



Report on the Joint Conference of Interface Working Group (IWG) and Interface Community Partners (ICP) on city interfaces.



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Address by the Justice Minister David Ford to the joint meeting of the Interface Working Group and the Interface Community Partners



Justice Minister David Ford took the opportunity to thank all those gathered at the meeting for the hard work that has been done in addressing issues around interfaces.

He thanked Duncan Morrow, in his last week as CEO of the Community Relations Council (CRC), on the work that he and CRC have done on interface issues.

Mr Ford highlighted the Department of Justice's commitment to building a strong and shared community, and how this is reflected in the draft Programme for Government (PfG) where the Department are committed to seeking local agreement to reduce the number of peace walls.

Mr Ford went on to say that at Assembly Questions in Stormont the previous day he highlighted that delivery of this commitment required engagement from different parts of government and other statutory bodies. He welcomed the Belfast City Council initiative on interface barriers.

Mr Ford said one of the key elements in the community safety strategy will be the creation of an inter agency group to address issues around interfaces. This would aim to target resources effectively and support communities to envisage change.

Mr Ford said he was determined that the Department of Justice will support local community groups on the ground and work with CRC to move this process forward and to be proactive. It is vital for the future of the city that we are seen to be making progress.

Mr Ford finished by saying that we should all work to build on recent progress and bring a fundamental change to our society.

Opening Comments

Tony Kennedy OBE, Chair of ICP group

This joint Interface Working Group (IWG) and Interface Community Partners (ICP) Conference has been organised to bring together statutory and voluntary/community sector agencies with responsibility for or an interest in interface communities and interface barriers.

The CRC has been working for the past five years in developing a strategic approach to the regeneration of interface areas and advocating for an interdepartmental and interagency strategy that can respond to calls for the transformation of interface barriers. The work in communities by practitioners on the ground is phenomenal and has been achieved in the absence of a working community relations policy.

CRC acknowledges the important steps taken by both the Department of Justice and Belfast City Council in supporting and advancing this work and we will be hearing from them in more detail later this morning.

We urge the Executive to ensure that the transformation of interface barriers is central to the revised Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) Strategy and action plan, to bring this work forward as soon as possible, with appropriate resources and targets to enable this important work to move to the next level in order to address the inequalities experienced by communities living in interface areas, (we must all acknowledge that Interface barriers are and create inequality). We will also hear from the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) later this morning on progress in relation to this.

We hope this conference marks the beginning of a joined up interface strategy and hope you will all participate fully and frankly to bring forward suggestions and calls for the regeneration of interface areas.



Introduction to the Interface Removal Guidance paper

Dympna McGlade,
Director of Policy and Development

Community Relations Policy?



Harbison review

In early 2000 Dr Jeremy Harbison carried out a review of community relations policies. It considered the impacts, achievements and effectiveness these policies, including the Community Relations Council, the District Council Community Relations Programme, the work of the Central Community Relations Unit and initiatives in education and other areas.

Concluding in 2002, the review suggested that the policy aims and the mechanisms used to achieve them needed to change. It recommended that a new policy be developed to reflect the political, economic and social environment envisaged in the Belfast Agreement. Harbison suggested that the new policy should be clear about what it was trying to achieve, how it would go about it, and how it would measure progress. He also stated that the new policy must be long-term and strategic, based on a clear vision, values, principles and objectives. Above all, it must tackle the fundamental divisions in our society directly. However, the Harbison review was never officially published.

A Shared Future Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland

In January 2003 the *A Shared Future* (ASF) consultation was launched and received over 500 written responses which included over 10,000 people and groups. This led to the publication of the *ASF Policy and Strategic Framework* in March 2005. This was accompanied by the ASF Triennial Action Plan, which aimed to translate the ASF vision into reality, detailing practical actions that Government Departments and agencies committed themselves to in order to make this happen. The *Good Relations Panel* was established and chaired by the Head of the Civil Service, to oversee the ASF agenda across Government. ASF and its delivery structures also planned to dovetail with the Racial Equality Strategy. However, when devolved Government was restored mid

2007 it decided to 'refresh' ASF and enter into a further period of consultation which technically put ASF into mothballs.

Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration

The Programme for CSI was launched for public consultation in July 2010 by First Minister Peter Robinson and deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. The consultation closed in November 2010 with 288 written responses. Representatives from each of the political parties were appointed in mid 2011 to produce a CSI strategy that is acceptable to all the main parties in the Assembly. The most recent CSI update is in an answer to a written Assembly question on 2 December 2011 by the First Minister and deputy First Minister:

...Our priority now is to achieve political consensus on the range of issues that will enable a final document and an associated high-level action plan to be published.....in early 2012.

Community relations policy has been under review since 2000, the turn of the century, given that we are in a peace process, may appear to be like the story of the 'Emperor's new clothes', in that we have a peace process with no community relations policy.

Draft Programme for Government

The Draft PfG 2011-15 stated goal is to achieve a shared and better future for all. The PFG adopts equality and sustainability as underlying principles of work and commits itself to the ethics of inclusion and good relations. The draft PfG commits to actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of 'peace walls' and to finalising CSI to build a united community and improve community relations

CRC hopes that a greater emphasis on community relations milestones and outputs will flow from many of the document's key commitments. Committing the Programme to measurable community relations outcomes would help embed community relations in the work of government and make a large contribution to the achievement of the Programme's stated goal.

Interface Working Group (IWG) and Interface Community Partners (ICP)

In November 2007 CRC raised its concerns with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) about the decision to build an interface fence in the grounds of Hazelwood Integrated Primary School, which came about as a result of ongoing tension and incidents leading to safety concerns.

Following these discussions, CRC decided to set in motion a process to assist the development of an overall strategy for potential new peace walls and existing peace walls. CRC established the IWG.

This process was developed in the context of major policy change including the devolution of Policing and Justice and the impending consultation process on CSI.

An important aspect of this development was the recognition of the important role of those working in interface areas and the need for a mechanism which could feed issues and opportunities to statutory bodies. After a period of consultation, the ICP group was established to support the IWG's strategic approach to benefit communities through the social, physical and economic regeneration of interface areas.

The IWG produced the *Guidance Paper on Proposed Process for Barrier Removal* ("the Guidance paper") which was endorsed by the Interface Working Group and informed by practice on the ground in relation to the transformation of interface barriers.

The Guidance Paper sets out a series of steps or processes to enable barriers in interface areas to be removed when the conditions to do so are right in the relevant community. It sets out the phases and steps of the process that should be reached where this is initiated by either a community, community based organisation or a Government Department. In doing so it attempts to resolve some of the bureaucratic and community engagement blocks that have occurred in previous attempts to remove barriers in some areas. This process is being tested by the statutory sector through the Barrier Removal Sub Group which is presently focusing on barrier transformation in several areas in Belfast.

