

## Next Steps Na Chéad Chéimeanna Eile

Tá réimse leathan Ranna Rialtais atá freagrach as an cheantar agus as an fhadhb seo a réiteach, ach faraor, theip orthu go dtí seo. Ba chóir go gceapfaí aire amháin san Fheidhmeannas chun seilbh a ghlacadh ar an phíosca oibre tábhachtach seo.

A range of government Departments have key responsibilities within the Holyland. We believe that the Executive should appoint a lead Minister to take responsibility for the co-ordination of those Departments in rebuilding the Holyland community.

This Minister should seek to build on the experience of the Holyland Stakeholders Forum, recently established by Reg Empey, to take forward its important work. The Minister would have the Executive authority to insist upon new approaches from government Departments, universities and places of higher education and other stakeholders.

Cllr Alex Maskey MLA is a Sinn Féin representative for South Belfast. Since being elected as a South Belfast councillor in 2001, he has consistently argued for a radical approach to the problems of the Holyland to rebuild it as a thriving community.



Community in crisis?  
Géarchéim sa phobal?  
A new vision for the Holyland  
and University areas.  
Fís Úr don Holyland.

A proposed framework for the  
regeneration of the Holyland and the  
promotion of residential communities

Cllr Alex Maskey MLA  
Sinn Féin



For the past Sinn Féin has worked with the residential community of the Holyland — now, sadly, a tiny minority — who have seen their once vibrant area deteriorate into a broken neighbourhood.



“The Holyland area was once home to a proud community which consisted of a healthy mix of families, professionals and students who lived together in relative harmony. Its untouched terraced streets and architecture was a haven for many of the families who lived and raised their children there.

Many now regard this once vibrant community as a broken neighbourhood.

The problems of the Holyland have been caused by neglect and failed policies which encouraged the wholesale transformation of homes into Houses of Multiple Occupancy.

Families were squeezed out of the area as tenants with no long term commitment to the Holyland moved in to often overcrowded accommodation.

As the numbers attending our universities increased and with the ever growing demand for private rented accommodation, Government Departments failed to provide a policy framework within which new residents could be integrated in to the long established communities around the university.

The problem was exacerbated by

- Failure to introduce and implement the HMO Subject Plan
- Failure to complete the registration of HMOs in each street
- Failure to enforce the limit of HMOs in each street
- Failure to regulate the private rented sector by refusing to introduce compulsory landlord registration

**Na daoine a chónaíonn sa Holyland, tuigean siad go maith na fadhbanna sóisialta a bhíonn ag cur isteach orthu sa cheantar ar bhonn rialta.**

Residents of the Holyland and surrounding areas are well aware of the chronic problems that continue to beset their communities.

These include:

- Displacement of the established community
- Erosion of community cohesion
- Huge rise in population density leading to extreme pressure on local infrastructure resulting in, for example, litter strewn streets and alley ways
- Increased levels of crime and public disorder
- Persistent anti social behaviour
- Incessant and intrusive building work
- Destruction of many buildings of architectural merit

“Despite the efforts of a number of community, political and statutory bodies, not least the multi agency group set up by Belfast City Council, Sinn Féin believe that efforts to date to resolve the problems have been extremely limited and uncoordinated. The failure of Government bodies and universities to fully accept their responsibility has clearly exacerbated the problems for local communities.”

**Tá géarchéim sa cheantar seo sa lá atá inniu ann. Faoi láthair, tá deis iontach againn na fadhbanna seo a réiteach agus is iad seo na moltaí atá ag Sinn Féin chun réiteach a bhaint amach.**

The Holyland community is in crisis. There is an opportunity and obligation to take radical steps to rebuild the Holyland community and regenerate the area. This initiative could provide a template for other university communities. Only with resolute action can the Holyland be reclaimed again for the benefit of long term residents and families who will form the core of a sustainable and prosperous community. Sinn Féin proposes that the following measures are taken:

- The categorization of the Holyland as an “Area At Risk” under the powers currently possessed by DSD so that urgent measures can be taken by government Departments and other key stakeholders to halt the decline of the area.
- The introduction of compulsory landlord registration
- The introduction of a requirement for all first year students not living at home to reside in university regulated accommodation
- The introduction of a requirement for universities to provide adequate purpose built accommodation