

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

**Policy Development Programme
Annual Conference**

***A SHARED FUTURE:
FROM CONSULTATION
TO ACTION***

Indian Community Centre, Monday 20 June 2005

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INDIAN COMMUNITY CENTRE WELCOME

MUKESH SHARMA, CHAIR, INDIAN COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Indian community settled in Northern Ireland as far back as one hundred years ago although they have become more prominent over the past fifty years. Many of us have lived here throughout the recent conflict. We work hard in Northern Ireland to share all aspects of our Indian culture, art, religion and heritage. We contribute to the social and economic fabric of NI society.

The Indian Community Centre values the huge importance of good relations and the support we receive from the Community Relations Council. We have worked in partnership with CRC for the past number of years during community relations week and other good relations initiatives.

The Centre runs a variety of educational, cultural and development projects and the basis and structure of each one of them is good relations ie to share and learn and ultimately break down barriers which lead to problems such as racism. In my opinion, good relations is not one sided, and not just about showing your own culture and background. One must learn about others as well as tell others about oneself, celebrate common ground and understand differences.

Northern Ireland is changing from a region in conflict to a more stable and thriving community. Like all other European regions, we are becoming a more multi cultural society. This is a positive sign of progress in peace. However, this positive change has also led to some individuals and groups feeling a sense of fear, misunderstanding and sometimes resentment. There has been a growing number of racist attacks across the province and there is no doubt that there will be more, however as long as ALL communities recognise the importance of good relations, and recognise that we all have a better future if we share it - life will improve for everyone. Racism exists and we must acknowledge this. The key to eliminating racism is how we deal with it. Politicians, community leaders, public bodies, organizations, next door neighbours and every right minded person should be public about accepting and welcoming minority ethnic citizens in all aspects of life and challenge sectarianism in all its forms. This is a slow but fruitful process.

The Indian Community Centre supports the *A Shared Future* policy statement that:
We must combat racism and sectarianism or any other extremism and proactively encourage understanding and tolerance.

The shared future document lays down in writing formally, what is really mostly common sense to many people. I hope that the document does not become only a discussion paper or another "book on a shelf" - it must be accepted as good practice and brought to life, so that it does make a change and a better future for Northern Ireland's growing multi cultural society

Thank you to the CRC for continued support and we look forward to continuing to work alongside you in the future to help bring about a more shared and harmonious society.

CONFERENCE WELCOME
EAMONN MCCARTAN

We all know the outcome of the past thirty six plus years of conflict - murder, mayhem, loss of homes, loss of business, segregation and all the other negative outcomes of bad relations.

The *A Shared Future* (ASF) policy is the new Government policy and strategic framework for improving good relations in Northern Ireland. ASF is one of the most important policies developed to assist NI on its way to a more stable, shared and pluralist society and a place where people of different political opinions, religious beliefs and racial group can live together in a safe and integrated society.

The ASF policy must become a central policy of government. It cannot be viewed as an 'add on' to existing work but rather must be woven into the fabric of government's vision and actions and throughout society. To enable the work of Shared Future to become real requires resources. Departments should be able to bid for funding which has been set aside to assist with Shared Future work.

Local Councils are now made up of 13 Unionist, 11 Nationalist and 2 shared/hung councils. Sharing has never been more important.

Councils will be supported to enhance their civic leadership role and develop and implement good relations approaches, which are meaningful, sustainable and feed into a collective peace process. CRC looks forward to working with Councils to develop an enhanced, permanent programme for the promotion of good relations through district councils. The new scheme will be called the Good Relations Challenge Programme and will be managed by the re-shaped Community Relations Council.

Politicians, community leaders and others with influence must support the development of the Triennial Action Plan which is being developed by a cross-departmental steering group called the Good Relations Panel. The Triennial Plan will identify key actions across government, co-ordinate long-term actions, advise on the targeting of resources and monitor outcomes.

In relation to the make up of the North of Ireland, it is fast becoming more diverse. Minorities are everywhere and need to be protected. What better sign of a more normalised society is there than one which is rich in diversity.

The *ASF* consultation gave us the opportunity to identify key community and race relations issues in NI, how they might be addressed and who should be involved in the delivery of the actions.

The Government has now published its *A Shared Future* strategy. This year's conference will give participants the opportunity to discuss and influence actions to ensure that the policy becomes practice.

Today's conference is being held in the Indian Community Centre which is beside the Orange Hall and at an interface roundabout – this will help us focus our minds on the work of Shared Future.

I wish to thank the Indian Community Centre for its work in assisting in the fight against racism and the development of good race relations approaches.

The Indian Community Centre and CRC have, over the years, developed a close working relationship. I thank the Centre for its assistance with today's conference and thank Mukesh for his warm welcome.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the following people for their important contribution to today's conference:

- ❖ Speakers and politicians
- ❖ Robin Wilson who is chairing the event
- ❖ CRC staff who organised it and;
- ❖ and especially you the delegates who are the people that will help make Shared future a reality.

I hope the day goes well and look forward to hearing the emerging comments and recommendations.

A SHARED FUTURE: FROM CONSULTATION TO ACTION

BILLY GAMBLE, HEAD OF GOOD RELATIONS AND RECONCILIATION DIVISION, OFFICE OF THE FIRST AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Good morning everyone. I am delighted to be here. I would like to pass on an apology from the Minister, Jeff Rooker who had to be in Parliament today but sends his best wishes.

This is an important event. As the conference papers suggest and as Robin outlined, it is an opportunity to discuss and influence actions. This will be achieved through the four workshops the outcome of which will help us shape the first Triennial Action Plan.

The *A Shared Future* policy document was published on 21st March 2005 which was just before the General Election and meant that the profile was somewhat understated. I was heartened by an editorial in one morning local which emphasised the importance of the policy that had been put in place without fanfare. I will say something later about how we plan to raise the profile of *A Shared Future* later this year.

What I would like to do this morning is cover three areas:

- say something about the commitment of the new team of Ministers installed;
- say something about what we have been doing since 21st March - at a practical level; and
- outline how I see the way ahead
 - in developing the first triennial action plan,
 - the processes, and
 - the structure to underpin the work.