The Guidance Paper proposes that all public agencies adopt the following the proposed aims, strategic approach and guiding principles (adapted from the IWG's Terms of Reference) to enable them to provide a joined up process to work within when entering into collaborative arrangements to address the transformation of interface walls and barriers.

We are particularly pleased that the Guidance Paper has been integrated into the Department of Justice Community Safety Strategy and the Belfast City Council's Interface Strategy. This is a perfect example of a bottom up approach and we look forward to hearing about the implementation of both strategies in today's presentations. We also look forward to seeing the Guidance Paper reflected in CSI when it is finally published.



CSI and interfaces

Rab McCallum

North Belfast Interface Network (NBIN)

This year, 2011, many of our interface barriers, from the first barrier erected in Cupar Street in 1969, will have been standing for over 42 years. This is half again as long as the 28 years that the Berlin Wall stood.

Whilst segregation or divided living has not been the primary cause of the conflict, it certainly has helped to broaden and sustain it. Interfaces provide an environment in which suspicion and hostility are nurtured and renewed. As long as they remain they will continue to be a ready-made source of inter-communal instability and potential violence.



The failure of government departments, statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector, for that matter, 17 years after the 1994 ceasefires to make any real impact on the removal of interface walls or barriers is not indicative of a failed process. Rather, it reflects the lack of any cohesive process at all.

Fortunately through the work of IWG and ICP we have started to develop that process. The IWG and ICP represent a significant step forward in this area of work, including:

- This high level inter-agency group has been working on the development of a strategic approach to the transformation of interface areas and physical barriers.
- The ICP group, which is integral to the working of the IWG, plays a significant role in the development of this work on a Belfast wide basis and includes representatives from across the political and religious spectrum.
- In short, a policy focus and interest, admittedly relatively underdeveloped, is emerging in relation to interfaces, shared space and demographic change.

But let's be clear about where we currently are. For most of us working in interface communities there is little evidence of readiness from within both Unionist and Nationalist communities to embrace the concept of removing interface walls and barriers; at least – not yet.

Apart from the Millward Brown Ulster Research carried out at the behest of Trina Vargo and the US-Ireland Alliance, there is little evidence to show that there is any significant support within those communities most affected by peace-walls, for their removal.

Even though 81% of the 1,037 people polled in this research indicated that they would like to see the peacewalls come down, 60% of those added the important caveat, only when the time was right.

So how do we begin to determine when the time is right?



What will that time look like?

Whose responsibility is it to bring about the right conditions that will make the time right?

Barriers remind us that although we have relative stability, the peace process has a long way to go. Barriers and interface walls serve to separate communities in which

fear remains and where many residents perceive that their removal at this time would put them at

Whilst the Vargo research stated that the majority of respondents felt that the time was not yet right for the removal of peacewalls, the IWG and ICP has sought to determine what the issues are for interface residents that sustain this notion, and to seek ways to overcome these issues in an incremental process of problem solving and confidence building that we hope may eventually lead to the removal of all interface walls and barriers.

There has been success to date but the process has been slow, time consuming and often frustrating. Yet we are making progress, however much remains to be done.

A lot of money, time and resources have been pumped into this work and high level expertise and models of best practice have been developed. This huge investment and expertise must not be squandered.

What has been achieved has taken place in the absence of an Executive led plan in the form of **ASF** or **CSI**. The name is of little importance but the absence of any policy is of huge importance.

The CSI Consultation Document did not adequately acknowledge the work taking place on the ground to address interface division and its accompanying levels of poverty and dereliction. The work undertaken in those communities that have had most to fear from each other over the course of the conflict, must be supported as we move from conflict intervention to conflict transformation and ultimately communal reconciliation.

This must be the focus of the forthcoming CSI Policy.

- CSI must focus on the Executive's responsibility to support alternatives to physical barriers whilst ensuring the safety of those living in interface areas is paramount.
- This must be through a process of engagement with all key players within the community, statutory and private sector.
- The ICP call on OFMDFM to publish the CSI Programme along with its accompanying action plan forthwith to assist with implementation of plans being developed on the ground and to secure the support of the expertise developed at local level before it disappears with all the rapidly disappearing funding packages.

In Conclusion...

What we need is the development of an inter-departmental interface strategy which builds on the desires and knowledge of local communities on development and delivery of plans for regeneration and investment in interface areas.

The regeneration of interface areas offers huge opportunities for social inclusion and cohesion, both at inter and intra community level.

This is not a single department's responsibility. There is a need for a cross-departmental pot of funding to enable transformation as interface barriers impact on health, education, poverty, deprivation, investment, enterprise, housing, community safety and good relations.

CSI, when finally concluded, must ensure that this aim is central. That it has a clear timeframe laid out for addressing the removal of barriers in partnership with local communities, and that such actions are resourced, if not, it will be difficult to see how this could be considered a robust strategy for addressing sectarianism and division.

We welcome the inclusion of the action to reduce the number of interfaces in the PfG. But we note with dismay that according to the PfG; CSI will not now be with us in December but rather vaguely it has been put into the timeframe of the next financial year, which means anytime up until March 2013.

The Community Partners call upon OFMDFM to produce CSI, its accompanying action plan and a robust resource and delivery structure as soon as possible, to enable us to continue this work of the regeneration of interface areas and the eventual removal of interface barriers.

I look forward now to hearing from Linsey Farrell from OFMDFM about the progress being made within the Executive on finalising the CSI Programme.

Linsey Farrell

OFMdFM

OFMdFM is dedicated to building a better future.

The Strategic Context to CSI



- Cross-Party Working Group on CSI – Work Plan has agreed themes and Interfaces is one of these themes.
- Meeting weekly to agree strategic direction
- Finalised strategy & high level action plan – early 2012

The Strategic Context of PfG

“Commitment to actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of peace walls”

Priorities:

- Making all spaces shared spaces
- Tackling conditions that allow segregation
- Community engagement
- Building on good practice
- Sharing learning
- Rural segregation – patterns of avoidance

Contested Spaces Programme

- Good practice
- Early years interventions
- Ministers are announcing 2nd round of applications and in particular looking for applications centred on rural work, youth work and shared space.

The consultation on CSI clearly showed the commitment right across society to building a more united community and breaking down the division that continues to exist in many areas.

There was strong support in the consultation for the priority themes of the document and tackling segregation and the issues that perpetuate division were just two of those priorities.

This means addressing division in urban areas where physical structures can separate people as well as tackling the issues in rural communities where division has built up over years through attitudes and behaviours. In these areas, there may not be physical signs of separation but segregation manifests itself through patterns of avoidance.

The safety of individuals is of utmost importance and it is vital that people feel secure. This must underpin any work to address segregation in our society. Today has also shown that segregation and division cannot be addressed in isolation – but must be considered in view of regeneration and building relationships between people as well as in light of economic imperatives.

