

Submitted as feedback to the Working Group on Unification Referendums on the Island of Ireland Interim Report – 6 December 2020

Dear Conor,

I hope this email finds you well.

I am writing this email in response to the Working Group's interim report. The report is comprehensive and there are no conclusions that I disagree with. I believe that the "Maximum Model" is probably the best configuration as it minimises uncertainty and avoids the pitfalls of the 2016 Brexit referendum.

During the preparation process, I think it is particularly important that an all-island Citizens' Assembly is convened to consult the public on the shape that a united Ireland should take, public policy issues, and symbolic issues. I also believe that the Oireachtas should establish a Joint Committee on Irish Unity to publish a White Paper on these issues.

There is another point that I believe deserves further attention, which is the criteria for triggering a border poll. I understand that the interim report explores different sources of information that the Secretary of State (SoS) might consider when assessing public opinion, however I think that the SoS should publically clarify what sources they utilise. This would improve accountability and reduce the potential influence of partisan politics, perceived or otherwise. For example, the public may suspect that a Conservative SoS would be less willing to call a border poll than a Labour SoS; knowing the criteria that they apply to making this decision would dispel suspicion and make the SoS more accountable to the public.

There is nothing further that I would like to add at this time. I wish you all the best in your work and I look forward to your final report.

Kind regards,

Cormac Begley