Government Commitment

- The Secretary of State and the new team were briefed on *A Shared Future*. It is a central issue that runs through all portfolios. I would echo the view of Robin Wilson that 'there is no more important area of public policy in Northern Ireland at the moment to get right than this'. This is evidenced in the recent events surrounding last Friday's Tour of North and other ongoing tensions.
- Jeff Rooker in particular has given a commitment to relaunch *A Shared Future* in Autumn 2005. That launch will include a major campaign on sectarianism and racism. This leads me on to two other important strands.
- The Racial Equality Strategy, which will issue before the summer recess, will have at its core many of the guiding principles of ASF.
- So will the Government's response to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee inquiry into Hate Crime in Northern Ireland. This is due to issue in the next few weeks.

Since 21 March, as well as briefing Ministers, we have:

- put in place a protocol on flags. The research into flags and emblems commissioned by OFMDFM by Dominic Bryan was discussed at an excellent seminar organised by CRC. This seminar series also included one on reconciliation.
- begun a process of reshaping the form and function of the Community Relations Council.
- started planning a workshop for CROs and line managers to help shape a new Good Relations Challenge Programme at council level.
- opened up discussion with DFP about (a) training and policy development on good relations and diversity and (b) how we can develop the same within the SCS competency framework.
- held bilateral meetings with senior teams in each Department (a) to deepen their understanding of the challenges ahead and (b) to work through the practical issues around action - having regard to the statutory duty (S 75 (2));

- held meetings with the Equality Commission and stakeholders, looking at additional guidance on good relations for public authorities.
- via the Community Action Group supported summer interventions and targeted actions across Northern Ireland, including support for those working at interfaces.
- worked with Groundwork on bonfires.
- supported dialogue around parading.
- supported conflict transformation initiatives.

I mentioned the work to prepare the Racial Equality Strategy and the NIAC response. We have also been looking at ways to improve the working of the Race Forum (which I chair): improved reporting mechanisms; a programme of work with the travelling community (£0.5m over the next three years); and on the specific area of racism £1.7m investment supported by the Minority Ethnic Fund.

I am conscious that ASF makes it clear that voice should be given to victims. Many will be aware that we are out to consultation on the next phase of policy in relation to victims and survivors. We are also consulting on the scope and nature of a Commissioner for Victims and Survivors. The Government has announced that it is establishing such a Commissioner.

Main Challenges and What Next

There is no more important area of public policy in Northern Ireland at the moment to get right than this - of that I am sure. My work involves community relations, race relations, victims and survivors and children and young people. All are inter-related. Central Government will put good relations at the centre of policy.

It is hugely important that public servants not only understand the good relations duty, but are encouraged to shape policy to promote good relations. Importantly here we need to see underpinning:

- guidance,
- training (here I see CRC and ECNI having a role), and
- measurement of individual and corporate performances.

Clearly a number of areas of public policy represent major challenges, eg education and housing. It would be foolish to say otherwise. But I do believe that public expenditure pressure, coupled with demographic and spatial factors, will be major influences.

Central Government level

We will establish the Good Relations Panel - chaired by Nigel Hamilton, Head of the Civil Service. This will be supported by mechanisms to draw in the views of civic society. We also wish to see the OFMDFM Good Relations and Reconciliation Division focus on its policy development role - combining race and community relations - and outsource funding.

Regional Level

Crucially here we need to see the emergence over the next 6-12 months of a revamped CRC with clarified roles and responsibilities, a new board and enhanced funding.

Local Government Level

An important issue here is clearly the development of the new good relations challenge programme. I am pleased to see that Mervyn Rankin, chief executive of Ballymena Borough Council will be speaking on the challenge presented to councils by ASF.

We are planning a workshop in September to draw on good practice across councils and to shape the new programme. Many Councils already have good relations plans/strategies and it is important to learn from those experiences, see what works and what doesn't, assess impacts and be realistic about constraints, but encourage new thinking about the next programme.

The aim is that the new programme will converge with the Review of Public Administration. It is our intention to run it into the new arrangements by promoting collaborative work in the interim. **The key**

focus of the new programme will be to produce qualitative good relations outcomes and measurable impacts.

We aim to draw up the new programme following the workshop and consult on it later in the year. For me the key is sub-regional or localised arrangements which will include pulling together community safety, community support and local strategic actions. The thread that could usefully connect these might be good relations programme

Triennial Action Plan

The Triennial Action Plan will follow the logic of the ASF document. The actions that we will pull together will be set and measured against the policy objectives set out in Section 1 of *A Shared Future*:

- eliminate sectarianism, racism¹ and all forms of prejudice to enable people to live and work without fear or intimidation;
- reduce tension and conflict at interface areas;
- facilitate the development of a shared community where people wish to learn, live, work and play together;
- promote civic-mindedness via citizenship education through school and lifelong learning;
- protect members of minorities (whether for example by religion, race, or any other grounds) and mixed marriages from intimidation and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice;
- ensure that all public services are delivered impartially and guided by economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- shape policies, practices and institutions to enable trust and good relations to grow;
- encourage understanding of the complexity of our history, through museums and a common school curriculum;
- support cultural projects which highlight the complexity and overlapping nature of identities and their wider global connections;
- support and learn from organisations working across ethnic divides for reconciliation, including those operating on a north-south basis;
- ensure voice is given to the diverse victims of violence in Northern Ireland, including via archives and victim-centred reconciliation events;
- encourage communication, tolerance and trust across Northern Ireland, but particularly in areas where communities are living apart;
- promote dialogue between, and mutual understanding of, different faiths and cultural backgrounds, both long standing within Northern Ireland and recent arrivals to these shores, guided by overarching human rights norms.

We will begin a major exercise to benchmark the costs of division. In line with this we will progress work to develop monitoring and evaluation arrangements. We have given a commitment that we will work with organisations and external stakeholders to help us develop meaningful, measurable and relevant indicators. It might be helpful if this conference offered ideas how we might best do that.

Closing Remarks

Some would still have a view - for example, those favouring tougher legislation on flags or enhanced arrangements in relation to integrated education - that *A Shared Future* is deficient in a number of important areas. I respect those viewpoints.

I believe, however, that *A Shared Future* moves Northern Ireland in the right direction. For the first time a policy to promote sharing over separation is in place and with the backing of Parliament. The task for all of us is to put in place the architecture and policy interventions that will demonstrably show that this society is truly moving forward.

