the Foundation’s mandate?” and “Do they reflect the principles, priorities and practices of the RUCGC and the Foundation including respect for the rule of law, fairness, professionalism, effectiveness, public service, proportionality and protection of human rights?”

It is of critical importance to the Foundation that any proposals to address legacy issues treat former RUCGC officers and their families with respect and dignity and comply with the rule of law. In other words, are they clearly underpinned by the six principles set out in the Stormont House Agreement and the Draft Bill itself? These include the principles that: rule of law should be upheld; human rights obligations should be complied with; and, the approach taken should be balanced, proportionate, transparent, fair and equitable.

Our submission, in summary, is one of deep concern based on our belief that the proposals fail to comply with rule of law and human rights standards while appearing to be imbalanced, disproportionate, unfair and inequitable – without safeguards and therefore open to abuse. In the current form they are unlikely to gain the trust and full engagement of the “RUCGC Family”.

Headlines such as “Terror Victims Face Legacy Trap” in the Newsletter on 3rd September are causing serious apprehensions about what fairness, truth and justice there will be for police officers who did their best under such extreme conditions. The aforementioned article (written by lawyer Neil Faris) contains the following analysis: *“Terrorists and others who have committed crime have to be shielded from identification in the HIU’s family reports, while retired RUC officers can be named and shamed in the same reports for ‘misconduct’*. Such expressed concerns are hardly likely to encourage engagement and create trust in the conduct of any retrospective investigation.

It is clear that there are those in our communities who seek to revise and rewrite the history of the Troubles; placing the police, who steadfastly performed their demanding, difficult and dangerous security and policing duties, on a par with terrorist “combatants” – or worse, portray them as the perpetrators. The Foundation is concerned that the proposals will, by accident or design, facilitate that warped narrative and in so doing cause great distress and dismay among those who served courageously, often at great personal sacrifice, and their families.

The Foundation will offer views regarding the 17 questions posed, but in essence we cannot offer unqualified support any of the proposals in their current form.

RUCGC FOUNDATION CONSIDERED VIEWS AND CONCERNS

The Foundation agrees that current arrangements for dealing with outstanding legacy issues are flawed (for example they focus on killings by state actors-already investigated - while lacking the capacity to address all outstanding unsolved murders). However we believe that the proposed changes are also flawed and could potentially make matters worse.

As stated, within the Draft Bill as outlined in the consultation paper this is causing deep disquiet among police family, victims and many members of society.

Concerns expressed to us and shared by us include the fact that the draft: makes no mention of terrorism, fails to define victims (we believe a definition should exclude perpetrators), ignores seriously injured victims of terrorists when investigating the past, offers nothing new for trauma sufferers, contains inherent unfairness and disproportionality with its focus on police “non-criminal misconduct”, is seen by many as equating police with terrorists, appears to ignore serious breaches of ECHR articles and is open to abuse by those who wish to rewrite history, spread untruths and engage in propaganda with the purpose of denigrating the State and state actors such as the police. As Patten recorded back in 1999 “the present policing style of the RUC has been greatly distorted by the security situation, to the frustration of both police and public.”^{P44} 7.5. RUC Officers faithfully and courageously performed the duties they were tasked to do – it would be a gross injustice to hold them responsible for the context created by criminal terrorists and violent extremists. The Bill requires no acknowledgement of wrongdoing by terrorist groups and there is growing concern that this omission will sanitise terrorism or at least play down serious violent extremism.

Another concern often expressed to us, and one that has a negative impact on potential engagement, is the widely held belief that the agreement and proposals therein represent a “done deal” – i.e. the Stormont House Agreement will be implemented and consultation is simply a “paper exercise”.

However, despite this, the Foundation wishes to submit a considered response to the proposals. It wishes to point out the widely held opinion among its stakeholders that the proposals create an uneven playing field – with an implied emphasis on identifying and criticising police and security forces. It is a fact that 10% of killings were by carried out by security forces (Army & RUC) – and these events have already been investigated - while 90% of Troubles-related deaths were murders by terrorists (who keep no records). So how can the process be fair? The Foundation and its stakeholders seek amnesty for no one, including any retired police officer, who is reasonably suspected of committing crimes in the past. The vast majority of RUC officers served with professionalism and courage - often at great personal cost to themselves and their families. Their sacrifices and achievements should not be undermined or debased by inferring that criminals in their ranks have been “pardoned”.

