

Platform for Change Campaign Newsletter No 2, May 2010

Welcome to our second Campaign Newsletter. Please forward this on to your friends to that they can join Platform for Change at [this link](#).

1. Platform for Change AGM

Platform for Change will soon be a year old and our first AGM is coming up. AGMs don't often get people jumping in the aisles, but there are two very good reasons for coming to this event, which will be on Saturday, June 19, in the Black Box in Belfast. The meeting will start at 10.00, with a presentation by the founders last year of the [Forum for an Alternative Belfast](#).

We haven't discussed planning issues in Platform for Change yet, so this will be an interesting front to open, with hopefully some of the ideas of as much interest in Derry or other towns and cities across the region. After the coffee break, the meeting will become the AGM, with reports from officers on the first year and election of a new committee.

This will be an opportunity for new members to come forward and take a more active role, as we roll out our plan for the year ahead (see below). The meeting will finish at 1.00. Please note that taking part in the formal AGM part of proceedings will require that you not just be a signatory but have also become a member of Platform for Change (as you will be able to do on the day if you haven't already).

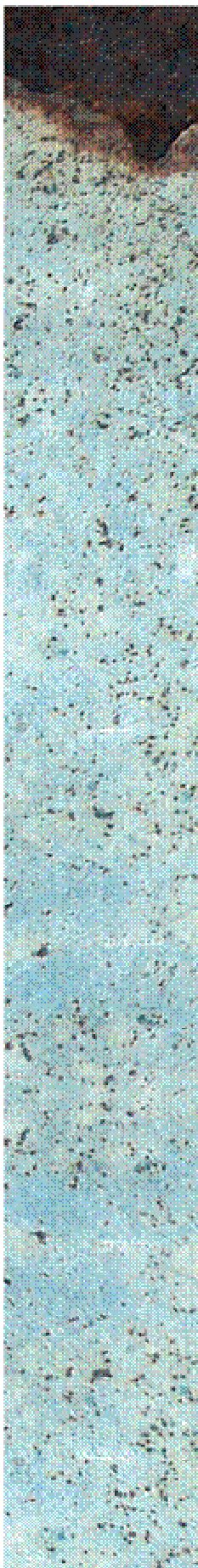
2. The Westminster Election

The Westminster election brought more change to Northern Ireland than many might have expected. While it saw a bruisingly 'traditional' sectarian encounter in Fermanagh / South Tyrone, Alasdair McDonnell of the SDLP spurned a call for a communalist pact in South Belfast, and still won; Margaret Ritchie stood on a strong 'shared future' candidacy as new SDLP leader and won well in South Down; Sylvia Hermon went out on her own as a liberal independent and romped home in North Down; and, above all, Naomi Long mobilised a strong working-class (to an extent old Northern Ireland Labour Party) Alliance vote in East Belfast to defeat the DUP leader and first minister, Peter Robinson, mired down by the Westminster expenses scandal and his local relationships with property developers.

Indeed, there was far too little made in the media of the strong women's voices the latter three will take to Westminster, given the heavy male domination of Northern Ireland politics (but then that's sadly true of the media too). After the failure of the Conservative-UUP compact, the big question now is will moderate Protestant opinion be pulled in a more liberal direction, including by a new UUP leader, or will it be drawn in behind the slogan of 'unionist unity' to 'stop Sinn Féin' at the 2011 assembly election? At best, the second scenario would lead to another dysfunctional executive, at worst to no executive at all.

3. Platform for Change Action Plan

Platform for Change has been focused since the outset on that more



medium-term milestone of the 2011 poll. Having successfully deliberated on our platform, and having successfully launched it in February—neither of them mean achievements—we are ready to turn talk into action in terms of campaigning. And before the Westminster election a well-attended meeting of our supporters in Belfast—indeed there would have been standing room only if so many had not been out on the stump for one party or another—debated and agreed an [action plan](#) to take us through to May next year.

The action plan includes a roadshow of meetings across Northern Ireland in the autumn, not just to take the Platform for Change message to a broad audience but also to garner a 'citizens' audit' of aspirations for politics in the region, which we aim to present to a political conference, including representatives of the parties at Stormont. These meetings will include sectoral events pitched at a range of constituencies, including young people and those involved with the arts.

We also intend, on the back of the substantial policy agreement represented in the platform, to publish proposals for a Programme for Government for an incoming administration in 2011. This would contain substantive policies on key 'bread-and-butter' concerns like the economy, environment and education, as well as on the crucial political issue of tackling communal division and other forms of intolerance.

4. What you can do?

All this activity, and in particular the roadshow, can only succeed with your help. There are three things in particular that you can do:

- (i) volunteer to help organise a local roadshow event, to ensure we tailor each event to local knowledge;
- (ii) help us build support for Platform for Change on the ground through forwarding the attached message to your email networks, or via Facebook or Twitter, urging your friends and contacts to become signatories; and
- (iii) signing up personally for the campaign if you have not already done so and, if you have but are not yet a member, repeating this procedure and hitting the 'donate' button this time.

Contact us:

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Have your voice:

Go to our website and join the debate by contributing to our discussion forms at [this link](#).