¹ *The term racism is used throughout the document as shorthand for all forms of racial intolerance and discrimination including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.*

AT THE HEART OF GOVERNMENT? TAKING OUR SHARED FUTURE SERIOUSLY

DUNCAN MORROW, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

One of the problems with sharing the future is that it confronts us with having to stop short of getting what we want. At its heart it means setting the dream aside, and making the lives and dreams of others central to what happens to us. Sharing has been nobody's aspiration. In Northern Ireland it is, and remains, everybody's predicament. The only way to achieving the pure dream is by assimilating, getting rid of, or killing those who stand in its way. The problem after decades of violence is that we all know that now. Just getting what we want in politics will turn us all into murderers or its accomplices and fellow-travellers.

In political science, the Irish dilemma has been called the double-minority problem, where everyone fears being left in a minority, and therefore in a powerless situation. Perhaps the problem is not so much that we fear being in a minority, but that our actions have shown that we are not trustworthy with power. Trust is not a question of what the others might do or have done, but is impossible because of what we have done when we had opportunities. The Irish problem is not the minorities but what we do or promise to do when we are 'majorities', whether in states, local councils or housing estates.

There is a lot of talk about democracy and majorities. There is less talk about the fear of losing that fuels resentment and violence, driving people to the conclusion that they will somehow cease to be, whether existentially (the genocide myth) or culturally, if they were ever to finally lose. Likewise, there is less talk about what a person-centred political system like democracy entails for those who lose the numerical headcount. Because the first characteristic of all democracies is not the mechanism for counting heads (majority rule) but the equal value placed on each citizen. And without a plausible sense that we are safe in each other's hands, headcounting quickly becomes another veil legitimising exclusion and even violence for the winners.

The challenge, then, is not so much to design the method of counting votes or dividing executives, but to find ways of making clear that the other is safe in our hands, whoever we are. The absence of power in local government that emerges from the Review of Public Administration is not the result of technical inefficiencies but of a history that local government became associated with clientelism, where those who voted for the winners had an advantage in accessing public goods over those who voted for the losers. The Housing Executive, that model which all other quangos have followed, exists because of a breakdown in trust. That is why the any attempt to return powers to local government is doomed unless it addresses the underlying dilemma head on – can we trust the new institutions? Are they really institutions for all?

The choice which faces us is to go on relentlessly pursuing our aspirations, and blaming the others when they crash against the rock of the other's existence, or recognising our predicament and working first to ensure the full citizenship of all. After trauma, that does not always make sense, because the logic of deep wounds is that trusting is impossible. It also means dropping all threat of violence and submitting to the authority of the law in public life, although that too is not easy if we continue to need to promote our violence as 'necessary defence', or if the law has been seen as part of us against them or them against us. The difficulty of the problem does not mean that it will go away (you know). For too long we have said that peace can only come after justice – a code word for 'us winning'. The greatest injustice is continuing with the relationship of endless antagonism which produces ever more victims in many communities, as surely as night follows day. Because the question in Northern Ireland is not whether the future will be shared, but how?

A Shared Future is ultimately about factoring others in to all of our public policy, of checks and balances to every aspiration so that human beings are not sacrificed or subordinated to the project of our victory over them. The alternative of segregation and hostility is not a recipe for benign self-

determination but a road to armed Bantustans, controlled by local warlords and draining the public purse. Apartheid is not benign in Northern Ireland as in South Africa. It is a thin veil for ongoing violence, resentment and hatred.

There is, in all of this, a critical role for political leadership. Reconciliation cannot be devolved to NGOs. After Auschwitz, no-one can claim democratic credentials if their national aspirations are not subordinated to wider humane principles: Mechanisms for consent, a commitment to cultural diversity within a shared public space, relationships with the rest of Ireland and the rest of the UK which recognise the predicament of our history, the rule of law supported by all, based on clear lines of equality and human rights, non-violence and commitment to purely democratic politics. Economic and social questions should be dealt with on the basis of personal rights and responsibilities evidence rather than competitive community claim. If political leadership can agree this code of conduct, then the signal that we are safe might become credible for many.

What *A Shared Future* demonstrates is that a commitment to sharing will mean redirecting key public services. Instead of avoiding or denying the problem, taking seriously the need to promote mutual safety and interdependence will mean a radical shift in policy priorities. Community Development can no longer be about increasing inter-community competition, planning must ensure full access to public space by all citizens, cultural policy cannot continue without clarity about democratic cultural diversity, policing must have the confidence and support of all citizens, flags and emblems must be regulated so as not to promote exclusion or aspiration over mutual belonging, power in local government must be shared so as to ensure trust, schools must take seriously the charge that we have educated sides rather than citizens and housing must grapple seriously with the challenge of providing integrated housing in a context of violence. All of this will require a redirection of resources away from mopping up violence and containing riots, towards generating safety and encouraging shared initiatives. Having published the strategy, the next step for government is to get serious about the required resources.

In reality a commitment to sharing with one another and the return of political power to local hands are intertwined. Because unless there is a real commitment to working together and to mutual safety and belonging, devolution will certainly collapse over the strain of sectarian division. The core question is then whether devolution is required for a shared future to be meaningful or whether a commitment to a shared future is required before devolution is viable. In the long run, both must be true. But in the absence of political progress, it is essential that the government, with their Irish and international partners set the parameters and compass, and engage the debate. Reconciliation is not an event, but a long trek from a place where violence and injury determined political life to one in which every party and institution takes for granted its commitment to a shared future for all, no matter what the national jurisdiction. For CRC it remains the key political and policy imperative of our time.

CREATING SHARED SPACES

MIKE MORRISSEY

The documentation generated by the ‘shared future’ process recognises that the concept of sharing has both minimalist and maximalist connotations. The former suggests a balkanised Northern Ireland shared by its two main communities only in the sense that they both reside there – two traditions distributed across a given space but without engagement or any sense of common ownership. In practice, this means the existence of some places in common (e.g. town centres or retail parks) surrounded by other residentially segregated spaces in which there are mutually reinforcing processes of cultural affirmation and identity building. As a result, there is no meaningful sense of sharing. In contrast, the *A Shared Future* policy document is explicitly committed to sharing through engagement and common ownership without diminishing the many benefits of diversity.

Moreover, like many other places, the population of Northern Ireland is recomposing with the introduction and growth of other ethnic groups. While their share of the Northern Ireland population remains small (less than 3%), their existence creates a real challenge of diversity rather than just the attempt (difficult in itself) to find an accommodation between the unionist/protestant and nationalist/catholic traditions.