The proposals in relation to “non-criminal police misconduct” appear to be unfair, unlawful and unworkable and, for some, highly offensive. The approach lacks proportionality when considered alongside terrorist atrocities. The fact that victims of non-fatal but serious terrorist outrages are ignored and

excluded by the Draft Bill is of concern. The Bill's proposals focus only on Troubles-related deaths and non-criminal police misconduct. The gap between these issues creates a belief that the focus is skewed because the HIU proposals display a lack of balance, concentrating on outcomes that will focus on non-criminal misconduct by servants of the State, not prosecution of terrorists. This has caused deep dismay among the wider RUCGC "family". It is accepted that police officers exercised powers and carried out actions for which they should be (and were) held accountable. However they should still be afforded fair and equal treatment under the law.

Of particular concern is the section in the Draft Bill that deals with the HIU Director's Operational Control. Para 9.13 states: *"The following matters (in particular) do not prevent the Director from forming belief that new evidence is, or reasonable investigative steps are, capable of leading to the identification of a person, the prosecution of a person or the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against a person—*

- (a) that person's physical or mental health at any time;*
- (b) that person's absence from the jurisdiction at any time;*
- (c) the death of that person since the time when the criminal offence or non-criminal police misconduct occurred;*
- (d) the death of any other person since that time;*
- (e) the period that has elapsed since that time."*

Is this section actually stating that investigations, prosecutions and disciplinary proceedings against any person (including former RUCGC officers) will proceed despite that person suffering ill health (physical or mental) or having died?

The Foundation is concerned that such proposed arrangements would involve the UK in clear breaches of ECHR Articles (something which we know has already been pointed out by many others). In so doing the Draft Bill fails to uphold many of the basic principles it sets for itself (fairness, rule of law and human rights compliance).

Regarding the HIU proposals, the Foundation has concerns about the naming of any RUCGC officer (or any other person) in family reports without due process having been followed. We believe that any family report must avoid naming or identifying any person in any adverse context unless and until that person has been accused and convicted of a criminal offence or has been subjected to properly-constituted disciplinary proceedings which found him or her to be culpable of misconduct (To do otherwise is a breach of Article 8

ECHR). We also have concerns that retired police officers and/or their families may be re-traumatized or otherwise adversely affected by the inquiries and other activities undertaken by the HIU. Everything possible should be done to avoid this and support provided if it should occur. No retired RUCGC officer should be compelled to give evidence.

It should be acknowledged that retired police officers are now civilians. They are part of the general public and therefore no longer subject to disciplinary actions. Parts of the Draft Bill seem to ignore this fact and seek to subject them to discriminatory treatment, contrary to the provisions of the ECHR 10. Why mention them only and not 'non-criminal civil servant misconduct', 'non-criminal lawyer misconduct', 'non-criminal military misconduct', 'non-criminal Security Service misconduct', 'non-criminal press or media misconduct', 'non-criminal ministerial misconduct', "non-criminal clerical misconduct" or anything of similar nature in this draft bill.

We believe the whole concept of non-criminal police misconduct needs to be re-addressed not only because of potential breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights but because the whole issue of police discipline and regulations is complex – particularly when those under investigation are retired and therefore no longer subject to disciplinary proceedings. It is a sad fact that there are those who seek to denigrate the name and performance of the RUCGC and individual officers (now retired). New procedures for dealing with the past should not afford opportunities to those motivated in this regard. Consequently, any new institutions and procedures must protect the rights of retired officers to the same degree as any citizen and afford them the opportunity to challenge or refute false allegations in keeping with the concept of the rule of law. The Foundation believes that adequate safeguards must be in place to prevent any unfounded and unlawful statements being included in family reports or HIU pronouncements.

A key concern for the Foundation is the credibility and veracity of any information offered to, accepted by or passed on as "truth" by any of the proposed new institutions. This applies to the HIU "family reports", the information retrieved by the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR) and indeed narratives offered to the Oral History Archive (OHA). THE OHA cannot become a repository for terrorist story telling deliberately aimed against military and police to make false allegations and shift blame.

The Foundation would also query whether the role envisaged for PRONI in relation to the OHA is practicable and in the best interest of gathering meaningful stories from across the full range of potentially interested parties.

We have many questions that the Draft Bill has prompted. Who is responsible for determining the trustworthiness of the sources and the truthfulness of the accounts? Will corroboration be required and what safeguards will be in place to prevent a concerted and organised propaganda campaign? If anti-state/anti-police activists decide to flood the Archive with similar but false accounts of incidents, who will determine the truthfulness of such accounts and what steps will be taken to address such a real possibility? On the flip side, what measures can or will be taken to enable former police officers to tell their truthful account about operations, for example involving informants within terrorist groupings, when they are bound by official secrecy legislation while still being motivated by the desire to protect lives, not endanger them?

