



Interface Community Partners Seminar

**Towards
a United
Community
November 2013**

Community Relations Council





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Interface Community Partners' Engagement

On 15th November 2013, the Community Relations Council invited practitioners on the ground and those with an interest in or responsibility for interfaces to attend a seminar at Belfast Castle. They were there to discuss the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy and help inform the design group tasked with developing the programme for interface barrier removal. Having come through some difficult times, and with the prospect of still more challenges ahead as we grapple with legacy issues in this post-conflict period, community practitioners have continued to maintain and build the good relations developed over many years and continue to work hard to improve the quality of life for interface communities.

The sector had asked for its voice to be heard and this event provided an important opportunity to explore the

issues to be tackled and to look towards creating a shared and better future for interface communities who have felt the brunt of the conflict.

The focus of the day was on how to create the conditions for interface communities to influence the work of transforming interface barriers, drawing on the expertise of those in attendance and using models of best practice they have developed, or hope to develop, through the T:BUC Programme.

CRC Council member, Jonny Byrne, ably chaired the seminar and the Community Relations Council wish to thank all those who participated in this important event.





Together: Building a United Community

Ministerial Statement

Interface Barrier Project

We will establish a 10 year Programme to reduce and eventually remove all interface barriers working together with the local community.

Taking down interface barriers is not something that can be achieved without engagement, consent and support with the people who live there. We must be sensitive to the views and perceptions of residents and balance this against the responsibility on us to create the conditions within which division and segregation can become resigned to the past.

Community confidence will only be built when assurances can be given that the intimidation and threat which led to the erection of barriers has been removed. We are committed to finding alternative ways of reassuring communities that safety can be achieved without separation.

Removing interface barriers and other structures of division will send out an important message that our society is continuing on its journey to peace and reconciliation, but more importantly will bring community benefits. The elimination of these physical reminders is necessary in progressing as a community and facilitating the reconciliation that has been prevented for so long through division. Through this Strategy, we will identify suitable assets within interface areas and at contested spaces that can be transformed from places of division and separation to places of sharing and mutual enjoyment.

Consideration will also be given to the transfer of unused public assets to the community where appropriate.

Within this context, we will also ensure that all government contracts for work at interface areas and areas of contested space contain a social clause insisting that the local population are able to avail of associated training and employment opportunities.

Intervention

The key objective of the programme is to have no interface barriers by 2023. This is a 10 year plan.

Key Principles

Local communities should come together to produce a phased plan of how to reduce and eventually remove the barrier.

Maximum consensus should be achieved from both sides of the wall.

Community, family and property safety is a core issue and consideration for the plan.

Interface Barrier Support Package

Interface barriers will only be reduced and removed with local agreement and support. Local communities around the interface will be encouraged to come together and decide if they want to be part of this programme. If there is agreement to become part of the programme then the area immediately surrounding the barrier will be able to avail of a range of support and help over a 10 year period, provided agreed targets are met throughout the period.

The support package is designed to encourage communities to come together and agree to take action. The package would include the following benefits;



- Community interface workers to support the putting together of the plan, ensure the implementation of key actions on the plan and to support the local community to create the conditions to reduce and remove the barrier over an agreed and specified time frame;
- Establishment and funding support for an on-going community forum to implement and monitor the plan;
- Capital improvement package which will be designed to change and improve the barrier while ensuring walkways and gates are included that can be used as part of phased opening; and
- Community capital and project grant specifically targeted at the local community in addition to the community interface workers.



Together: Building a United Community

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister Executive Summary

The Together: Building a United Community Strategy outlines a vision of **“a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation - one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.”**

The Strategy reflects the Executive’s commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. This strategy represents a major change in the way that good relations will be delivered across government. Departments will be expected to work together to ensure that outcomes are delivered on the ground. This will mean that funding is directed in the most appropriate manner through the most appropriate bodies on the basis of the themes in this strategy.

A key action of the strategy will therefore be the establishment of an independent and statutorily-based organisation to provide advice to government and to challenge all levels of government in terms of its performance in improving good relations. The Equality Commission already fulfils a similar role in terms of monitoring public authorities against the statutory duties in Section 75 of the NI Act 1998. We will therefore establish an Equality and Good Relations Commission to change their roles and responsibilities to include good relations, this will incorporate the existing role and new good relations role. This will place significant functions currently under CRC on a statutory basis.

This change has the potential for significant impact on the Community Relations Council. In line with the Management Statement for the Community Relations Council, OFMdfM will use the next planned review of the organisation to inform the detailed arrangements for future funding.

Whilst the main focus of this document is on improving community relations, these issues are not considered in isolation. To tackle issues of inequality we must improve equality of opportunity; by improving equality of opportunity for all, we make positive strides to address better community relations. Likewise, by tackling sectarianism, prejudice and hate we can contribute positively to removing and reducing the motivation for discrimination.