It should be recognised, however, that the state from which the *A Shared Future* policy emanates has, at best, limited powers to impose change. Arguably, its role is fourfold:

1. To define the relevant policy set (with appropriate consultation and participation);
2. To penalise unacceptable forms of behaviour (discrimination or hate crime);
3. To make sure that its own house is in order – that the public sector complies with the highest possible standards, and;
4. To encourage and support positive practices within civil society.

Within that framework, it is unreasonable to expect that the state can resolve everything without a complementary, active role for citizens – creating a shared future is everyone’s responsibility, while at the same time it is important that the state is held to account for its appropriate responsibilities.

The challenge for all of us lies in finding the means to transform the *A Shared Future* aspiration into a practical process and the purpose of this (short) paper is to suggest some ideas in that respect. Specifically, it is argued that *A Shared Future* needs to be bolstered by a clear understanding about the nature of the problem it seeks to address leading to a greater focus on citizenship as a mechanism that can simultaneously encourage diversity and a common identity. It should be said here that the intention is to make a contribution to a discussion rather than present some fully thought-through thesis.

Northern Ireland is perhaps the world’s most over-researched conflict situation even if there is no consensus about its causes, nature and consequences. However, some of its key dimensions might be summarised as:

- It is fundamentally a dispute about sovereignty; between those who want the area to remain within the United Kingdom and those who want it reunited with the rest of the island, i.e. part of the Irish Republic. To the extent that the sovereignty contest is emphasised, the solution to the conflict cannot lie solely in an internal redistribution of power or economic resources. The fundamental challenge is to the existence of the state rather than whether it has been governed equitably.
- Inevitably, however, issues of equity and social justice overlap and interpenetrate the sovereignty dimension. For some, grievances around socio-economic issues, political rights and civil liberties justified the challenge to the state, even the use of violent methods. For others, such grievances were misrepresented to legitimise a violent conspiracy – demands for reform were no more than the thin end of a wedge designed to undermine the state.
- Such divided opinions are a reflection of a divided society as evidenced in substantial patterns of residential segregation and the lack of mutual engagement between communities that live cheek by jowl. This is, in part, caused by mutual fear and suspicion – all sides to the conflict suffered sufficiently to fear their enemies. Such problems point to the way in which the

conflict is not just a sovereignty contest but also a conflict between two indigenous communities.

- However, some interpretations emphasise the role of sectarianism, a form of supremacism likened to racism, in perpetuating division and catalysing violence. Thus, what one community sees as the exercise of its traditions and culture is seen by the other as a form of triumphalism.
- A further dimension of the conflict is disputed role of the security forces as they responded to political violence. There have been persistent accusations about the suppression of civil liberties, the excessive use of state violence and the collusion between the state and some paramilitary organisations. Conversely, there is the view that such accusations have been part of a strategy to politically paralyse the state's capacity to suppress violence.

The fact that the problems in Northern Ireland revolve around a sovereignty contest as well as other forms of dispute creates multiple problems for any transition to a fully peaceful society. Even where there is agreement that any change of constitutional status depends on an internal democratic mandate, those who challenge the legitimacy of the state can, at best, accord it a conditional legitimacy. Arguably, the notion of legitimacy is absolute - it cannot be partial or conditional. If one of the key protagonists believes that neither the Northern Ireland state nor, indeed, the state in the Irish Republic is truly legitimate, its behaviour cannot be constrained by the laws of either. In short, there are problems in sustaining the rule of law, which is critical in any transition from conflict to peace. This creates ongoing disputes over key issues like the role of the security forces. Moreover, those who favour the status quo tend to regard their opponents as only partially 'reformed' and remain suspicious about behaviour and 'real' motivation. There is thus a perpetual climate of distrust on all sides so that almost any discordant incident can create a block to progress or undermine local effort.

Moreover, the combination of political volatility, unresolved grievance and residential segregation suggests that efforts to encourage engagement between communities can be easily undone by one 'crisis' or another – a problem exacerbated by differences within communities where those willing to take risks are often castigated as 'traitors' by other factions. It is important to understand these dynamics without collapsing into paralysis at the scale of the difficulties.

How does a state, which has only conditional legitimacy for some of its citizens, intervene in such a situation? Having reviewed the strategies of a number of governments both in Europe and elsewhere, Mc Cartney (2003) suggests the various approaches might be categorised as (p.8):

Homogenization: *Homogenization aims to include the whole population in one common identity based around citizenship and assimilating minorities into the society.*

Separate development: *A second goal might be separate development where the Government promotes separation rather than contact or at the least is unconcerned if the different communities develop independently.*

Co-existence: *Co-existence seeks good relations between the different communities without reference to the issues and concerns that divide them. These concerns may be avoided deliberately if they are considered divisive and unhelpful to the development of good community relations.*

Pluralism: *Finally the goal of the policy may be to create a pluralist society, encouraging a positive diversity or pluralism. The latter requires opportunities for communication understanding and respect but a homogenization policy may also look for mixing between the people to create a common identity.*

Interestingly, McCartney recognises that a pluralism strategy may also contain a homogenisation component. However, there is a need to simultaneously appreciate and respect difference and for some overall binding framework that can create a sense of commonality. The main contention here is that only the sense of citizenship can do so. Citizenship involves a bundle of rights and responsibilities that people hold in common. Debates within social policy suggest that rights are social as well as human and political while the more recent debate about active citizenship points to the ways in which active citizenship in governance demands that we balance our rights with real responsibilities.

Arguably, what might be called the public sphere has been distorted by three decades of political conflict in Northern Ireland. The public sector has dramatically expanded to the point where around 60 per cent of Northern Ireland's GDP is made up of public spending. Ignoring economic arguments that

this 'crowds out' private sector enterprise, one consequence is an over-dependence on the state to solve our problems, including that of a macro political settlement. Northern Ireland's two dominant communities are not so much interdependent and externally dependent on the British state to make this or that initiative – even republicans who do not accept the legitimacy of the British state insist that the 'British government must live up to its responsibilities'. A greater sense that the people of Northern Ireland have to solve their own problems might go a long way to facilitating progress.

At the same time, one consequence of the dislocation of the political process and public service delivery has been the erosion of a public service ethic within the public sector. The scrutiny of politicians may be irksome but it, at least, reinforces the sense that the *raison d'être* of public services is to improve the lives of citizens. The Fabian notion of public service remains relevant where civil servants are servants of the people rather than the Crown.