Another concern of the Foundation regarding information and how it is handled is the issue of possible leaks and the unauthorised sharing/publication of information. What safeguards will be in place? Another relates to the competency of personnel, at all levels, who will be employed to implement the provisions of the Bill. We believe that personnel involved in new institutions must possess the required skills, experience and background to perform their tasks competently. They all should all be accountable and be subject to oversight – right to the top. For example, we are concerned that the Director of the HIU appears not to have any independent oversight or scrutiny body (other than a Policing Board that cannot intervene in operations) while decisions are apparently to be unchallengeable.

In conclusion, the Foundation, having consulted widely wishes to record the fact that it (along with its stakeholders) has serious doubts about the Draft Bill's proposals and these are based on feedback including:

- LACK OF TRUST in the purpose, structures, processes, focus and motivation of the new institutions and the proposed outcomes as outlined in the draft bill.
- NOT VICTIM-CENTRED. Serious injuries and other terrorist crimes are to be ignored. The definition of victimhood is not clarified allowing perpetrators to be included. These factors have created a reluctance to engage – something already being expressed widely. There have been many police victims and police family victims but the principles of rule of law must pertain, so victims are unlikely to learn more about the deaths

of loved ones without convictions. Justice for victims should not be at the cost of injustice for the accused.

- **FALSE EXPECTATIONS.** Will victims receive truth and justice? Only selected cases will be investigated. What will “family reports” contain? Five years for HIU tasks seem unrealistic. A basic premise of the law is the fact that HIU could only identify terrorists who have been prosecuted and found guilty due to the evidence presented in courts. Information Retrieval Commission has obvious limitations in what it can and will deliver and there is also implied impunity for terrorists.
- **UNFAIR FOCUS & TREATMENT OF POLICE OFFICERS.** Will rule of law and human rights be applied and protected regarding (retired) police officers? Why the constant references to non-criminal police misconduct? Equating police (protectors of life and investigators of terrorism) with “combatants” is insulting, offensive and obscene. Concerns that reports will focus on police (and their records) not unaccountable terrorists. Levels of proof for misconduct are lower than for crime – so will this be a “witch hunt” of RUC officers?
- **OPEN TO ABUSE.** Truthfulness and corroboration issues e.g. Oral History Archive. What controls/safeguards will protect victims and innocents from deliberate lies, terrorists glorifying their exploits or concerted propaganda campaigns to vilify police and state forces.
- **LACK OF OPENNESS & ACCOUNTABILITY** e.g. HIU Director, Annual & Thematic Reports

RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Question 1: Current system for addressing the past.

Do you consider that maintaining the current system for dealing with the issues of the past through legacy inquests, PSNI and OPONI investigations is the right approach or do you think there is a need for reform?

The Foundation is of the view that the current systems have many failings and shortcomings some of which are pointed out in the consultation document. Reform is required to address these failings and problematic issues. Well resourced, properly led, evidence-based, independent investigations that are carried out fairly in accordance with the rule of law and the European Convention of Human Rights are the way forward. Any new processes should improve the current situation and must contain safeguards for those investigated. Any new institution must be subject to higher review and appeal – in other words not be above the law.

Question 2: Stormont House Agreement proposals - engagement with legacy Institutions.

Does the proposed approach help to ensure all groups of people can effectively engage with the legacy institutions?

The Foundation is of the view that many retired police officers will view the proposed arrangements as unbalanced and disproportionately singling out police conduct for investigation while ignoring terrorist activities that seriously injured people and destroyed billions of pounds worth of property. It is unlikely to encourage their engagement.

Question 3: HIU remit.

Should the HIU's remit also include deaths which took place between the signing of the Belfast Agreement on 10 April 1998 and 31 March 2004?

The Foundation has major concerns about the HIU. Its remit and modus operandi are the critical issues for us – not its scope in terms of dates.

Question 4: HIU - Director assessing previous investigations and deciding whether further investigation is needed.

Do you think that the process set out above is the right way to assess whether an investigation into a Troubles-related death has taken place or whether investigations needed?

The Foundation shares the concerns of former RUC officers about the proposals giving discretion to an apparently unaccountable/unchallengeable Director. As mentioned in the body of our submission, section 9.13 of the Draft Bill is particularly disconcerting.