Underpinning Principles

The following principles will underpin the implementation of the Strategy and drive forward actions – at both a central and local Government level:

- Cohesion
- Diversity
- Fairness
- Inclusion
- Integration
- Interdependence
- Respect
- Responsibilities
- Rights
- Sharing
- Tolerance



Key Priorities

The Strategy outlines how Government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change against the following key priorities:

1. Our children and young people;
2. Our shared community;
3. Our safe community; and
4. Our cultural expression.

Shared Aims

Each of these four key priorities will be supported by the following shared aims:

Our Children and Young People

Shared Aim: *to continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations.*

This Strategy includes a range of commitments that, over the longer term, will lead to sustainable improvements in good relations here. Each of the four key priorities also has a set of tangible and practical commitments.

For our children and young people, we will:

- Create 10,000 one year placements in a new “United Youth” programme;
- Develop a Summer Camps/Summer Schools pilot programme with a focus on sport and developmental activities initially consisting of 100 summer school/camp projects to be run throughout summer 2015;
- Roll out a “buddy scheme” in publicly run nursery and primary schools;

- Develop, in partnership with the relevant agencies and Departments age-appropriate primary and post-primary anti-sectarianism resources and ensure that teachers are trained, equipped and supported to deliver an effective anti-sectarianism module;
- Ensure that our approach to youth intervention becomes a year round programme.
- Create ten Shared Educational Campuses; and
- Build on the legacy of the Olympic Games, and, work across all sport to develop significant programmes of cross-community sporting events which will focus on reconciliation through sport and be based at community level.

Our Shared Community

Shared Aim: *to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone.*

In moving from contested spaces to shared spaces, we will:

- Ensure that all government contracts for work at interface areas and areas of contested space contain a social clause that provides training and employment opportunities and that members of the local population will be able to apply for these opportunities. This social return on investment will be modelled on the Strategic Investment Board’s Social Clauses Toolkit, but will reflect the relative size and amount of the investment taking place;
- Enhance Good relations scrutiny by placing it on a statutory basis with the creation of a new “Equality and Good Relations Commission”, which will build on and incorporate the existing Equality



Commission and the policy and advisory work of the Community Relations Council;

- Introduce an enhanced good relations section for Equality Impact Assessments for all policies across government;
- Create 4 Urban Villages;
- Create 10 new Shared Neighbourhood Developments; and
- Have an overarching review of housing to bring forward recommendations on how to enhance shared neighbourhoods.

Our Safe Community

Shared Aim: *to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety*

In building a safer community, we will:

- Create a 10-year Programme to reduce, and remove by 2023, all interface barriers;
- Create an Interface Barrier Support Package;
- Work to build a culture where people feel comfortable to report when they have been the victim of intimidation or harassment;
- Ensure that the monitoring of the Community Safety Strategy forms a component of the delivery and implementation architecture of this Strategy; and
- Review the Good Relations Indicators to reflect the ongoing importance of safety as an influence on good relations outcomes.

Our Cultural Expression

Shared Aim: *to create a community which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced.*

In dealing with issues around cultural expression, we will:

- Establish an All Party Group, with an independent chair, to consider and make recommendations on matters including parades and protests; flags; symbols, emblems and related matters; and the past;
- Use the restructured District Council Good Relations Programme to examine ways in which culture can be celebrated in a shared and mutually inclusive way. Options for joint activities, shared learning and respect of diversity will be key features of district council led cultural events;
- Develop, through the Arts Council, options around a new annual shared community relations/Cultural Awareness week, to encourage cultural celebration and exploration for cultures and identities; and
- Encourage the continued use of the arts and sports as a means of improving good relations.

In order to support the achievement of the four shared aims we will put in place a range of measures to aid implementation.

In Designing Strategy Implementation, we will:

- Establish a Panel comprising all Ministers from the Executive in addition to senior representatives from a range of statutory agencies and community partners;
- Ensure that each Minister reports against the actions and targets attributed to his or her department and show how and to what extent departmental policies are achieving the objectives aligned to this strategy;
- Develop detailed action plans to include key aims, targets and milestones. Resources and responsible departments/agencies will be assigned to each target;



- Establish thematic subgroups under the auspices of the Ministerial Panel to reflect the key priorities of this Strategy; and
- Ensure that the membership of both the Ministerial Panel and associated subgroups will seek to reflect the range of sectors across our community who can contribute to building good relations here.

In Enhancing Policy Advice & Challenge to Government, we will:

- Amend the remit, roles and responsibilities of the existing Equality Commission into an Equality and Good Relations Commission; and
- Develop an augmented impact assessment that assesses the extent to which policies and other interventions contribute to meeting the objectives of this overarching Strategy.

In improving Funding Delivery, we will:

- Ensure that funding is directed in a way that secures sustainability of the infrastructure that has been established at a local level and that continues to develop the capacity of individuals and organisations working to build good relations across our society.

In Enhancing Local Council Delivery, we will:

- Use the findings and recommendations from the evaluation of the District Council Good Relations Programme to help inform an enhanced delivery model that reflects the strategic priorities of this Strategy;
- and
- Ensure that good relations considerations are mainstreamed into the revised arrangements under the Review of Public Administration.

In Monitoring & Evaluating Implementation, we will:

- Review and consult on the Good Relations indicators by the end 2013.