The attendance at this event is clear evidence of the dedication there is to building a better future and the wealth of experience and expertise in this room across all sectors needs to be supported and built on as we move forward. The consultation on CSI highlighted the need for individuals, groups and communities to be empowered and supported to ensure that none of the good practice that has been built up over time is lost.

The consultation also emphasised that people right across our society want an ambitious and positive vision for the future – one in which we can all share and contribute to making a reality. Today proves that we do have a vision of a better place for all of us to live, work and socialise in – where people can live out their lives side by side – not separated by physical divides or invisible divisions in the mind.

In light of the importance of creating and achieving this vision, a cross-party working group was set up in September to bring forward a finalised CSI strategy and it continues to meet on a weekly basis with a view to producing a final strategy and high level action plan early in 2012. The group is working to agree on the strategic direction against the themes that emerged through the consultation.

Today's event has highlighted examples of how a co-ordinated, joined-up approach can lead to positive outcomes. CSI aims to create a more strategic approach to tackling the challenging issues that have led to the division and segregation in our society.

In terms of the existing Contested Spaces Programme – jointly funded by OFMDFM and Atlantic Philanthropies, Ministers will shortly be announcing a second call for applications. This opportunity will particularly welcome applications from those projects based in rural areas.

Feedback from Delegates



OBSERVATIONS:

It is positive to see interfaces as commitment in the PfG. However Shared Space was shelved and the CSI process has been moving at a snail's pace. Just to inform people that 'Ministers are meeting' is not a delivery plan on multi-dimensional development on interface communities.

There needs to be a political will to deliver

Health, Education, Housing, Safety, Poverty; if these issues remain undealt with, will lead to and maintain division.

We should not use labels such as 'recreational rioting' – it is sectarianism and it is the reason there are interfaces. Normality strategies ignore sectarianism.

The community states that the fall down is with Statutory Groups and OFMdFM.

There is a lack of working together in terms of institutional cooperation, this needs to happen.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

There is a need to ascertain each of our organisations' field and the current issues.

There needs to be recognition of the tremendous amount of work that has been completed thus far.

Physical intervention in the removal of barriers runs parallel with relationship building programmes running within interfaces.

It is necessary to build up clear research in order to improve relationships before the issue of physical barriers are looked at. Consultation and research should be completed with excluded groups such as young people who do not have a voice. Belfast City Council is funding some projects throughout Belfast and if they direct consultation and research at young people who are engaging directly with community groups and build on this research, this can enhance a view of where the future should go regarding interfaces. Both a 'top down' and 'bottom up' process needs to meet in the middle.

Belfast City Council and the Assembly need to provide clear and united party political support for development and maintenance of shared spaces and co-operative working across interfaces.

The new action plan by OFMdFM, due in early 2012, needs to incorporate financial resources. The community relations sector is facing severe losses of key financial support, such as Atlantic Philanthropies, IFI and Peace Funding.

CSI must include the theme of interfaces and reflect this in the high-level action plan

There needs to be more published on the work of the cross departmental group taking forward CSI



Belfast City Council and Interfaces

Jean Brown

Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group (SLIG)



Over the past five years both the IWG and the ICP have very much welcomed the support of Belfast City Council.

We also welcome the announcement of the Council regarding their plans to develop a citywide interface strategy which was interestingly agreed unanimously by Belfast City Council during a week of protests and negative commentary.

The IWG and CRC have themselves worked to produce a Barriers Guidance Policy which attempts to look at the process of removing interface barriers when the time is right to do so working in co-operation with local communities and relevant Government Departments. We would hope that these steps are taken into consideration and embedded within the final Belfast City Council Interface Strategy and we also hope that the example and leadership shown by Belfast City Council will be replicated across other Councils and Government Departments.

It is unfortunate that the reality in many interface communities is that generally people are tired. Progress has undoubtedly been made but it has been a long, hard slog to try and get our issues taken seriously and apathy and lack of vision for

the future is rife. There is a real need now to offer genuine hope and encouragement to interface communities and to genuinely demonstrate to those who have worked tirelessly for years and who know and understand the realities of what life is like on an interface that they can raise their expectations and begin to genuinely imagine what life could be like for future generations. The Council strategy must have this ethos at its core.

Public policy

- To date public policy has been framed around the containment of communities as a tool of conflict management which has inevitably lead to a pattern of separation and duplication. It should be recognised that there is a need now to examine how public policy contributes to the stability of the peace process and bringing communities together. We are glad to see that the Council is now doing this through its Interface Strategy.

Sharing resources

- Belfast City Council has a number of resources which already benefit interface areas in some ways but which could be much more effective if they were better targeted and joined up. We welcome the fact that steps are being taken to address this. This type of joined up approach should ensure a more targeted and better resourced approach to work in the regeneration of interface areas across Belfast.
- There is however continued investment in duplicating core services which could be more efficiently provided through sharing. A key example of this is our leisure and community services which are provided on a parallel basis – one for you and one for them.
- We genuinely hope that Belfast City Council's shared space agenda is more than an aspiration on paper but is seen in reality to be a determined, demonstrated effort to ensure that all its public resources are of good quality, safe, welcoming and accessible to everyone no matter what religious belief, political opinion or racial group we belong to.
- Equal resources can continue to be provided on a segregated basis but we all know that this is financially and socially unsustainable and completely defeats the purpose of a peace process and building a new shared and better future.
- Real sharing is an important economic issue but it should not be considered as solely an economic issue. Sharing must be planned in the context of a region emerging from conflict and the proper allocation of time, resources and consideration must be given to communities trying to address fractured, broken relationships and real hurts by addressing the legacy of the past and building towards a shared and reconciled society.
- Investment in plans for sharing must have an inbuilt good relations approach to address fractured, broken relationships and ongoing community tensions.

Partnership with communities

- Belfast City Council has been working with interface communities over many years and is fully aware of the issues and potential solutions and knows that working in partnership is the key. It must now redouble its efforts and link with the PfG and CSI commitments to addressing interface issues. We would like to see the Council play a leading role in bringing together all of the key players necessary to transform interfaces and ensure that local communities are one of these key partners playing their part on an equal footing with all the others not sidelined off into a minor part.
- Under the Review of Public Administration (RPA) plans, Councils will be given the power to develop community plans. The ICP are keen to engage with Belfast City Council on this as it is an ideal opportunity to develop an effective tool to engage with interface areas and mainstream plans for their regeneration into real decisions at local level.
- It is imperative that Belfast City Council's interface strategy seeks to build on the good practice which has already been developed on the ground. Although good progress has been made the problems on interfaces haven't all gone away and many genuine real concerns still remain. In developing their strategy the Council has an ideal opportunity to engage with local communities in a participatory planning based approach to explore how

concerns can be addressed, how transformation can be achieved, how regeneration can be supported and additional socio- economic factors can also be addressed. The aim should be about creating and delivering a new vision for the community in co-operation with the community.

