

Thoughts

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Personal information redacted by the RHI
Inquiry

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Inquiry

Timothy Johnston

Happy new year.

A few thoughts below. Feel free to discard, share, quote etc.

Sooner or later, the Executive is going to have to collectively get a grip on the RHI story - not least by instituting an inquiry and stemming the losses.

Sooner or later, the Executive also has to get back to big ticket policy issues - like the budget, Brexit, health reform, educational underachievement, job creation, shielding people from austerity, infrastructure investment.

The alternative is to leave all this to direct rule Tory English Ministers.

Diplomacy is not my strong suit. I can see no easy way past the stepping aside/not stepping aside dilemma.

But I do know that good diplomacy starts with putting yourself in the other person's shoes.

Two points on that.

If there was every any chance of Arlene Foster standing aside, it ended when Sinn Fein demanded it. That's a blunt reality of political life here.

Secondly, Sinn Fein is under clear pressure to demonstrate to its base that Stormont is delivering and that power sharing is a real and full partnership.

Decisions like the axing of the Liofa bursary funding - and the way it was done just before Christmas - look like a calculated spit in the face. It's hard to interpret it any other way.

...other Assembly election might clear the air. But I would say the odds are heavily stacked against that.

Good luck!