



CNI

Political crisis: Moderator says embrace values which promote respect

Having entered into a period of political crisis and fresh uncertainty, with an election almost certain to take place in the coming weeks, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar, has said that people need to be clear about the values upon which they want Northern Ireland and its institutions to be based.

Dr. Sellar said, "At the start of this month, in our New Year Message, I wrote with Ireland's other church leaders that 'The world is an uncertain place'. We did not know that within two short weeks Northern Ireland's political institutions would be plunged into further crisis.

"It is at times like these that we must be clear about the values upon which we want our society and institutions to be based.

“For both to function well, there must be integrity, a commitment to openness, generosity of spirit and cooperation for the common good. These values - and personal and collective demonstrations of goodwill and empathy - are also important and are at the heart of what it means to love our neighbour, as our Lord Jesus commanded.

“No institution is perfect and as imperfect people in an imperfect world, we all fail at times to embrace values that promote respect, encourage and build others up. With an election on the horizon and what are likely to be very difficult negotiations that follow, I call on all involved to show a willingness to listen carefully to each other, to honour and value one another and to work constructively in partnership. The drawing of too many ‘lines in the sand’ will only thwart progress on resolving the pressing issues that we face as a society.

“Northern Ireland’s political institutions are the fruit of difficult and committed negotiation and I give thanks for all those who have worked so hard over the past 18 years and beyond. We have come a long way, but still have far to go.

“It will be my prayer in the next number of days and weeks that our political leaders will receive

abundant grace and wisdom, so that a vision for the common good will emerge.”

Need to reframe what is meant by reconciliation, Rev. Norman Hamilton

The Reverend Norman Hamilton, a past Moderator of the Irish Presbyterian Church gave the David Stevens’ Memorial lecture last week. The lecture was especially timely given the events of recent weeks, as the Northern Ireland Government totters on the brink of collapse.

Hamilton said: “The events of the past month and especially of the last few days have taken the need for civic reconciliation to a completely new level. Events have reframed it in a very public way, for no longer can it be largely confined to community relations work, public policy as in TBUC, or dealing with the past. We now have the obvious need for reconciliation to be put at the heart of restoring government. I find it striking that the language and tone of public and political discourse in recent times has been that of aggression, disillusionment, despair, scandal, horse trading, blame, counter blame, and the

likelihood of weeks – perhaps even months – of negotiation. Maybe I have missed it, but I have heard little or nothing about the common good, about apology, about trusted relationships, consensus or generosity of spirit. That is deeply worrying – even if we accept that there is a measure of ‘rough and tumble’ in our particular brand of adversarial politics.”

Hamilton recognized that one obstacle to reconciliation is that almost no one can agree on what it means. He suggested that a helpful way round this impasse would be to clearly distinguish “civic reconciliation” from other types of reconciliation:

... when the term ‘reconciliation’ is used in politics or community relations work, it should be explicitly and consistently described as ‘civic reconciliation’. This will distinguish it from what might be called ‘person to person’ reconciliation, where the primary – or even the main – emphasis is on the restoring of fractured relationships rather than on developing a programme, a policy, or an initiative.

Hamilton then identified two main ways civic reconciliation could be worked out:

Firstly – in ‘Political’ reconciliation – where elected leaders move to set the past aside in order to address either a new common threat or a new common opportunity. ... Key to this happening, and being accepted, is that a new generation of leaders emerges, who have no direct involvement in, or direct culpability for, past horrors. ...

Secondly – in ‘Community relations’ activities, where divided communities meet each other in order to build a better future together. They discuss their differences, but manage to reach a position where they can work together for their shared common good, without denying the reality of difference and pain. They usually retain their own identity and re-tell their own story. Inter church forums are often part of this type of work, alongside a multitude of community relations and community development groups.

Political and community relations activities are of course limited. Indeed, Hamilton’s civic reconciliation could be seen as a quite minimalist approach, in that it deliberately excludes individual forms of reconciliation. But Hamilton was not saying that it is not important to recognize individuals’ needs for reconciliation, or

their different definitions of it. Rather, he framed civic reconciliation as a means to:

... reframe the language we use so that these differing understandings and content of reconciliation are clear all the time. This would open the way for better public discourse around civic reconciliation to take place, without in any way compromising the need to properly recognise and honour the legitimate needs of victims and survivors.

