

## The Irish Language

### **The SDLP want to see a standalone Irish Language Act.**

The issue of an Irish Language Act has now become about more than the language. It goes to the very core of the historical problem in the North – parity of esteem.

Wales and Scotland have both officially recognised the importance of their own languages, in the Republic, Irish has special mention in our national Constitution. While recent years funding streams have opened up to Irish-medium education and other projects, no formal legislative recognition for Irish language speakers exists.

Previously the SDLP attempted to legislate for the Irish Language – both Dominic Bradley and Patsy McGlone worked on Private Members' Bills. We have consistently argued for rights for the Irish Language.

The SDLP has been very clear throughout the talks process, that none of the issues are insurmountable and that includes the delivery of a standalone Irish Language Act.

The current stalemate can be broken and real equality, including economic equality, as well as language equality, can be delivered if there is the political will. However, if the Assembly is to develop and an Executive set up which is to have at its core parity of esteem and a genuine will to create a reconciled society, then we need to accommodate each other. While others will seek that different aspects of their identity be accommodated, the SDLP believes the Irish language should also be accommodated.

### **The Irish Language Act should have provision for -**

- Official status for the Irish language;
- A central translation department;
- The use of Irish in courts and the Assembly;
- An Irish language commissioner;
- The use of Irish by public bodies;
- Irish language broadcasting;
- Provision of Gaeltacht areas
- Provision of place names in Irish;
- Guarantees for Irish language education.