- We would also hope that this work will become a direct responsibility of elected members, that leadership is demonstrated and certainly we in the Interface Community Partners group would welcome the opportunity to discuss our work and suggestions with elected representatives both within the Council and the Assembly.
- It is vital to ensure that the final interface strategy produced enables senior officers within Council to work in partnership with other statutory agencies and especially with the voluntary and community sector and local residents.
- We would encourage the publication of Belfast City Council's draft strategy as soon as possible.

We now look forward to hearing from David Robinson about Belfast City Council's plans for a Belfast wide interface strategy



David Robinson

Senior Good Relations Officer, Belfast City Council

Background

There have been two Notices of Motion put down at Council on the broad issue of interface barriers and regeneration over the last number of years:

1. Cllr Tom Ekin, September 2011 – The current strategy and plan now developed on interfaces and was agreed on Council meeting on 1 December 2011 and unanimously agreed to by the Strategic Resources and Policy Committee, the key Council committee. Already there is a lot of buy in to this at senior officer and elected member level.
2. Cllr Alban Maginness, March 2008

2008 – 2011: Phase I of Peace III –

Transforming Contested Space theme - £1.5M

2011 – 2013 Phase II of Peace III – key projects: Tension Monitoring, Youth Engagement Project, Interfaces, Bonfires, Migrant Project, within the plans of the Belfast Community Safety Partnership and the Good Relations Partnership.

- April 2011 – Internal Council Interface Officers group led by Good Relations and Community Safety was set up.
- One Council approach to interface areas – service provision and funding. There is a cost to servicing a city that is divided.
- Ongoing participation by the Council within the IWG convened by CRC. Within this we acknowledge the work that CRC has done in keeping this process alive, inclusive of IWG barrier removal template which is being utilised as the basis for moving forward in terms of the safety and security of people. The Barriers Removal Guidance Paper has been included as the basis for progress within the Council's agreed strategy.
- Development of Phase II of the Peace Plan
- DOJ interest and involvement
- Analysis of current Council delivery and provision in interface areas. The issue of interfaces has risen to top of the agenda.



- Linking interface areas with deprivation, regeneration, tourism, investment, quality of life, health and well-being and in doing so, target towards doing something positive in these areas as opposed to just managing situations. In the last ten years, Interface areas have remained the top 10% of deprived areas in Northern Ireland and there has been no real improvement to the quality of life of people living in Interface areas.

Belfast City Council and Interfaces:

The Council has no direct responsibility for the erection or removal of physical barriers, but it has identified 3 key roles:

1. **Civic Leadership role** – setting a vision of a city with improved cohesion, less segregation and fewer physical barriers
2. **Influencing role** – to ensure that all plans, projects and developments contribute to the vision
3. **Practical role** – using the resources, assets, facilities and funding of the Council to complement and support initiatives aimed at promoting a more cohesive city, with fewer physical barriers (funding criteria, planning, regeneration, mobility etc). A big issue in regards to opening the gate at the Newington interface was resources. It is our aim to take this away from the argument within the next two years so that we can get results for local people who want to progress the issue of barriers.

Proposals:

- Promoting cohesion via the corporate planning process under the corporate themes of the Council, within each Council Department
- All Council Departments develop actions which support the vision of greater cohesion and less segregation
- Identify neighbourhoods seeking to transform/reduce/remove barriers in partnership with others such as the DOJ, and in line with the principles of the Barrier Removal Template of the IWG
- Influence programmes such as the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) to invest in areas where there is a will to move towards barrier removal
- Adjust community funding streams to make explicit support for less segregation and improved cohesion
- Profile each of the defined interface (Towards Sustainable Security) areas and identify initiatives to help reduce segregation
- A dedicated internal interface group will act as a key point of contact in all Council work around interface areas.

- Immediate projects will be identified in partnership with others and a programme resourced through Peace III Council funding
- Influence the goal of reducing segregation within major transport, regeneration, infrastructural and housing developments within the city

What is driving this process?

- Supporting communities seeking barrier removal through immediate projects – linking these to regeneration and improving quality of life for residents. Our aim is not to go barging in to take down walls but rather to support communities living in the interface areas who do seek to transform physical barriers.
- Setting a positive vision for communities at interface areas and the city as a whole
- Directing the work of the Council towards this vision – all departments within Council
- Moving from conflict management to city transformation – long term process
- To help develop communities and support regeneration
- To facilitate connectivity and mobility of citizens and support people to access local services – at present there are a number of services remaining underutilised.
- To support relationship building and move beyond isolation. Rab McCallum mentioned in his presentation earlier the need for reconciliation and this is something that we recognise is required so that we can connect the city and the people living in the city also.

Feedback from Delegates



OBSERVATIONS

In the absence of a formal strategy there seems to be a desire to be a 'from the ground upwards' strategy pushed by funding.

Impressed with Belfast City Council introducing an ethos of equality, cohesion and community as this should be adopted at Northern Ireland Assembly level. Belfast City Council being the biggest: what are the insurances that policy will inform practice and be resourced and transported as a model of good practice across Northern Ireland.

There has been a positive approach, such as linking sources of funding and adopting a positive vision, and this should be publicised more widely.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is the strong need for a committed strategy that looks to facilitate the actions necessary to allow for the removal of interface barriers at the heart of the Programme for Government. This would be achieved through a committed alignment of the Departmental bodies responsible. Communities must be embedded in the process and not merely be consulted via lip service.

The ICP needs to be involved in the decision process around which interfaces can be removed or reduced, as it will be the community groups who will have to manage the change.

Belfast City Council should look to actively fund cross community events and activities.

Good relations needs to be threaded through all the work of statutory agencies with action based approaches targeted at interfaces.

Belfast City Council should consult with other potential funders.

Good Relations needs to be addressed through a joined-up approach including statutory agencies and local communities. This should not be focused on 'communities' but working with different community groups in the decision making process, as not all community groups need the same solution.

Belfast City Council should take the lead in initiating or supporting cross community interface community planning models.

There is a need to consider electoral boundaries – are there changes that could be made to reduce separation?

Need for an equality based review of interfaces, for instance are all pedestrian access gates accessible for people with mobility impairments? Interface entrance ways should comply with equality legislation in terms of disabled access.

The Belfast City Council's Interface Strategy must build on good work established thus far through profiling each of the interface areas and identify initiatives to help reduce segregation. As Belfast City Council takes on the specific regeneration role that will take over from DSD under RPA, how the Council will action this strategy will be interesting.

The use of relationship rather than security language is important.

Belfast City Council and the Department of Justice need to work in sync.

The new strategy must be reflected in the CSI document, it must also be questioned if there is governmental buy in? How will it be reflected in other councils?

Can a proofing mechanism be developed to test funded programmes at a citizen participation level?

There needs to be a collective identity for Belfast and its citizens



Community Safety and Interfaces

Michael Atcheson

Intercomm

I start by welcoming the Department of Justice's paper on community safety. I especially welcome their statement that they are committed to working with communities, to support the transition from the view that safety is only achieved through separation, towards a view that safety is better achieved through sharing.