Question 5: HIU - disclosure appeals mechanism.

Do you think that the proposed mechanism to appeal disclosure decisions to a judge provides adequate opportunity to challenge decisions by the UK Government to protect information?

The Foundation has major concerns about the proposals regarding national security material being visible to and handled by the HIU. More detail about how challenges will be handled in the future is required but this is a major concern for many retired RUC officers who worked in this area of policing.

Question 6: HIU - overall view.

Does the HIU provide a method to take forward investigations into outstanding Troubles-related deaths in a proportionate, victim-centred manner with an appropriate structure and safeguards?

Unfortunately the Foundation view is that the proposals do exactly the opposite in so far as police officers and their families are concerned. There is no mechanism or plans to address the thousands of “police family” victims who were grievously injured while the focus appears to be only on “Troubles related deaths” and non-criminal police misconduct. Balance, fairness, proportionality and safeguards all appear conspicuous by their absence. We are also concerned about raising false expectations regarding how much truth and justice the HIU can actually deliver.

Question 7: Independent Commission on Information Retrieval.

What actions could the ICIR take to support families who seek information about the death of their loved one?

The Foundation is of the view that any report supplied must be factual (i.e. corroborated by evidence) whether based on the police investigation of the time or including any new material appropriate for public dissemination. A system to prevent leaks is essential to earn trust, and, safeguards for any person named must be in place to ensure compliance with rule of law best practices and ECHR articles.

Question 8: Independent Commission on Information Retrieval.

Do you think the ICIR is structured correctly, with the right powers and protections, in way that would provide victims and survivors with the chance to seek and receive information about the deaths of their loved one?

The Foundation is of the view that there are numerous flaws in the present proposals for the ICIR, in particular in the way in which information will be handled and the dilution of traditional criminal justice processes.

Question 9: Oral History Archive.

Do you think that the Oral History Archive proposals provide an appropriate method for people from all backgrounds to share their experiences of the Troubles in order to create a valuable resource for future generations?

The Foundation has, for more than 15 years, been delivering an RUCGC Oral History Project and has tremendous experience and expertise about how such an Archive should be conducted and managed in keeping with international best practice. The Foundation continues to actively network with local oral history practitioners representing a wide range of diverse interests.

Our stakeholders believe that current proposals are wide open to abuse for malign propaganda purposes. Safeguards and best practices are required in order to ensure credibility and veracity. They are essential in order to prevent an organised campaign of propaganda and the “rewriting of history”?

The Foundation takes the view that former members of the RUC, or their families, would be reluctant to engage with the OHA as proposed. The fact that their contribution was to be held by a government department, as PRONI would be viewed, would raise suspicion as to its treatment by a Minister who may have views less than supportive of the role of the RUC. More fundamentally, perhaps, former officers would be reluctant to relate their stories to interviewers on the staff of PRONI, or in the pay of PRONI, who were unlikely to have a police background. In gathering interviews for the Foundation’s oral history project we went to great lengths to use former officers as interviewers to provide the confidence deemed necessary.

Rather than PRONI gathering all of the interviews and retaining the archive we would suggest it would be more appropriate for interviews, in the main, to be gathered by the various interested parties with PRONI providing guidance and advice as to ethical principles and legal issues. PRONI would provide signposting, or if technically possible, a portal to all of the interviews and provide a reduced facility gathering interviews to those wishing to contribute their story to the archive but are not part of any formal grouping.

Question 10: Oral History Archive.

What steps could be taken to ensure that people who want to share their experiences of the Troubles know about the Archive and are encouraged to record their stories?

The Foundation is of the view that many police officers have much to contribute but legal and professional restrictions relating to confidentiality and official secrets will prevent them from doing so. Interestingly, it is this group of people who suffered so much and performed so well that have the records and evidence to corroborate their reminiscences – yet the legacy proposals and experiences to date may be counter-productive in engaging them. Is it the case that former police officers should be encouraged to start naming suspects, informants and the evidence and information in their possession regarding behaviours and activities during the Troubles?

Question 11: Commissioning the academic report on themes and patterns.
Do you think that the ESRC should be engaged to commission the academic work on patterns and themes to ensure independence, impartiality and best practice in academic research?

The Foundation would like to think that “*themes and patterns*” would include reference to the sacrifices and achievements of the RUC in countering terrorism and providing a police service in the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances. Sadly we are of the view that this is unlikely to be the case given the unbalanced and unfair focus of the legacy proposals.