Hamilton also advocated a policy idea – “reconciliation screening.” By that he means that “all public policy should be checked for its likely contribution to building a reconciled community.” He said:

This is not a new idea, but it is one that has had very little ‘traction’ largely because, I suspect, there is such little enthusiasm for deep reconciliation right across our society. But that deficit can – indeed must – be remedied, and helping to make it happen is a task and a calling for many of us in this room and in wider society. Equality screening is very important. I might even suggest that reconciliation screening is even more important, so that the potential for marginalisation, disillusionment and previously

unidentified and unintended consequences is identified at an early stage and addressed.

So here, Hamilton recognises that reconciliation extends beyond individual and civic relationships to social, economic and political structures. I take this to mean that all public policies should be checked to see to what extent they continue to support – and not challenge – segregation and sectarianism.

Hamilton didn't make this particular connection, but to me it sounds like the political structures of the Northern Ireland Assembly – which only allow the votes of those who designate as “nationalist” or “unionist” to count when it must make a “key” decision – wouldn't pass a reconciliation screening!

Hamilton's “take home” message was that it was up to all sectors of civic society to make it clear to our politicians that we prefer civic reconciliation to tribal politics:

“There have been times when sections of wider society should have spoken, but did not do so – and I do include the faith sector in that. Silence creates a vacuum which can be filled with obnoxious noise rather than wisdom.”

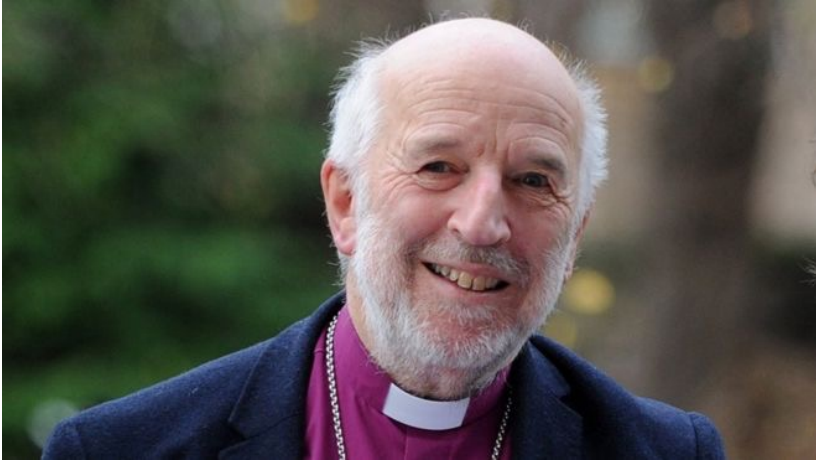
Norman Hamilton served many years at Ballysillan Presbyterian in North Belfast and worked alongside Father Gary Donegan to quell community tensions during the Holy Cross School dispute of 2001. The David Stevens Memorial Lecture honours the former leader of the Corrymeela community, whose life work was devoted to promoting reconciliation on this island.

Full text of Norman Hamilton's David Stevens lecture: [Stevens Lecture 13 Jan 2017 FNL Pub](#)

Church 'deeply distressed' by Koran offence, says Primus Chillingworth

The head of the Scottish Episcopal Church says the Church is "deeply distressed" at the offence caused by the reading of a passage from the Koran in a Glasgow cathedral.

The comments of the Church Primus, the Most Rev David Chillingworth, follow criticism that [Islamic verses were read during an Epiphany service](#).



In his [blog](#), he also condemned the abuse received by St Mary's Cathedral.

Police are investigating [offensive online messages aimed at the church](#).

