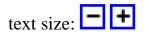
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Skip to content



Skip to content....

- <u>links</u>
- <u>contact me</u>
- about your MEP
- documents
- press releases & speeches

'Peace' Priorities anti-Unionist

23 October 2008

Jim Allister has launched a blistering attack on the roll out of the EU Peace III Programme, saying its priorities reflect a clear anti-Unionist bias.

The MEP said,

"After the poor focus of previous Peace Programmes on tackling disadvantage within Unionist communities, I highlighted my concerns to the Managing authority, the Special European Union Programmes Body. In particular, I raised my concerns over the lack of assistance given to innocent victims of the Troubles, particularly when compared with the funds lavished upon groups linked to paramilitaries".

"In January of this year, I wrote to then Finance Minister Peter Robinson, expressing my concerns at the lack of Unionist representation on the Peace Steering committee, which has responsibility for assessing project applications and approving funding. Only now in October have the authorities decided it might be an idea to include representation from the Unionist community, despite a number of deeply objectionable projects having already been recommended for funding".

"The Steering committee has approved funding amounting to £7.5 million to be directed to 'current and former republican prisoners, their families and displaced persons'. In addition, a further £3 million has

been approved for loyalist 'ex-prisoner' groups. Of course, 'ex-prisoners' is one of the priority areas for funding under the Peace III Programme, which has been approved by our very own Northern Ireland Executive."

"I am deeply concerned at the lack of equality within the allocation of funds under the Peace III Programme, and the objectionable manner in which funds are being prioritised towards combatants, rather than innocent victims. This is simply another case of airbrushing history and appeasing paramilitary thugs, facilitated by an unwillingness on the part of DUP Executive Ministers to rock the political boat."

"I intend to follow up these issues with the Managing authority, and with Commissioner Hubner in the coming days."

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Peace Funding

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Current

- <u>ALLISTER WARNS AGAINST TROJAN CANDIDATES</u>
- <u>Take TB eradication to next level</u>
- <u>'Peace' Priorities anti-Unionist</u>
- Milk crash requires action

Topics

- 2004 EU election
- <u>Agriculture and Environment</u>
- <u>Archive</u>
- Elections
- EU Constitution
- EU Parliament
- Fishing
- <u>General</u>
- <u>NI politics</u>
- Peace Funding
- <u>Terrorism</u>

Archive

- <u>October 2008</u>
- <u>September 2008</u>

- <u>August 2008</u>
- <u>July 2008</u>
- <u>June 2008</u>
- May 2008
- <u>April 2008</u>
- <u>March 2008</u>
- February 2008
- January 2008
- December 2007
- November 2007
- <u>October 2007</u>
- September 2007
- <u>August 2007</u>
- <u>July 2007</u>
- <u>June 2007</u>
- <u>May 2007</u>
- <u>April 2007</u>
- <u>March 2007</u>
- February 2007
- January 2007
- December 2006
- November 2006
- <u>October 2006</u>
- <u>September 2006</u>
- <u>August 2006</u>
- <u>July 2006</u>
- <u>June 2006</u>
- <u>May 2006</u>
- <u>April 2006</u>
- <u>March 2006</u>
- February 2006
- <u>January 2006</u>
- <u>December 2005</u>
- November 2005
- <u>October 2005</u>
- September 2005
- <u>August 2005</u>
- <u>July 2005</u>

- June 2005
- <u>May 2005</u>
- <u>April 2005</u>
- <u>March 2005</u>
- February 2005
- <u>January 2005</u>
- December 2004
- November 2004
- <u>October 2004</u>
- <u>September 2004</u>
- <u>August 2004</u>
- <u>July 2004</u>
- <u>June 2004</u>
- <u>May 2004</u>
- <u>April 2004</u>
- <u>March 2004</u>
- <u>Top</u>
- <u>Home</u>
- <u>Accessibility</u>