Question 12: Implementation and Reconciliation Group.

Do you think the IRG is appropriately structured to allow it to review the work of the legacy institutions, to commission an independent academic report and promote reconciliation?

No comments to offer without further detail.

Question 13: Stormont House Agreement proposals - overall view.

Do you think that the package of measures proposed by the Stormont House Agreement provides an appropriately balanced and planned way to move Northern Ireland forward that can command the confidence of the community?

The Foundation, as already stated, believes that the proposals which are supposed to be about dealing with Troubles-related deaths (i.e. hundreds of

murders by terrorists) are not balanced, not fair and disproportionately focussed on non-criminal police conduct. Therefore they are unlikely to command the confidence of retired RUC officers, their families, friends and wider circle – a very sizeable group in Northern Ireland society.

Question 14: Other views on the past.

Do you have any views on different ways to address the legacy of Northern Ireland's past, not outlined in this consultation paper?

Perhaps a more positive approach could be taken with the emphasis on "lessons learned". The exercise could focus on how we (Northern Ireland society in all its parts) must not repeat those mistakes that put the police in such a difficult position. It could focus on how to prevent grievances and how to counter violent extremism.

Question 15: Impact of the current system.

What are your views on the impact of the current system for addressing the past (as outlined in Part one) for different groups as described by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998?

No comments to offer.

Question 16: Impact of the Stormont House Agreement proposals.

What are your views on the impact of the Stormont House Agreement proposals (as outlined in Part two) for different groups as described by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998?

The new proposed structures are designed to deal with the legacy of the past, yet it excludes the injured from this process. They will have no option but to continue to engage with the PSNI, thereby remaining on the workload of that organisation. Whether it is PSNI-led or HIU-led, any criminal investigation must go where the evidence leads and must not be influenced by Section 75 considerations (i.e. equality provisions in the NI ACT 1998). If an investigation into allegations of criminal conduct by police produces more suspects from one particular section of the community so be it. That principle cannot however be used to justify singling out retired police officers for special and discriminatory treatment in relation to supposed "non-criminal police misconduct". The tests and burden of proof for 'guilt' should not in any way be diluted in any determination by an apparently unaccountable HIU Director. Retired police officers and those who represent them, as a matter of principle, do not believe

in amnesties for anyone, police included. This applies also to any “statutes of limitations”. Let those who committed criminal offences be prosecuted. For a number of terrorists there have been *de facto* amnesties. We oppose these and any further amnesties, whether by ‘letter of comfort’ or any other mechanism. Police officers do not wish in any way to be considered as morally equivalent to terrorist murderers. They do not need any amnesty or any statute of limitations in order to protect reputations. They simply need fair treatment under the law.

Question 17: Opportunity to promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations?

The Foundation is of the view that the present proposals are sadly lacking in equality and balance. With the appropriate resources and if fully supported in its mandate, the RUCGC Foundation has an educational and outreach role that could be put to good effect in terms of promoting mutual respect, understanding and reconciliation.

CONCLUSION.

The Foundation has many concerns about the proposed new institutions for dealing with legacy issues. In particular, as a small group (1 Chairman and 5 Trustees) legally charged with marking the sacrifices and honouring the achievements of the RUCGC, we see a great unfairness and imbalance in the proposals. By appearing to highlight (as if it is almost expecting to discover) non-criminal police misconduct and somehow equating this with those who caused deaths (most of them by deliberate cold-blooded terrorist murders) it demeans the tremendous work delivered and courageous duties performed by the vast majority of RUC officers.

The Foundation does not seek any special treatment or privilege for officers of the RUC and their families. We seek justice and truth for all victims of terrorist violence and criminality during the Troubles. As a matter of principle we do not believe in amnesties for anyone including police officers. All those who committed criminal offences should be prosecuted and all suspected persons deserve the most professional and ethical of investigations in compliance with the law and the articles of the ECHR. Let the facts and evidence lead any investigations. There is no place for bias, inaccuracy, fiction or deliberate re-writing of history. We will never accept moral equivalence between those who

upheld the law and protected society with those who sought to destroy it. The Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation will do all in its power to deliver its very important mandate; to mark the sacrifices and honour the achievements of the RUCGC. Those brave RUC men and women who sacrificed their lives while standing up to terrorism and who achieved so much despite facing a murderous campaign waged against them deserve nothing less.

RUCGC FOUNDATION

BELFAST

October 2018