The primus, who is also Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, said the church wanted to bring together people involved in interfaith relations. He said in a statement on his web blog:

“The Scottish Episcopal Church has had a long commitment to the development of interfaith work. Over many years, we have sought to develop friendship, understanding and mutual respect between our Christian faith and the other great world religions. This work, like all works of reconciliation, must be founded on truth. We

approach others with open hearts but we stand in the truth of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Those who seek to work in the area of interfaith relationships must weigh carefully whether the choices which they make are appropriate or otherwise. In today’s world, those judgements must give careful consideration to good relationships which have been carefully nurtured over many years in a local context. They must also weigh carefully the way in which national and international issues shape perceptions of what is appropriate or inappropriate

“The decisions which have led to the situation in St Mary’s Cathedral are a matter for the Provost and the Cathedral community but the Scottish Episcopal Church is deeply distressed at the widespread offence which has been caused. We also deeply regret the widespread abuse which has been received by the Cathedral community.

“In response to what has happened at the Cathedral, the Scottish Episcopal Church will bring together all those who are involved in the development of interfaith relations. Our intention will be as a Church to explore how, particularly in the area of worship, this work can be carried

forward in ways which will command respect. Our desire is that this should be a worthy expression of the reconciliation to which all Christians are called.”

New £500,000 community hall for Larne parish

The rector of St Cedma's Church, Larne, says a new £500,000 church hall development will help regenerate a 'dilapidated' section of the town. Archdeacon Stephen Forde spoke out after Mid and East Antrim Council sold the land to the rear of Inver Garden Park to the Church of Ireland Representative Body on St Cedma's behalf.

Last March, planning permission was granted for a new parish hall capable of seating up to 200 people at the site. Permission was also given to create an adjacent car park with 33 spaces, and Archdeacon Forde says that the development will create a “cloister complex” which will open the area up for the community. “This will be very much a community facility, it's not just for the people of St Cedma's Parish, he stated.



An architect's drawing of how the new St Cedma's community hall will look

“It is a major development for the town as well as the parish. The new single-storey community hall is completely disability accessible and will also feature a kitchen, toilet and storage facilities. Our old hall on the Curran Road was 90 years old and had structural problems after the bombing in the seventies, so the cost of refurbishment would have been equal to that of purchasing and building the new hall.

“Now, after 12 years of negotiations with the local council we are going to be able to proceed. “We would hope to open the new hall up to the Irish

Dancing Festival and to groups such as Uplift Drama Group, Brownies, parents' groups and others. "It is a real boost for everyone," he continued. The church has spent years fundraising for the project, and has so far secured £480,000 of the £500,000 needed to undertake the work.

"We will continue fundraising until we reach our target," Archdeacon Forde stated. "We would be hoping to get on site in mid 2017. "We hope that this development will reinvigorate and the Inver Road area, and will be part of the regeneration of that whole area." - Larne Times report

NI Attorney General John Larkin speaks on religious freedom

Northern Ireland's Attorney General John Larkin QC spoke about religious freedom at the launch of a new resource from the Evangelical Alliance and Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, the *News Letter* reports.

The *Speak Up* guide aims to "equip and inspire Christians with confidence and knowledge of the current legal freedoms we have to share our faith".



Attorney General John Larkin QC

Mr Larkin spoke alongside Sir Nigel Hamilton, retired head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, at the launch event in Belfast's Skainos Centre at 12.30pm today.

Peter Lynas of the Evangelical Alliance said:
"Speak Up encourages Christians to understand and enjoy the legal freedoms which exist across the UK to speak publicly about their faith."

Working with children and young people in Northern Ireland, make your voice heard

The Northern Ireland Department of Education has launched a public consultation on the Executive Children and Young People's Strategy 2017 - 2027 and it is seeking responses from all who work with children and young people .

This is a very important document for everyone to have their say for our children and young people in Northern Ireland influencing changes for the next ten years. The consultation period will run until 5pm on Monday 27th February. Take a read here first . . .

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/children-and-young-peoples-strategy-2017-2027>

Then see -

https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CYP_Consultation

'Extremist' Franklin Graham must not pray at Inauguration, Trump's team told

Franklin Graham should be removed from Donald Trump's inauguration line up, the US' largest Muslim civil rights group said on Thursday last.