When asked to speak here today three issues came to mind, fear, security and interfaces. All of these are important components of any community safety proposal. But while community safety is an issue for all communities, and can be and should be much more than tackling anti social behaviour and reducing crime, I will be focusing my brief presentation today on community safety issues at interface communities.



Interface barriers have been part of security and indeed public policy response to sectarian divisions for many years. In many cases they were seen as temporary or emergency interventions. But as we have all seen this has not been the case and over many years interface barriers have become permanent features.

While there have been discussions and indeed public research into identifying local concerns and responses to the removal of interface barriers there are growing local perceptions that

this is not accompanied by locally informed government policy on their removal.

Indeed it can be discourses that the trend in interface barriers in recent years has gone up rather than down. In 2007 the NIO announced that a new interface was to be built in the playground of Hazelwood Integrated Primary school (Whitewell area of North Belfast) to protect houses and residents in the Old Throne Park from sectarian attack. What was not clear was that the decision and erection of a new interface barrier was made after an attack which took place nine months earlier with no evidence of sustained or ongoing attacks since the initial incident. This was seen by many that government policy remained the same, and that was the only way to deal with sectarian incidents was to build physical barriers.

What can be done?

I live within a ten minute walk of several interfaces, I do not live under the shadow of an interface. Those ten minutes put me light years away from the needs, fears and concerns held by those who live under that shadow. Continued top down policy does not address these underlying issues regardless of whether they are perceived or real.

What is clear is that the reduction of fear, an increase in shared living and the regeneration of interfaces will not come about solely through improved policing or institutional investment. When communities ask for local solutions to local problems they mean much more than local.

Community safety will only come about through creative and inclusive civic and institutional partnerships that do not measure good relations and safety through the reduction of knee cappings or the removal of physical barriers, but a partnership that has positive outcomes such as increased community participation and engagement. Projects need to speak about 'we', rather than them and us.

It is through these multi agency projects that we can challenge and overcome the psychological barriers that keep communities apart by recognising and legitimising community perceptions, concerns and fears.

It is through these partnerships that collectively we can put forward strategic area based strategies (one size does not fit all) which are not time bound, but will work with communities to ensure that they have the capacity to engage at all levels of any decision making process.

Concluding points:

1. Continued top down policies will not address the underlying issues of community safety.
2. Shared living and the regeneration of interfaces are key to any community safety initiative but they will not come about through public and institutional investment alone. It can only come about through risk taking, innovative and creative partnerships that do not measure good relations through the removal of physical barriers, but partnerships which challenge psychological fears by promoting new community participatory frameworks and opportunities through community, public and institutional engagement.
3. Any community safety policy must ensure that those who are most affected are in a position to influence it.
4. The Department of Justice must fulfil their objective to ensure that communities are supported so that they have the capabilities to engage positively and constructively with public departments and institutions.
5. The Department of Justice must promote engagement with other government departments to increase the efforts of the public sector to engage collectively with communities to address issues around social and economic disadvantage which have a direct impact on community safety issues.
6. A lot of good work is taking place to address many of these issues. I would like to see DOJ consult with and promote good community practice through their community safety paper like the IWG Guidance paper for interface Transformation, Greater Whitewell Community Surgery 'WE' Programme, the Cityside Project and other excellent examples of practice throughout the Province.
7. After stating all of this we should remember that while barriers continue to provide a sense of reassurance and safety for many, they continue to separate and divide communities. Department of Justice are responsible for 47 interfaces and while they have taken a step to addressing some of these issues through their paper on Community safety. I would call on them to take the next step by promoting interdepartmental strategies that work with communities to address many of the social and economic issues that reinforce sectarian attitudes and separation.

8. I started with this so I will end with it. The Department of Justice must reach their goal and fulfil their commitment to work with communities to support the transition from the view that safety is only achieved through separation, towards a view that safety is better achieved through sharing.

Eamon Jones

Department of Justice

As a DOJ representative, I'm encouraged to hear so many words of encouragement from previous speakers. I absolutely agree with the points raised by Michael and grateful to CRC for the opportunity to speak today and provide an update on the Community Safety Strategy.

DOJ have three key priorities:

1. Safer and Shared Communities
2. Fairer and Faster Justice
3. Youth and Prison Reform

The Safer and Shared Community priority is underpinned by a range of policies alongside a review in relation to access to justice.

Within the Community Safety Strategy, the flavour coming from the Department of Justice has been that work can only be taken on if done so with the wider Executive, in order to help reshape the justice system and create a safer Northern Ireland. This has been a conscious decision at outset.

We held 12 public events throughout Northern Ireland on the consultation process to the Community Safety Strategy, with 300 people attending these and two being held here in Belfast City Hall.

There is the recognition of Community Safety affecting everyone with participants being a wide range of people with a wide range of interests.

We quality assured the consultation responses and strongly acknowledge the support of CRC and Duncan Morrow in this.

From the consultation there have been three proposals:

1. How to build a shared community
2. How to build community confidence
3. How to build community safety

These three themes will be delivered by new local partnership arrangements through Policing and Community Safety partnerships (PCSPs).

In looking towards a shared community, the consultation paper acknowledged the physical barriers.



The solution to this problem cannot be delivered by the Government alone as has been made clear at this conference today. To bring about community safety there is a need to be building bridges instead of walls, and this will impact a number of areas including racism or of sectarianism.

The proposals have widely been accepted by those responding to the consultation on the Community Safety Strategy.

There were four priority areas identified by Consultation responses including:

1. Anti Social behaviour
2. Early intervention
3. Tackling concerns around abuse of drugs and alcohol
4. Promotion of a shared society

We seek to address the fear of crime that exists particularly amongst the vulnerable and elderly.

The Community Safety Strategy and the PfG sets out the strategic direction for building a safe Northern Ireland in the years ahead.



Feedback from Delegates



There is a lack of cross departmental agreement and actions resulting thereof. DOJ needs to be a more active lobby to bring about joined-up departmental working on the issues at interfaces and to ensure early intervention.

The DOJ document connects aspirationally to the live issue but fails to deal with the inter-departmental failures.

DOJ appears to be left to carry the parcel on this issue, whilst the practical issues that need addressed lie with other departments

There needs to be community involvement in that those who are affected by policy must help to shape it.





Concluding comments

Dr Duncan Morrow *CEO of CRC*

Thank you very much Minister and particularly for your kind words to me personally.