Headline Actions

A range of strategic headline actions are identified throughout the Strategy. These headline actions provide innovative approaches to building a united, shared and reconciled community and comprehensively demonstrate the Executive's commitment to realising change across the key priorities within this strategy.

We are committed to:

- Establishing ten new shared education campuses;
- Getting 10,000 young people, not in education, employment or training, a place on the new United Youth volunteering programme;
- Establishing ten new shared housing schemes;
- Developing four urban village schemes;
- Developing a significant programme of cross-community sporting events;
- Removing interface barriers by 2023; and
- Pilot 100 shared summer schools by 2015.

These are just some of the strategic actions we have committed to in the Strategy. This is an ambitious programme, and one that sets out our vision for a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation.



Feedback from Workshops/Roundtable Discussions



Two workshops during the day served as an opportunity for organisations and individuals to discuss issues to be addressed in relation to the T:BUC commitment to removing interface barriers by 2023 and to explore practical models, approaches and solutions that could be used in the transformation of interface areas.

The following is a summary of the feedback captured at the tables.

1. Outstanding issues to be addressed in relation to the T:BUC commitment to removing interface barriers by 2023

- It is important that sustainable relationships, with a focus on good relations, are established prior to any interface removal in order to tackle sectarianism. This should also include 'invisible' interface areas in both town and country.



- Removal of psychological barriers.
- Period of permanent peace (absence of violence) is required which needs to be region wide.
- Need for more inter- and intra-community work encourage buy-in, commitment and engagement from all.
- Issues around flags, walls, parades, etc, mask the real problems which include poverty, youth unemployment and lack of educational attainment.
- Current funding strategy is inadequate.
- Government needs to implement wider social and economic regeneration and investment strategies.
- Build on the good practice that exists rather than reinventing the wheel or changing the focus of funded initiatives.
- Legacy issues need to be dealt with – how they impact on relationship building and how they reflect a changing society.
- The needs of children and young people should be looked at in the wider context of family, society, education and job opportunities.
- Community confidence, capacity and safety need to be addressed prior to interface removal.
- Managing fear and change – who provides the leadership?
- A tailored, flexible, ongoing aftercare package, including commitment from Government to deliver on promises, should be core to addressing issues and in place prior to any physical adjustment.
- Promote and encourage shared education.





- Segregation v integration: education segregated; political landscape segregated. The BIG issues haven't been resolved and are still the root of the conflict.
- Change/regeneration does not always result in positive outcomes for residents – eg Gasworks.
- Lack of joined up approach from statutory agencies.
- 10 year programme – will the funding match? Where is the detail?
- Negativity from media which only reports the bad news stories at interfaces.

2. Practical models, approaches and solutions to support T:BUC programme

- Review of funding mechanisms to allow for sustainability and ensure connectivity and knowledge base.

- Need for an impartial assessment/review of work undertaken by groups with a view to ensuring that local residents most affected by barriers are receiving resources.
- Work of smaller, but more community based, groups needs to be acknowledged and supported.
- Consultation with communities to promote and encourage development of relationships particularly with regard to young people.
- Development of confidence and trust; address issues of fear.
- Statutory bodies need to demonstrate continuous support (not just 9-5) for communities via infrastructure, and the social economy.
- Promotion of community and peace advocates within departments.



- Need for government to ensure a bottom-up and properly joined-up approach to deliver an outcome focused, integrated package of social, economic and physical renewal of our community.
- Clear lines of communication from department to local community which allow for rapid decision making and action.
- Develop 'shared' programmes across communities.
- Measuring and sharing of good practice and build on these frameworks – establish structure and accountability/good governance around these, for example IFI/Peace Walls programme

- which encourages both statutory and community commitment and responsibility.
- Encourage/foster positive media coverage of good practice.
- Tourism and the walls – part of heritage?
- Introduce pilot projects to prepare the way.
- Derry/Londonderry approach – multi- agency, joined-up, community engagement, local initiative – investment and promotion of 'normality'.
- Creativity and innovation to be displayed in terms of barrier removal – including language.
- Re-establishment of a Civic Forum to feed into government and prioritise work.





Fergus Devitt, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister - Closing Remarks



What we have achieved today is part of an ongoing process of engagement. The work and discussions we have heard will allow us to refine the proposals that will be presented to Ministers for final decisions. Until Ministers make those decisions it is difficult to give much detail on what will happen first. Ministers are however very committed to moving forward with the commitment set out in Together: Building a United Community.

They are keen that we use structures, partnerships and organisations that have proven methods of working as the building blocks for commitment. This is particularly true of developing community support.

The Ministerial statement announcing this measure made it clear that there would be a financial package associated with this commitment. At this stage I cannot say what this will be.

It is clear that to make the sort of progress Ministers have committed to will require determined work and support.

We will continue to update the Interface Community Partners Group on progress through the Community Relations Council and we look forward to further constructive commitment.





Community Relations Council



Community Relations Council
6 Murray Street
Belfast
BT1 6DN
Tel: 028 9022 7500
www.nicrc.org.uk