The outspoken conservative pastor and son of evangelist Billy Graham is due to pray at the ceremony next week in Washington.

But the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) called on the president-elect to drop Franklin, who they described as a "notorious Islamophobe", in order to unite the country.

"If President-elect Trump truly seeks to unite our nation as he promised in his acceptance speech, he will limit the list of those offering prayers at the inauguration to religious leaders who work to bring us together, not to create divisions between faiths," said CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad.

"Rev Graham's ill-informed and extremist views are incompatible with the Constitution and with



Donald Trump gives a thumb's up beside evangelist Franklin Graham, who did not endorse Trump but has strongly signalled his support

American values of religious liberty and inclusion."

A statement from CAIR pointed to comments from Graham in which he called Islam a "very evil and wicked religion".

Graham also claims Islam is incompatible with American values.

"Every Muslim that comes into this country has the potential to be radicalised – and they do their

killing to honour their religion and Muhammad," he wrote on Facebook in 2015.

"True Islam cannot be practiced in this country. You can't beat your wife. You cannot murder your children if you think they've committed adultery or something like that, which they do practice in these other countries," he once told CNN.

"I don't agree with the teachings of Islam and I find it to be a very violent religion."

Graham is set to pray alongside Hispanic evangelical Samuel Rodriguez and prosperity preacher Paula White. The mainline religious traditions will be represented by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Rabbi Marvin Hier and Bishop Wayne T Jackson.

Malta's bishops tell the remarried: take Communion

Malta's bishops have said that remarried people should receive Communion if they think they are at peace with God.

In a new [document](#), Criteria for the Application of Chapter VIII of Amoris Laetitia, the bishops say that if “a separated or divorced person who is living in a new relationship manages, with an informed and enlightened conscience, to acknowledge and believe that he or she are [sic] at peace with God, he or she cannot be precluded from participating in the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist”.

St John Paul II and Benedict XVI reaffirmed the Church’s perennial teaching that divorced and remarried Catholics cannot receive Communion, except possibly when they endeavour to live “as brother and sister”.

However, the Maltese bishops say that avoiding sex with a new partner may be “impossible”.

The new document, which has been [published](#) by the Vatican newspaper, underlines divisions among the world’s bishops over the Church’s traditional teaching, in the wake of Amoris Laetitia. The bishops of Poland and Costa Rica, several North American bishops, and others, have reiterated the traditional teaching, while others have diverged from it.

In November, the diocese of San Diego said that remarried Catholics may “conclude that God is calling them to return to full participation in the life of the Church and the Eucharist.”

Earlier this week Cardinal Raymond Burke [said](#) that, if the San Diego interpretation were to become universal, “then the Church’s teaching on marriage is finished.”

The Maltese bishops claim that *Amoris Laetitia* encourages a new practice because of footnote 351. This, in reference to the integration of people in “irregular situations”, states: “In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments.”

Although Pope Francis has said he cannot remember this footnote, it has provoked much debate. Some have argued that it merely reaffirms John Paul’s teaching in *Familiaris Consortio*: “Reconciliation in the sacrament of Penance which would open the way to the Eucharist, can only be granted to those who, repenting of having broken the sign of the Covenant and of fidelity to Christ, are sincerely

ready to undertake a way of life that is no longer in contradiction to the indissolubility of marriage.

“This means, in practice, that when, for serious reasons, such as for example the children’s upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, they ‘take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples.’”

However, the Maltese bishops say that couples should instead “examine the possibility of conjugal continence”. The bishops refer to “complex situations where the choice of living ‘as brothers and sisters’ becomes humanly impossible”.