I would like to comment both on your reference to the spread of interface barriers and on the implications of our decade of anniversaries and centenaries. One of the things said to me most in recent years came across from a group of young people brought up in the shadow of interfaces, who pointed out that by 2019, these barriers will have been up for 50 years. That is not a temporary phenomenon but part of the fabric of normality in this city which we will have to tackle. But it is good to remind ourselves of how long the long term is on this issue – these walls have already been up for 42 years and 17 years of their lives have been under conditions of ceasefire. The terrible truth is that the housing in interface areas is more modern than the walls themselves, meaning that we have built communities around the walls, not built walls to separate communities. They have become part of our historic memory and have taken on a terrible normality

What is heartening from today, is that more and more people are starting to accept that this is a real issue – some people are starting to get that this is a really serious economic and social phenomenon, with real consequences which have been burrowing into Belfast for over 40 years. These barriers were initially the last resort for safety. The risk now is that they have become our first idea any time there is trouble. What we know now, is that once up, they seldom come down. Interface barriers separate communities for good unless we take a decision to take them down. The question is when and how do we get to that decision?

After 17 years of ceasefire, we need to ask is this fear grounded in real threats to people's safety or only in historic memory. If it is memory, then the solution is in confidence building and therapeutic investment. But if the threat is real here and now, and not just imagined as I suppose most of us would concede then how come we cannot tackle it after 17 years? Just who is threatening who in a world where 14 years ago we all signed up to purely political means, and where is the action plan to tackle this completely unacceptable threat?



So, is there a threat? Where is the threat? What are we going to do about it? These are real questions demanding urgent answers, not a shrug of the shoulders and a 'don't be so naive.' We still have a tendency to shoot the messenger not answer the question!

How do we create an agenda that tackles fear and reduces threat?

If a demography change occurred, what would happen?

If there is a threat to the minority entering a segregated area, why is this here?

For instance the Polish community that live within some areas and the threat they face. Does the wider local community have different views to those actively intimidating minorities? If so how do we help people stand up to bullies in their community and who is doing it? If not, we have to ask deeper questions about sectarianism and racism and the depth of our hatreds.

It is obviously vital to bring the community with us when we are proceeding in this matter. We must be able to look residents in the face with confidence and tell them that they are safe with the wall down as well as with the wall up. And that will mean that those intimidating should be the ones being moved on, not those being intimidated.

But if the walls are up because of a genuine threats, then we have to identify those threats and proactively tackle them, not put up walls and walk away with hatred intact and a victory for sectarianism and racism. This is not a question of the middle classes suggesting that walls come down in other people's areas. It is a matter of acknowledging that fear is real, that we need to tackle its source and people should be allowed to live in freedom from any intimidation in a peaceful society. What is true on the Malone Road should be normal in the inner city too.

The call for this action is real and the support for local communities is undoubtedly genuine. It has been great to see the Belfast City Council and Department of Justice present today. It is the responsibility of the Government to provide safety and there needs to be proactive thought as to how safety is provided for all and alternatives to barriers which create huge costs for poor people across Belfast found as a matter of urgency. The time for talk is over, we need to get together and deliver change.



*From left –
Michael Atcheson
(Intercomm), Jean
Brown (SLIG), Rab
McCallum (NBIN),
David Ford MLA,
Minister for
Justice, Tony
McCusker, CRC
Chair and Tony
Kennedy, ICP Chair*



Speakers

MR DAVID FORD MLA

Minister for Justice, DOJ

David Ford was re-elected as Minister for the Department of Justice on 16 May 2011, having secured the necessary cross-community support within the NI Assembly.

Leader of the Alliance Party, before embarking on a full-time political career he was a Social Worker with the Northern Health and Social Services Board in Antrim, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus.

TONY KENNEDY OBE

CRC COUNCIL MEMBER

Tony was Chief Executive of Co-operation Ireland from 1992 until his retirement in 2008. He has extensive experience and involvement in promoting and delivering reconciliation activities between people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, in the management of cross border grants programmes and in the decision making structures for grant aid. He has been Chair of the CORE consortium, managing a major cross community project between East Belfast, Short Strand and Finglas in Dublin in partnership with community networks from those areas. He is also Deputy Chair of Ulidia Housing Association, Director of the John Hewitt Society and a Member of the Arts Council Northern Ireland. Tony is a Member of the Community Relations Council and Chair of its Policy and Communications Committee.

DR DUNCAN MORROW

CRC

Duncan is the Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (CRC) since 2002, the body with primary responsibility for funding and development of inter-community relations practice and policy in Northern Ireland. Previously, Duncan was active in many areas of community relations work as a member of Understanding Conflict and as Co-Director of Future Ways, a unique active learning agency within the University of Ulster. His interests included political education, organisational development work with public agencies and voluntary groups, community development, mediation and the facilitation of difficult conversations between people and groups in conflict. At the University of Ulster he was also a lecturer in politics with a particular interest in ethnic conflict and religion and violence.

He has written numerous reports, books and articles including 'A worthwhile Venture?' (with Karin Eyben and Derick Wilson), 'Northern Ireland Politics' (with Arthur Aughey) and 'Churches and Inter-community relationships.' In 1998, he was appointed as a Northern Ireland Sentence Review Commissioner, the body responsible for implementing the early release of paramilitary prisoners agreed as part of the Good Friday Agreement. A native of Belfast, Duncan is married to Susie. They have three children.

DYMPNA MCGLADE

CRC

Dympna McGlade has worked in the field of community development and community relations in NI for over twenty years. She grew up in the 'Marrowbone' area of North Belfast and has firsthand experience of the impact of conflict, inequality and segregation.

She is employed by the Community Relations Council as Policy Director. Her work includes assisting organisations in the development of good relations approaches through the creation of opportunities for constructive and open dialogue leading to positive actions at all levels and positively influencing Government policy.

RAB McCALLUM,**North Belfast Interface Network****Joint Winner of 2011 Community Relations Award**

Rab has been working on conflict resolution and developing community relations in North Belfast since 1997, since 2002 he has been the project coordinator of the North Belfast Interface Network

In 2011 Rab jointly won (with Michael Atcheson) the prestigious Community Relations Council Award for exceptional Achievement in Good Relations

MICHAEL ATCHESON,**Intercomm****Joint winner of Community Relations Award in 2011**

Michael has been working in Peace Building for a diverse range of community and NGOs for the past twenty – five years. Michael was Chairperson for five years of the North Belfast Conflict Transformation Forum and on the editorial team for the Building Peace through Partnership Peace Papers and The Other View Magazine. Michael was project coordinator of the Conflict Transformation Programme with LINC Resource Centre for over ten years and is presently the Policy and Practice Manager for the 2028 Project with Intercomm.

In 2011 Michael jointly won (with Rab McCallum) the prestigious Community Relations Council Award for exceptional Achievement in Good Relations. Michael has a 1st Class BSc Honours Degree in Community Development and a Diploma in Community Education, both from the University of Ulster.

JEAN BROWN,**Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group****Previous joint winner of Community Relations Award**

Jean describes herself as primarily a wife, mother and grandmother who has a passion for her community and a real belief in the fact that ordinary people can make a difference.

She has been involved in a wide range of both voluntary and paid community work in Suffolk for over 30 years and helped to establish an Action for Community Employment Programme in the early 1980's which she eventually managed for 16 years.

