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**An Bille um Pleanáil le haghaidh Athrú Bunreachtúil,  
2026**

**Planning For Constitutional Change Bill 2026**

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*Meabhrán Míniúcháin*  
*Explanatory Memorandum*

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**AN BILLE UM PLEANÁIL LE hAGHAIDH ATHRÚ  
BUNREACHTÚIL, 2026  
PLANNING FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE BILL 2026**

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**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

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**Purpose of the Bill**

The purpose of the Bill is to provide for planning and preparation for the possibility of constitutional change and the reunification of the island of Ireland, in accordance with the right of self-determination of the people of the island of Ireland as recognised by the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999, and as provided for in the Multi-Party Agreement reached at Belfast on the 10th day of April 1998.

The Bill requires the Taoiseach to institutionalise preparation and publish a Green Paper as a means of consultation outlining tentative policy proposals designed to stimulate national public debate and gather feedback, serving as a preliminary step before formal government policy and legislation is established.

The Bill provides for the convening of a Citizens' Assembly to consider the multiplicity of issues relating to future constitutional change on the island of Ireland. This is an established model of deliberative democracy and consultation by the government to give consideration to substantive political and policy matters, including those which require constitutional change by way of referendum.

Promotion by the government of engagement across communities, experts and others, including a particular focus on Unionists and those of a Protestant tradition is a key requirement in relation to this Bill in order to create an official evidence base and structured national discussion before any future constitutional change process.

The Bill places a requirement on the Taoiseach to ensure regular reporting to the Oireachtas on progress.

**Provisions of the Bill**

*Section 1* – This section defines key terms used throughout the Bill so that the legislation is legally clear and identifies the existing statute law and agreements upon which the Bill relies.

*Section 2* – This section provides that the Taoiseach shall within 12 months of the commencement of the section prepare and publish a Green Paper on planning and preparing for constitutional change covering key issues, such as;

- economic and fiscal impacts,
- taxation and public finances,

- public services (health, education, policing, welfare, justice),
- governance and institutional arrangements,
- human rights protections,
- relations between Ireland and Britain,
- and broader constitutional and social implications.

The section requires that in the preparation of the Green Paper the Taoiseach shall consult with the following:

- civil society groups,
- all political traditions,
- Unionist and Protestant representatives,
- experts,
- underrepresented groups;
- and any other persons the Taoiseach considers appropriate.

*Section 3 – Citizens’ Assembly.* This section establishes a deliberative democratic process to examine Irish unity and constitutional change which will be convened and funded from the Department of the Taoiseach within 6 months of the Green Paper being published.

The Citizens’ Assembly must be broadly representative of people across the island, include perspectives from different communities and traditions, operate under standard Irish Citizens’ Assembly procedures, and produce a report and recommendations, which will be submitted to the Oireachtas, and receive a formal Government response within 6 months.

*Section 4 – Engagement with communities.* This section requires active outreach and dialogue with communities across the island, especially Unionist and Protestant communities. The Government must promote the principles from the Good Friday Agreement 1998, including:

- self-determination,
- parity of esteem,
- equality between traditions, and
- human rights protections.

*Section 5 – Annual report to the Oireachtas.* This section creates accountability and parliamentary oversight. The section requires that within 12 months of the Bill being commenced, the Taoiseach shall publish annual progress reports covering; preparation of the Green Paper, progress of the Citizens’ Assembly, community engagement activities and any other relevant developments. The reports shall be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

*Mary Lou McDonald, TD,  
Meitheamh, 2026.*