However, while the public sector has expanded, what might be called public spaces have declined. Public spaces are those where access is fully open to all, where people feel secure and where people have a sense of ownership. For example, we talk about public parks rather than district council parks and public highways rather than Department of the Environment highways. A sense of the public is not just about important freedoms, but also a sense of what people hold in common irrespective of political aspiration or cultural tradition. When public spaces become branded by ethnic symbols, they are, in effect transformed into ethnic spaces where 'outsiders' feel uncomfortable or indeed threatened – a characteristic of many places in Northern Ireland.

Reversing this situation is no easy task, but if *A Shared Future* is to be realised in spatial terms, we need to recognise that the balance between common (neutral) space, and public space on one hand and ethnic space on the other needs to be shifted so that the latter is progressively minimised in favour of the former two. This demands that tradition cannot be used as a club against outsiders and that territorial branding is not a genuine cultural expression. Simultaneously, people should have the right to walk the public highway but only in ways that respect those who live alongside them.

This idea is underpinned by the assumption that resolving conflict in Northern Ireland is about changing the political calculus of majority insecurity and minority grievance, which means that progress for one side requires some form of suppression of the other. It is also about reconstituting civil society based on a model of active citizenship rather than social inclusion (Peace I) or economic development (Peace II). That kind of citizenship requires the promotion of key values, (consent, a commitment to peaceful methods, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law) that we should be asked to sign up to before we work out how they affect us for good or bad.

The citizenship/public sphere approach to shared space has been endorsed elsewhere. The stress placed in community cohesion programmes in Britain has been on citizenship education, identification and recognition of shared values, rights and responsibilities, whilst tackling racism and religious bigotry as part of the process. The Independent Working Group on Community Cohesion (2002, p.2.1.) emphasised the urgency of addressing the problem in the British context:

We believe that there is an urgent need to promote community cohesion, based upon a greater knowledge of, contact between, and respect for, the various cultures that now make Great Britain such a rich and diverse nation. It is also essential to establish a greater sense of citizenship, based on (a few) common principles, which are shared and observed by all sections of the community. This concept of citizenship would also place a higher value on cultural differences.

There are, however, obvious difficulties for a citizenship approach where the jurisdiction of the state to which citizens belong is being challenged. The importance of the Good Friday Agreement is that the sovereignty contest could not be immediately resolved within it; rather it set out the means of its resolution – agreement that constitutional change could only happen if supported by a majority of Northern Ireland citizens. The implication of this is that those who challenge the existence of Northern Ireland as an integral component of the UK state have to work with all its institutions until a majority says otherwise. Simultaneously, those who wish to remain within the UK will have to accept the alternative if a majority so decides. Of course, it is in the interest of each of these political aspirations to seek the support of as many of the 'other side' as possible as part of a majority maintaining/building exercise. Doing so demands a full appreciation of the other side's rights and traditions – pluralism becomes the means of pursuing one's own political agenda.

Another problem is whether we are going to have an inclusive or exclusive model of citizenship and this is particularly relevant for ethnic groups outside Northern Ireland's dominant traditions. The degree to which we fear or exclude groups that are new to Northern Ireland reinforces the degree to which we are unable to resolve our traditional divisions.

Finally, the citizenship approach suggests that the long-term debate about the relative effectiveness of single identity (intra-community) or cross-community (inter-community) work needs to be located in a broader framework offering a commonality that does not compromise difference or individuality. The goal of rebuilding civic society demands both investment in community capability and citizenship engagement. Interestingly, people like Robert Putnam suggest that societies with this kind of citizenship engagement are best placed to live in a globalised world.

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TACKLING THE VISIBLE MANIFESTATIONS OF SECTARIANISM AND RACISM

GORDON GILLESPIE

Introduction

I would like to begin by asking you to bear in mind the general point that images and symbols can be very important expressions of an individual or a group's identity. As well as this, as we all know, one person's expression of their political opinion or cultural identity may well be another's intimidation and territorial marking. For example, at the time when my colleague Dominic Bryan and I were conducting research for a report examining the display of flags, and in particular flags connected to paramilitary organisations, the News Letter ran a page one story suggesting that we were proposing 'the end of the traditional Twelfth'. Although this obviously not our objective it did seem perfectly reasonable to us to ask just how 'traditional' the flying of flags from lampposts was – and particularly the flying of paramilitary flags which has been the most controversial area.

Parameters

What sort of visual manifestations are we talking about and how representative of popular opinion are they? Images which could be considered racist or sectarian might take the form of graffiti, wall murals, kerbstone painting, flags or might be particular symbols seen at marches, rallies or bonfires.

Popular reaction to the various type of image also varies widely. The appearance of racist or sectarian graffiti is usually quickly followed by widespread condemnation and removed fairly quickly but just how far removed are such crude images (not to mention sentiments) from some of the views expressed in the wall murals found in most areas of Northern Ireland?

There can be a narrow line between images expressing a hard-line stance on a particular issue (for example on parades) and those promoting support for a paramilitary organisation. At what point does legitimate expression end and territorial marking and intimidation begin?

Some statistics

Statistical information on public perceptions of such images is still relatively limited, however, the most recent figures from the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey (2003) give an indication of the scale of the issue. In response to the question, 'has there been any time in the last year when you personally have felt intimidated by loyalist murals, kerb paintings or flags?' 21% of those questioned answered yes – 23% of Catholics, 19% of Protestants and 19% stating/giving no religion. The same question asked in relation to republican images also brought a yes response from 21% - 12% of Catholics, 29% of Protestants and 14% from those stating/giving no religion. Although these figures are perhaps lower than might be expected a qualifying factor may be that residential segregation means that many people do not come into contact with images which may make them feel intimidated. Having said that the figures still indicate that one in every five people had felt intimidated by such displays.

Flags

On the issue of flag flying, does the question of whether flags are viewed as intimidatory depend on the type of flag being flown, where it is being flown, the number of flags being flown, the duration of time it is flown or combinations of these factors?

The Northern Ireland Life and Times survey for 2003 suggested that 66% of people believed that paramilitary flags should be removed by the police – although 50% believed that laws to this effect would be unenforceable. If this degree of equivocation exists in relation to one of the most clear cut areas of dispute then reaction to attempts to restrict the flying of non-paramilitary flags and in particular 'national' flags (the Union Jack, the Irish Tricolour and the Northern Ireland flag) is likely to be far more contentious. As examples of this issue we only need to think of the ongoing disputes between nationalists and unionists over the flying of the Union Jack on District Council buildings or the flying of Tricolours at the St Patrick's Day concert at Belfast city hall. Do these, in the first case, represent expressions of Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom and of Irish

identity in the second or are they merely more sophisticated examples of territorial marking? Again there is no clear cut answer.