A founder member and former Chairperson of Suffolk Community Forum she has been employed for the past 11 years as the Community Development Worker. Jean played a key role in helping to develop the Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group, the Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project and Sparkles Daycare all of which she is still involved with. She has been involved in a wide range of projects representing Suffolk Community Forum, including the Belfast Interface Project and feels extremely privileged to have seen the work expand and develop as it has. Jean has been a recipient of the Community Relations Award, in 2008.

LINSEY FARRELL,**OFMDFM**

Linsey Farrell joined the Northern Ireland Civil Service in 2003 after graduating in Law from QUB. She completed an MBA at the University of Ulster in 2010.

Linsey has worked in OFMDFM for the entirety of her Civil Service career but across a range of policy areas, including: anti-poverty, disability and community relations.

Linsey took over as policy lead on community relations in September 2011.

DAVID ROBINSON,

Belfast City Council

David Robinson is currently Belfast City Council's Senior Good Relations Officer. He has been with the Council for almost 6 years working on the implementation of the Council's Good Relations strategy. He has been specifically involved in the delivery of the Council's bonfire management programme for the last 5 years. He has been central to the development of the Council's strategy and action plan on interface areas, which he will be speaking about in his presentation today.

Originally from Bray in Co. Wicklow, he has been working in Northern Ireland for the past 16 years and his most enjoyable activity outside of work is spending time with his son Tom.

EAMON JONES,

Community Safety Unit, Dept. of Justice

Eamon Jones is the Head of the Strategy Branch within the Department of Justice's Community Safety Unit. He leads on the new Community Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland, and policy on anti-social behaviour, hate crime, older people's issues and business crime.



List of Delegates

Agnes Brown	Urban Innovations
Alan Swann	PSNI
Bill Shaw OBE	174 Trust
Billy Johnston	Belfast City Council
Brendan Clarke	NBIN
Brian Davidson	Dept of Finance and Personnel
Chris O'Halloran	Belfast Interface Project
Cllr Conor Maskey	Intercomm
David Ferris	
Minister David Ford	Dept of Justice
David Robinson	Belfast City Council
Eamon Jones	Dept of Justice
Emma Campbell	NBIN
Hazel Francey	Belfast City Council
Jean Brown	SLIG
Jennifer Hawthorne	NIHE
John Chittick	Dept of Justice
John Howcroft	NBC DTG
John McQuillan	
Johnstone Price	Forthspring
Joy Hadden	RDN
Kate Clarke	NBIN
Kerry McIvor	RDC

Linsey Farrell	OFMdFM – Policy Lead
Lorna Donnelly	
Malachy Mulgrew	NBIN
Maura Moore	Forthspring
Michael Atcheson	Intercomm
Michael Collins	Belfast City Council
Michelle Hand	Belfast City Council
Nadia Maurar	
Dr Neil Jarman	Institute of Conflict Research
Noel Large	Interaction
Patrick McKeever	
Rab McCallum	NBIN
Renee Crawford	SLIG
Richard Dougherty	RDC
Richard Good	Dept of Justice
Richard McLernon	Belfast City Council
Roz Goldie	QUB
Sam White	BCRC
Sean Montgomery	Skegoneill and Glendore Common Purpose
Stephanie Smith	Skegoneill and Glendore Common Purpose
Steven McCourt	Dept of Justice
Cllr Tom Aiken	Alliance Party
Tony Stevens	Urban Innovations

CRC

Bebhinn McKinley
 Damien McNally
 Dr Duncan Morrow
 Ellie Perrin
 Grace Hamilton
 Jacqueline Irwin
 Kelan McClelland
 Kerry Kelly
 Patricia O'Neill
 Ray Mullan
 Tony Kennedy OBE
 Tony McCusker

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank a number of people for their hard work and dedication in this area.

I wish to thank CRC's Policy Director Dympna McGlade and her team; Bebhinn McKinley, Kelan McClelland and Grace Hamilton who have put a vast amount of effort into this work. I also wish to express my thanks to the members of the Interface Community Partners (ICP) and the Interface Working Group (IWG) who have invested heavily in this work

I also would like to personally thank both Tony Kennedy OBE and Tony McCusker for their support in this work.

Dr Duncan Morrow

Chief Executive



Appendix 1 – Barrier Removal Guidance Paper

Guidance Paper on Proposed Process for Interface Barrier Transformation/Removal

Produced by the Interface Working Group and informed by practice
on the ground in relation to the transformation of interface barriers

Community Relations Council



Community Relations Council

April 2011

GUIDANCE – Barrier Removal Process

The purpose of this guidance is to provide a process for statutory agencies and their voluntary/community sector partners to work within when entering into collaborative arrangements to address the transformation of interface barriers or calls for new or strengthened interface barriers.

Background

The first interface barriers were built in the early 1970s, following the outbreak of serious and ongoing conflict. They were built as temporary structures but have become more permanent. The current political climate provides a unique opportunity to facilitate a process that will enable interface communities to participate in the transformation of interface areas by trying to help create an environment where the people directly affected by the interface barriers feel safe enough to consider transforming them.

In November 2007 the Community Relations Council (CRC) raised with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) its concerns about the decision of the NIO to build a fence in the grounds of Hazelwood Integrated Primary School as a result of ongoing tension and incidents leading to safety concerns.

Following these discussions, CRC decided to set in motion a process to assist the development of an overall strategy for potential new peace walls and existing peace walls. CRC established the Interface Working Group (IWG) which is an interagency partnership that:

- acts as a think-tank and shares experience, expertise and good practice to creatively explore issues emerging from interfaces by bringing together key policy-makers and experienced practitioners working in the field of good relations, conflict transformation and community regeneration;
- acts as a stimulant to the debate on interfaces through high level policy seminars, workshops, conferences and research aimed at mainstreaming ideas and policy proposals and highlight challenges which need to be addressed to achieve the transformation of interface areas;
- establishes appropriate working groups where necessary including the Interface Community Partners and the Beyond Belfast Steering Group; and
- in light of emerging policy in general and CSI policy in particular, informs and advises Government Departments on potential and existing Government interventions in interface areas and, where appropriate, coordinates a programme of work with specific outcomes.

This guidance is part of the work developed by the IWG.

Public Policy and Interface Barriers

The policy which led to barriers being erected has not yet been accompanied by any systematic thinking about how and when such barriers might be removed. As a result, temporary or emergency interventions have become effectively permanent. Furthermore, the responsibility for removing barriers and

engaging in a more broadly based strategy to ensure safety requires the involvement of social, economic and political actors from a broad range of public agencies.

The voluntary/community sector has an important role to play in facilitating interface communities in considering their future in the context of the peace process, supporting the statutory services in the transformation of interface barriers and in responding to problems leading to local communities calling for new or strengthened interfaces.

Proposed process

The Interface Working group proposes that all public agencies adopt the following aim, strategic approach and guiding principles to enable them to provide a joined up process to work within when entering into collaborative arrangements to address the transformation of interface walls and barriers.

