

News story: Prime Minister's statement on the death of Martin McGuinness

First and foremost, my thoughts are with the family of Martin McGuinness at this sad time.

While I can never condone the path he took in the earlier part of his life, Martin McGuinness ultimately played a defining role in leading the Republican movement away from violence. In doing so, he made an essential and historic contribution to the extraordinary journey of Northern Ireland from conflict to peace.

While we certainly didn't always see eye-to-eye even in later years, as deputy First Minister for nearly a decade he was one of the pioneers of implementing cross community power sharing in Northern Ireland. He understood both its fragility and its precious significance and played a vital part in helping to find a way through many difficult moments.

At the heart of it all was his profound optimism for the future of Northern Ireland – and I believe we should all hold fast to that optimism today.