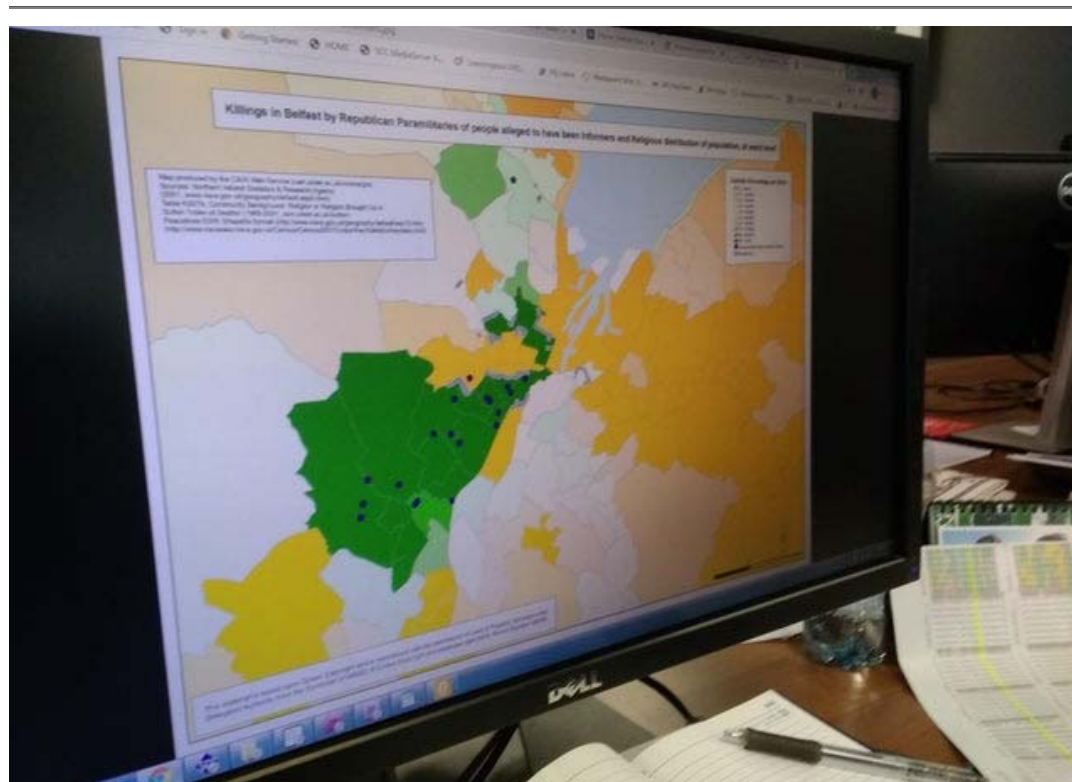# Ulster University to put vast Troubles archive CAIN into suspended animation

3-4 minutes

Research being done on the CAIN digital archive – this map shows republican so-called punishment attacks in Belfast city Copyright: Other 3rd Party

The Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) is a sprawling network of webpages detailing the specifics of conflict deaths, murals, treaties, and more.

It brings together the work of researchers at Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast, and is headquartered at the former's Magee campus.

Ulster University has previously refused to say exactly how many

staff work at CAIN, or how much it costs (though it is thought to be around £170,000 annually).

Last year Ulster University said that unless extra funding can be found CAIN will become a mere "static archive" – not a live project which is constantly updated and expanded.

The deadline for finding the cash was the end of April.

Now Ulster University has told the News Letter: "Through our consultation and engagement with stakeholders it is clear that CAIN is a valued resource.

"However, despite this high regard, and whilst the team successfully secured some external project funding, no funding was committed at a level that would enable the archive to be sustainable in its current curated form, or support its future expansion.

"As agreed at the start of the extension period, CAIN will now begin the transition to become a static archive.

"Given the operational impacts arising from Covid-19, the transition period has been extended to six months, commencing on May 1. All ongoing research projects within the archive will be fully supported to completion.

"As a static archive in the future, CAIN will be fully and freely accessible online and remain a valuable resource for those who use it; reflecting Ulster University's continued teaching and research leadership in the field of peace and conflict studies."

Edward Burke, assistant professor at the Centre for Conflict, Security and Terrorism in the University of Nottingham, had previously said: "Put simply, there is nothing that compares to the CAIN archive. It is the 'go-to' site for accessing digitalised archives and statistics on the Troubles.

"Ulster University has earned a reputation for excellence in conflict studies. Initiatives such as CAIN are vital to maintaining that reputation."

Anthony McIntyre, a former IRA convict who killed a UVF man during the Troubles, uses the CAIN website often in the course of his writing and said whilst it may not turn a financial profit, "it is certainly profitable to society".

He said it was akin to putting it into "cold storage" – but said he "takes comfort that they're not putting it to bed completely".

However, he said people will still have to correct any inaccuracies if any of the millions of facts and figures are wrong.

But ultimately he said: "It creates an opportunity for others to do the work that they expect from CAIN."