News briefs

+++ Lunchtime lectures on campanology - A new series of lunchtime lectures on the theme of campanology is underway in Christ Church cathedral, Dublin. Last week the series began with an introduction to towers and belfries by the architectural historian, Dr Michael O’Neill, and it continues next Monday at 1.10pm when Dr

Stuart Kinsella, the cathedral's research advisor, will give a brief history of the tower of Christ Church. On the two following Mondays the current ringing master in Christ Church, Nigel Pelow, will give a social history of the Christ Church belfry and Garry McGuire, who was ringing master 2006–08, will explain the craft of campanology. These lectures have been organized by Stuart Kinsella in memory of Leslie Taylor who had been ringing master in Christ Church for over four decades. Admission is free and all are welcome with the following caveats. The lectures take place in the belfry and so numbers are limited. Also, access to the belfry is via a spiral staircase of over 80 steps and so not for the faint hearted. New recruits to the bell ringing fraternity are welcome. Contact details and further information may be had from the website of the Irish Association of Change Ringers at www.bellringingireland.org

+++ Choral Music in Ireland: History & Evolution - A series of lunchtime lectures in the National Concert Hall which begin on Tuesday 17 January. 'Choral Music in Ireland: History & Evolution' is a collaboration between Chamber Choir Ireland and the National Concert Hall's Education, Community and Outreach

Programme. Among the speakers will be Dr Frank Lawrence (UCD) on medieval sacred music, Professor Raymond Gillespie (Maynooth) on 'Singing and Society, 1540–1700' and Professor Harry White (UCD) who will trace the cultural changes in Irish choral music from the imperial colony of the 19th century to the independent state of the 20th century. Admission is free but tickets must be obtained from the National Concert Hall.

+++ Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise - will hold its Annual Interdenominational Service in Christ Church cathedral, Dublin, next Friday at 8pm. The Revd Tony Murphy from Cork will preach and two choirs will be sing as Gaeilge – Gaelscoil na Cille from Ashbourne, Co. Meath, and a cohort of the Christ Church Cathedral choir.

+++ Next Bishop of London? - The Bishop of Chelmsford, Stephen Cottrell, has been named as the favourite to succeed Richard Chartres as Bishop of London. Cottrell is 3/1 favourite with bookmakers **William Hill** for the Church of England's third most senior job after Archbishop of Canterbury and York. Although the **formal appointments process** has not yet begun, his name is increasingly being spoken of in Church

circles as someone with the experience and charisma to lead the Church of England's fastest-growing, most diverse and most complex diocese.

+++ Retirement of foremost cathedral

organist - Highly respected Cathedral organist, James Lancelot, has announced his retirement as Master of the Choristers and Organist at Durham Cathedral this August. This follows a 32 year tenure leading the Cathedral Choir and the musical life of the Cathedral. James arrived in Durham in 1985 having previously been Sub-Organist at Winchester Cathedral and an Organ Scholar of King's College, Cambridge. As a child he was a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral where he sang at the state funeral of Sir Winston Churchill. James' time at Durham will be remembered with huge affection and admiration. He succeeded Richard Lloyd and continued the reputation of Durham Cathedral Choir as one of Britain's leading cathedral choirs. During James' stewardship Durham Cathedral Choir has flourished as it leads the musical ministry of the Cathedral, at whose heart are the Opus Dei – daily Evensong, together with Matins and Sung Eucharist on Sundays. The Choir has toured internationally to Brazil, the United States,

France and other parts of Europe, most recently to sing a concert at Frankfurt Cathedral in 2015.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Derry sisters link with Auschwitz

News Letter

Two sisters from Londonderry have found out fascinating new details about a long lost ring which belonged to their aunt who died at Auschwitz.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/londonderry-link-to-priceless-auschwitz-antique-artefact-1-7773316>

NI Education Authority considers ending free school transport

BBC News

Charging families for school transport is part of a package of measures being considered by the Education Authority (EA) to save money.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-38616000>

Anger as Irish bishops dodge celibacy issue

Belfast Telegraph

[http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/anger-as-irish-bishops-dodge-celibacy-issue-35366775.html?](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/anger-as-irish-bishops-dodge-celibacy-issue-35366775.html?utm_source=ipad_share&utm_medium=ipad_app&utm_campaign=clickbacks)

[utm_source=ipad_share&utm_medium=ipad_app&utm_campaign=clickbacks](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/anger-as-irish-bishops-dodge-celibacy-issue-35366775.html?utm_source=ipad_share&utm_medium=ipad_app&utm_campaign=clickbacks)

'It came as a big shock to find my mother was being locked in and tortured like I was'

The Journal

A mother and daughter are campaigning for the children of Magdalene women to receive a State apology.