To complicate things further there are, of course, also visual manifestations which, to the untrained eye, appear to have little or nothing to do with Northern Ireland but which also add to the territorial marking – a recent outbreak of flags and graffiti connected to Glasgow Rangers winning the Scottish League or Martin O’Neill leaving Glasgow Celtic and perhaps most bizarrely a few years ago republicans flying Palestinian flags and loyalists flying Israeli flags despite the fact that Britain has arguably been more sympathetic to the Palestinians than Israelis and that the Israelis fought a guerrilla campaign against the British in the 1940s.

In this light it might be helpful to have clearer definitions of what might be considered acceptable visual displays and what are not. This may entail further research on the subject of public reactions both to particular forms of display – murals, flags, bonfires, etc and also to specific symbols. Paramilitary flags, for example, are widely seen as being unacceptable forms of territorial marking and (as I mentioned earlier) and we have some statistical information from the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey on how other flags and murals are perceived. It may, however, also be useful to have more information on how other symbols such as soccer, rugby and GAA shirts, Easter and orange lilies, poppies, the shamrock, etc are popularly perceived.

Context

Having said that, we should not lose sight of the bigger picture, that disputes surrounding visual displays do not emerge from nowhere – these are after all *visual manifestations of an issue*, not (or at least not primarily) the issue itself. The context in which these images appear is extremely important. At local level this may be related to social and economic conditions and to changes in the make-up of the local population leading to a heightened sense of insecurity. On a broader canvas the context may be influenced by developments in local politics or even, in a less tangible form, by some of the trickle down effects of the Good Friday Agreement which have also arguably helped encourage the ‘Balkanisation’ mindset in Northern Ireland.

Policy Implications

Clearly these issues have important implications for policy makers among others. Should, for example, public funds be provided to support loyalist bonfires in order to improve the environment if the bonfires burn the Tricolour or effigies of the Pope? If funding is provided for such loyalist celebrations should funding not also be provided, for example, for the St Patrick’s Day Carnival even if it is, as its critics claim, an almost exclusively nationalist event? Alternatively does funding such events only serve to encourage the sort of cultural apartheid to which most of us are presumably opposed?

Developing Policy

Many of the policy options contained in our report on Flags and in *A Shared Future* have already been implemented or are in the process of being introduced. Not least important in this area has been the development of the Joint Protocol in Relation to the Display of Flags in Public Places produced by the PSNI, DSD, DRD Roads Service, NI Housing Executive and OFMDFM. We would however, like to see similar protocols developed at local level – particularly in relation to interface areas.

There are, however, practical issues to be taken into account - many visible manifestations can be removed but almost as easily replaced. It is therefore important to have the support of local community leaders to ensure that images which are removed stay that way. It is also important that the removal of images not be seen as an attack on the identity of the local community – it is, therefore, better to do this in a wider context, for example, as part of a local environmental clean-up.

In all of this there is a danger of focussing only on the most extreme or high profile visual manifestations while ignoring those that are deemed more politically acceptable or are less well known – for example some of the images contained on internet sites may deserve further scrutiny in the future.

Having said that we clearly have to start somewhere. In this light might I suggest a small step might be a less tolerant approach to election posters still on display long after the election is over. It seems, to

say the least, slightly illogical to complain about flags, murals, etc being erected as territorial markers while images of our political leaders remain on lampposts weeks, months and even years after they should have been removed and effectively also serve the purpose of marking out territory.

***TRANSFORMING LOCAL COUNCILS TO MEET
THE CHALLENGE OF A SHARED FUTURE***

MERVYN RANKIN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, BALLYMENA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Good Relations Strategy was developed by Eileen Beamish, of RES independent consultancy. The process was not without its difficulties and took longer than anticipated to develop due to the fact that this area of work was a new approach by everyone in Northern Ireland, including Ballymena Borough Council, and the fact that it was sensitive and ground breaking work.

The newly elected Council in 2001 agreed not to launch the Strategy but agreed to allow officers to progress it further.

The key themes identified in the Strategy involved mainstreaming Council business in key areas including:

- Cultural Diversity,
- Ethnic Minorities,
- Good Relations Training,
- Single Identity Issues,
- Inter-faith Work,
- Territory Marking and Intimidation Issue, and
- Councillor Relationships.

Ballymena Council's *A Shared Environment* document was launched in June 2003.

It is designed to explain to Ballymena citizens some of the key challenges facing communities in the promotion of good relations within the borough. The document also links the work of good relations to other services, ie Community Safety; Community Development; the District Policing Partnership; the Community Forum; Race Issues and the Local Strategy Partnership.

It was circulated to all households in the Borough. The survey aspect to the document attracted 120 replies, which we felt was somewhat disappointing, but nonetheless useful as the information received itemised key community relations issues.

The council has worked in partnership with Future Ways, University of Ulster, to develop and deliver:

- internal work: Good Relations Staff Working Group,
- a range of Good Relations/Civic Leadership training with Councillors which will be renewed with our new Council, and
- external work: It is hoped to establish a multi-agency group to work on Good Relations issues in the Borough.

A Shared Future and Local Government

In March 2005 the Government released the much awaited *A Shared Future*. The Strategy refers to the fact that transformation of local communities requires action at local government level.

Currently all 26 councils participate in a Government sponsored District Council Community Relations Programme which ensures that each district council has a community relations officer(s) to provide a support role for councils and the capacity to deliver small grant making programmes. This programme will be phased out and replaced with a better-resourced and focused programme called the Good Relations Challenge Programme (GRCP).

From April 2007 councils will be required to prepare a three-year good relations action plan covering employees and local residents. In preparation for this change, training in good relations will be made available to both councillors and council officers.

The GRCP will represent a key component of the Government's Triennial Action Plan and inform councils Community Support Plans.

The GRCP proposals will be submitted to the Community Relations Council. The plans along with recommendations will be forwarded to OFMDFM for approval and the subsequent release of funding by CRC. If the GRCP plan or implementation is unsatisfactory, respective funding may be withheld.

The strategy acknowledges that good relations cannot be developed through the delivery of events alone, nor by narrow service delivery. Local councils need to demonstrate political agreement and community involvement on local policies and plans for the promotion of good relations.