Aim

Where possible, to find ways to provide structured support for initiatives to regenerate interface areas, leading to the eventual creation of open and vibrant communities free from fear, threat or any obstacle to interaction across the region.

Strategic Approach

This will include supporting peace-building initiatives in the development and delivery of short, medium and long-term actions to address social, community, physical, economic and security and safety issues in interface areas. It will build upon existing good practice and address any gaps in provision. This support will require Departments to adapt a flexible approach to practices which may be beneficial to enabling or sustaining regeneration and transformation approaches which take full account of the problems and opportunities for local areas and the entire region.

Principles

In all responses to the legacy of physical segregation the safety and security of those people living near to interfaces and interface barriers will be the priority. At the same time it is the responsibility of government to develop responses to the real challenges of fear and threat which do not rely on permanent barriers or patterns of exclusion and violence.

With this in mind:

- Departments should create the conditions for the removal of all interface barriers across the region
- The process of removing interface barriers should be part of an inclusive, community approach towards building a shared society
- New barriers will only be built if all other avenues of intervention have been tried and failed. Priority must be given to other forms of investment in communities to ensure their safety and security without the need for physical structures.

STEPS TO MAKING IT HAPPEN

Principles

In all responses to the legacy of physical segregation the safety and security of the people living near to interfaces and interface barriers will be the priority. At the same time it is the responsibility of government to develop responses to the real challenges of fear and threat which do not rely on permanent barriers or patterns of exclusion and violence.

With this in mind, Departments should agree to create the conditions for the removal of all interface barriers across the region.

The process of removing interface barriers should be part of an inclusive community approach towards building a shared society.

New barriers will only be built if all other avenues of intervention have been tried and failed; rather priority must be given to other forms of investment in communities to ensure their safety and security without the need for physical structures.

Political and public sector process

- Political endorsement
- Lead agency identified
- Cross Departmental engagement agreed
- Stakeholder meetings convened
- Action plan developed
- Resources secured
- Local area consultation and plans
- Monitoring and evaluating process and outcome

Community/voluntary sector process

- Form local interagency partnership or focus existing partnership re: interface work
- Capacity and confidence building at local level
- Visioning/participatory planning at local level to develop options
- Seek consensus and community buy in on options through community consultation
- Deliver plan

Leading to peace-building initiatives in the development and delivery of short, medium and long-term actions to address social, community, physical, economic and security and safety issues in interface areas. It will build upon existing good practice and address any gaps in provision

Appendix 1 gives more detail about these steps
Appendix 1

Interagency work

The engagement of the statutory sector with the voluntary/community sector in relation to planning for, and responding to requests about interface barriers is crucial and vice versa

Interagency partnership working is critical for responding to local issues and requests. Existing partnerships may be a useful vehicle to work through or the establishment of a fixed term partnership of key agencies may be necessary. Either way the following model for community and statutory actions are key.

The model set out below demonstrates how a process for barrier removal may be, using good practice, initiated either from the community based organisations working in interface areas or areas where barriers exist or alternatively from the Departmental, Statutory or Agency. It sets out a number of steps and overarching guiding process to ensure that throughout the staged process that community confidence is assured and that there is appropriate cross departmental/ agency support to allow transformation and transition. It also sets out the steps that need to be taken in a joined up method between both community based organisations and the responsible department or agency.

PROPOSED STEPS OF TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS

Departmental/ Agency/ initiated steps

1. **Political/ Ministerial** endorsement or statement
2. **Lead** - Responsible Department/ Agency initiates process
3. **Cross-Departmental Engagement** - Interface process to written correspondence sent to other Departments which potentially has responsibilities or interest in the removal of barrier in the area
4. **Explore** - Identify potential areas
5. **Evidence** - Collate existing information such as previous Consultations, surveys and discussions by community and statutory organisations
6. **Rationale** - Develop rationale as to why areas have been selected to go forward for Risk/Impact assessment – e.g. regeneration opportunity, capacity and confidence at good level etc.
7. **Assessment** - Risk/impact assessment by DoJ, OFMDFM, DSD, CRC, PSNI, emergency services, roads service, Council - other agencies and local community organisations where and/or when relevant. Interagency forum to be set up to explore specific barrier related proposals from community.

JOINT STEPS

1. **Lead**- If Assessment has low risk or no risk then process for responding to the transformation will be initiated by Department/agency responsible for barrier.
2. **Engagement** - process will include written correspondence to other Departments which potentially has responsibilities or interest in the removal of the barrier in that area.
3. **Stakeholder Meetings** - Lead agency or Department to convene meetings and/or roundtable discussions with other Departments, agencies and community stakeholders to determine suitable direction.
4. **Consultation** - If no consultation has been carried out before; this is to then be initiated in partnership with local community organisations in the area. Where there are gaps in information or the consultation process, to develop additional community engagement process either through local community organisations in partnership with the Department or agency with responsibility for the barrier.
5. **Collate** – views and opinions to be collated and exploration of concerns that have been raised.
6. **Develop** - series of potential options and costings to be developed where relevant
7. **Presentation** - Present a series of options to community for agreement or consensus
8. **Action plan** – to develop an approach for staged opening closing, reduction or removal. This is inclusive of factoring in aspects such as: owner, sponsor, stages, timeframe, responsibilities and targets including the agreed option by community alongside the relevant resources required.
9. **Resources**- Ensure the relevant resources are in place; community safety, police presence, intervention programmes, and youth activities increased OFMDFM, DoJ, DSD, CRC and local Council need to be included within the overall action plan. This may require establishing a resources group to bring together funders, departments, council and other organisations that provide resources and funding in area.
10. **Communicate** - Information events, flyers articles in papers community news sheets detailing process and stages of staged opening/closing detailed when, what times, contacts etc or removal process
11. **Monitor and Review**- Ongoing monitoring of increasing/reducing tensions and residents concerns.

Community initiated Process

1. **Capacity building** – contact, dialogue, cross-community work, common issues identified and addressed
2. **Confidence building** – interventions to address common issues and address concerns and tensions
3. **Visioning/participatory planning** – exploring possibilities, benefits, regeneration/challenges (age, gender, religious, political, disability, proximity to barrier/wall, closely neighbouring communities/streets) range of stakeholders, DoJ/ DSD/CRC/OFMDFM/DRD/local council /business/community/councillors/ MLA's etc
4. **Identify** – Department/ Agency who owns or has responsibility for the barrier identified
5. **Assessment** – community organisations request for to meet responsible Department and request risk assessment to be carried out Risk/impact assessment DoJ, OFMDFM, DSD, CRC, PSNI, emergency services, roads service - other agencies, council and local community organisations where or when relevant – interagency forum to be set up to explore specific barrier and proposals from community.



This Report has been published by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council which aims to support a pluralist society characterised by equity, respect for diversity, and recognition of interdependence. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Council.

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