<http://www.thejournal.ie/children-of-magdalene-laundry-women-3183623-Jan2017/>

Mail on Sun

Report on the Reformation, which began 500 years ago, saying that this week the Archbishops of Canterbury and York are expected to express remorse for the brutal treatment of believers during that period. Anne Widdecombe is quoted saying that modern Christians are not responsible for what happened in the Reformation. Article also notes that next month's General Synod will debate the anniversary.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4120886/Are-martyrs-500-years-ago-really-burning-issue-Welby-Archbishop-ridiculed-plans-express-remorse-burned-beliefs-Reformation.html#ixzz4VojoChKL>

Mail on Sun

Report that abusive messages have been sent to St Mary's Episcopal Church in Glasgow, which celebrated Epiphany last weekend with a reading

from the Koran. Kelvin Holdsworth, Provost of St Mary's, is quoted saying he had had no choice but to report the comments to the police. The Primus of the Episcopal Church said: 'We are deeply distressed at the widespread offence which has been caused. We also deeply regret the widespread abuse which has been received by the cathedral community.'

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4120510/CofE-clergyman-bombarded-hate-messages-allowing-passage-Koran-denying-Jesus-God-son-read-cathedral.html#ixzz4VoknO6HG>

S Times

Feature on the York suburb of Woodthorpe, where seven year old Katie Rough was murdered last week, including ref to the work of the local CofE vicar, Revd Luke Tillett, in his support for the community.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/katies-death-has-worlds-safest-city-shuddering-dh5vfsg3x>

Sun

A look back at the Punk movement which began 40 years ago, interviewing three ex punks including David O'Brien, 54, who the article notes 'swapped his bovver boots for a Bible and is now a vicar in Shrewsbury'.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/tvandshowbiz/2617307/we-hear-from-the-pioneers-of-punk-40-years-after-they-unleashed-havoc-on-polite-society/>

Huff Post

A reflection by the Archbishop of Canterbury on recognising and responding to evil, written following his visit to the former concentration camp at Auschwitz.

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/justin-welby/justin-welby-auschwitz_b_14142894.html

Mail

An interview with Gavin Drake, the widower of Jill Saward, the campaigner against sexual violence.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4119054/I-hugging-Jill-died-told-battle-peace-raw-interview-widower-Ealing-vicarage-rape-victim-Jill-Saward.html>

BBC

Reports that Alex Carlile a former Welsh Liberal Democrat leader has quit the party in the House of Lords and is no longer a Lib Dem peer. Article notes that in November Lord Carlile was appointed by the Church of England to lead an independent lessons learnt review into the processes used in the Bishop George Bell case.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-38618448>

Christian Today

Report that the Bishop of Chelmsford, Stephen Cottrell, has been named by bookmakers as the favourite to succeed Richard Chartres as Bishop of London. Bishop Stephen is 3/1 favourite with bookmakers William Hill for the C of E's third most senior job.

BBC

Report that retired vicar, Graham Gregory from York, has appeared in court charged with indecently assaulting a girl under the age of 13, in 1990 on the Isle of Man. The Revd Gregory appeared at Douglas courthouse on Thursday and was released on bail until a hearing on 2 February.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-38609722>

Ind

Reports that Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world, according to a Christian think-tank. The Center for the Study of Global Christianity says 900,000 Christians have been 'martyred' in the last decade, equating to

90,000 a year and one every six minutes. The study claims 30 per cent of Christians died in acts of terrorism and 70 per cent were killed in tribal fights in Africa.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/christians-killed-martyred-900000-last-decade-africa-boko-haram-al-shabaab-study-of-global-a7526226.html>

Comment

Christian Today: Why the Archbishop is right – The North of England needs a better deal

Northern Echo: Bridging the North-South divide.

[http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/features/15021858.Bridging the great North South divide/?ref=rss](http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/features/15021858.Bridging_the_great_North_South_divide/?ref=rss)

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