Challenges

1. Timing issues:

- When will it happen, eg wait to the Review of Public Administration?
- Condition of Belfast Agreement, peace process.
- Assembly.
- Review of Public Administration.

2. Governance:

- Political leadership.
- Civic leadership.
- Power-sharing issue.

3. Capacity issues of various players:

- Councillors.
- Community.
- Council departments and statutory bodies.
- Paramilitaries – will they evolve?

4. Mandating space for experiment and new discussions and developments:

- It is essential chief executives and councils give staff the necessary space to create new opportunities to 'think outside the box' and develop new relationships with key people.

5. Linkages to Community Planning:

- Community Support Plan.
- Community Safety.
- Planning.
- Local Strategy Partnership.

6. Operational issues:

- How, when?
- Where will function be located?
- Staffing implications.
- Job descriptions.
- Training issues.

A SHARED FUTURE: *REMAINING CHALLENGES*

ROBIN WILSON, CHAIR, CRC POLICY COMMITTEE

Introduction

The final version of *A Shared Future* (ASF), published before pre-electoral ‘purdah’ in March 2005, represented a significant improvement, in large measure due to the efforts of the CRC, on the pre-Christmas draft. To appreciate the progress that has been made, and to identify what remains to be secured, it is worth recalling first the benchmarks of effective policy-making. In simple terms, these are:

1. define clearly the **problem** to be solved,
2. identify the solution, the outcome, sought as the policy **aim**,
3. break down this aim into **objectives** to realise it,
4. elaborate the **programmes/projects** to fulfil those objectives,
5. establish the **structures/mechanisms** to implement them,
6. determine how **progress** will be assessed and monitored.

This then creates a feedback loop which allows the policy to be revised in the light of experience and research.

The changes made in the final draft are concentrated at the top of this list. This is no bad thing: it is much easier to improve a policy framework if the weaknesses lie in the detail rather than in the overall conception. The limits of our influence further down the policy line reflect the weight of departmental inertia at that level—a key problem for us however to tackle if we are to make further progress. But the effective self-presentation by Duncan during the ASF consultation went a long way to ensuring, even in the original draft, that CRC would have an enhanced role as a structure outside government.

The problem

In the initial version, remarkably, the definition of the community-relations problem was avoided, except in as far as it was argued that it might have negative economic and social effects. There was also ambiguity as to whether ‘difference’ was to be bemoaned or celebrated. This was never the basis for a coherent policy or for effective political leadership to bring it about.

The revised version makes clear that the fundamental problem lies in the domain of *culture* (in the broad sense) and that it is one of *intolerance*. This is an improvement, as politics is a process of moral and intellectual reform. Morally, this seizes the high ground and disables opponents from dressing up sectarianism as a defence of ‘pluralism’. (Genuine pluralism, of course, is about individual diversity rather than communal conformism.) It presents the challenge as a social evil—like drink-driving—which must be relentlessly tackled, including by all of us taking responsibility for it.

Intellectually, it recognises that the problem is by no means specific to Northern Ireland but is merely an acute form of the tensions besetting multi-ethnic societies across Europe and beyond. This is critical

to how it is to be addressed, as it automatically encourages an outward-looking perspective and lesson-learning from elsewhere.

The aim

The initial version of the policy aim did enshrine ‘equity, diversity and interdependence’. Yet these are not aims but (very important) values. The revised version (p8) makes clear that the *goal* is a ‘normal’ civic society, in which all individuals are treated as equals, they resolve their problems through dialogue and the state is impartial as between their contending claims. This is the antithesis of a divided society in which individuals are hoovered up into ethnic groups, whose leaders compete with each other over ‘parity of esteem’.

It gets three very important things right. First, today’s society is an *individualistic* society—not in the neo-liberal sense of the individual as customer but the democratic sense of the individual as citizen. Reconciliation is impossible between people who come together as mere embodiments of group stereotypes and with no conception of a common good. The fundamental reason why the Belfast agreement has not realised the ambition of reconciliation (rather than the failure of the IRA to disband) is the institutionalisation of the former and the absence of the latter.

Secondly, this definition does not counterpose a culture of tolerance to the pursuit of equality. This is critical for Catholic acceptance. But it also does not reduce the first to the second: dialogue has to be genuinely embraced, as the antidote to paramilitary violence. This is just as critical for Protestant endorsement. It is the only vision that can take us beyond unionists and nationalists endlessly talking past each other—the first defining the problem as paramilitarism, the second as inequality.

Thirdly, in this perspective the nature of the state is not up for endless ‘negotiation’, with the ethnic protagonists on either side seeking to enrol the British and Irish governments to their cause. If government continues to fund Protestant-dominated areas to assuage ‘loyalist’ pressure, it will now be acting in breach of its own policy.

Looking ahead (and beyond the further Quixotic negotiations to come), this approach foreshadows a pragmatic constitutional settlement which can be widely accepted, which focuses on devolution with egalitarian power-sharing, and which looks to develop policy and political networks across the UK, across Ireland and beyond. That this settlement looks a long way off should not obscure the little-noticed fact that it is now the only show in town (other than indefinite direct rule from Westminster).

The objectives

The objectives (pp12-13) are a mixture of material from the original document and objectives we suggested. This has connected much more clearly the overall aim and the objectives, and it has made the latter much more robust. And the key area of ‘victims’, which had been completely ignored in the original draft, has now been addressed. The powerful lever represented by public expenditure is recognised in a commitment that decisions in this area will be made impartially, guided by economy, efficiency and effectiveness—which should be seen against how capitulation to competitive sectarian claims has had hugely sub-optimal effects on the overall pattern of public services.

What is still missing from the objectives is a willingness, in the key areas of education and housing, to treat the integrated option as the mainstream rather than the marginal. In the former case, this reflects the way the department has long been captured by the churches, which in effect get denominational education entirely at public expense and so have no incentive to change. **NICIE's proposal that an integrated school should be treated as the default option for new housing developments** (rather than a controlled school being built and/or a demand being awaited from the Catholic authorities for a maintained one) **has not been accepted.**

In terms of housing, the existence of the points system, against the history of sectarian allocations, should mean that the NIHE will not tolerate segregation, as this *ipso facto* narrows the options for those most in housing need. But **the suggestion that new social-housing projects should be integrated from the outset has also been rejected.**

We should still keep these goals in mind, as a society in which most people live separately and the overwhelming majority of kids go to segregated schools is one far removed from the 'normal', civic society to which the policy aim now refers. Such a still divided society will never enjoy the basic solidarities needed to secure a modicum of equality, it will never allow the emergence of safe spaces for dialogue and it will always be beset by competitive claims upon the state from mutually mistrustful 'communities'.

Also missing from the objectives is any reference to the media, despite their prominence (invariably as an object of criticism) in the consultation. This is not because organisations outside government are treated as off-limits: promoting inter-faith dialogue is included. The media are quite rightly always bound to be defensive of their autonomy, under the banner of freedom of expression. **But there remains a need to sponsor a public debate about the role of the media in this society, engaging the press and broadcasters, given their tendency towards a hyper-political style of reporting which takes communal division entirely for granted.**

The programmes

Tackling the issue of flags is clearly central to a number of the new objectives, and ASF does build on the excellent work by Dominic Bryan and Gordon Gillespie for OFMDFM. Already the protocol they proposed and which was advanced in ASF has been agreed between the PSNI and relevant departments. The local protocols they proposed would also considerably constrain the flying of flags at street level.

Absent remains any commitment to new legislation, which could ensure more formal regulation without the privileging of the Union flag contained in the repealed Flags and Emblems Act. Bryan and Gillespie had suggested this be considered. The acceptance in ASF, however, that the display of any flag (not just paramilitary) on any lamp-post (not just on arterial routes) 'should be off limits' (p28) should be built on; if this were enshrined in law, of course, it would mean the police could simply remove it. **Another recommendation** Bryan and Gillespie made which has **not been carried forward** was **exploring the potential of common civic emblems, as with the agreed PSNI and assembly logos.**

Addressing the flags issues is a part of the task of dismantling ‘interfaces’ over time in a context where security is guaranteed. Another, as now recognised in the objectives, is the protection of minorities and mixed marriages from intimidation. In 2003 an individual subject to repeated harassment, apparently sectarian, by a neighbour in Limavady, won on appeal a judicial review of the decision by the NIHE not to repossess the house of the perpetrator, under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, out of concern for the safety of NIHE staff, yet this does not seem to have changed executive policy. **The practice of the NIHE, supported by the police, has to change from rehousing the victim if the perpetrators of intimidation are to be punished and others thus deterred.**

The document commits DSD/NIHE to reject the idea that particular areas should belong to ‘one sort’. But **there is no commitment to removing from social housing estates—public property—the kerbstone-painting, murals and so on which define areas precisely in those terms.** Footpaths and gable walls belong to the public, not local paramilitaries. If any individual or association wants to erect a piece of public art, they should seek planning permission to do so.

Ensuring departments comply with the new objective that all public expenditure be allocated on the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness should have particular implications for interfaces, where demands for separate services have been particularly indulged. It is up to police to ensure the rule of law applies, so that all individuals can attend local services without insecurity, rather than the state agreeing to demands for duplication to suit paramilitary-determined patterns of insecurity or simply to accommodate sectarian prejudices.

The same principle should apply in education. If it is accepted, as ASF does, that nursery, further and higher education should be integrated, there is no reason a different principle should apply to primary and secondary. **But a minimum project should be the integration of teacher training, via an offer of state-of-the-art investment with either side defied not to take part.** If for no other reason, integrated teacher training is needed so that teachers in integrated schools have some training for the demanding educational environment they will enter, but it is difficult to see how teachers trained in isolation can somehow live up to the requirements placed on *all* schools by ASF to contribute to a shared future.

ASF sees potential in Costello for building networks between providers. But these could easily, if allowed, run with the grain of sectarian division. **Progress will depend on incentivising integration: schools should be told that, on the basis of the ‘3Es’ expenditure objective, they are much more likely to receive financial support for new projects—particularly expensive ones like laboratories or sixth-form colleges—if they operate across the communal divide.**

Finally, in the educational area, **there is no specific commitment, in terms of the objectives of inculcating civic-mindedness and understanding the complexity of our history, *vis-à-vis* citizenship education and the teaching of history. The goal must be that the former is given serious commitment (in terms of timetabling, resources, dedicated staff) through key stages 3 and 4, and that the latter offers a rounded history of Northern Ireland for all secondary students (which will have major textbook and training implications).**

Museums are invited to ensure their collections are ‘representative’ of local diversity. Yet this could easily be interpreted as simply reflecting back to local residents taken-for-granted identities and folk memories, rather than stimulating new awareness and self-criticism. **Curators should be encouraged to be challenging and reflective, placing conventional communal narratives in question, rather than dovetailing their exhibitions to what they think is a local ‘balance’.**

One paragraph each in ASF is allocated to the huge areas of the arts and sport—as against 11 on ‘linguistic diversity’. Indeed **no actions are specified** in this section of ASF, essentially the domain of DCAL, **towards the objective to support cultural projects which highlight the complexity and overlapping nature of identities and their global connections.**

The Arts Council should be explicitly charged, without prejudice to criteria of artistic merit, with privileging support for projects which interrogate taken-for-granted cultural identities in its mainstream funding programmes. Links between the ACNI and republic’s Arts Council could be developed for joint funding purposes in this regard.

On sport, **there is no mention of the new stadium** to be built at the Maze site. This is critically important because, depending on the GAA’s final stance, it could be multi-code. **A decision to call it the Stadium of Reconciliation would be a major statement in terms of popular culture and a shared future. The proposed ‘conflict transformation centre’ in part of the site should meanwhile not be allowed to represent a paramilitary ghetto, but should be informed by neutral expertise on the work of reconciliation.**

The bizarre culture war between Irish and ‘Ulster-Scots’ continues to dominate in the cultural arena. ASF now even affirms a kind of ‘parity of esteem’ between ‘British’ and ‘Irish’ sign languages (giving Northern Ireland’s metaphorical ‘dialogue of the deaf’ a whole new concrete meaning). Yet **there is still no recommendation that a statutory interpretation service be provided for all those—a rapidly rising group—for whom English is not the mother tongue.** This is an extraordinary distortion of priorities.

On workplaces, the document promises proposals on ensuring access routes to places of employment are free of ‘overt’ sectarian/racist displays. If the commitments on flags and emblems already made, and those suggested above, were effected, then this problem would be solved in the process.

On ‘communities’, ASF continues to talk about ‘single identity work’ as having a role, regardless of any evidence (which the document makes no attempt to advance) as to its value. All that ‘single identity work’, by definition, can ever do, is reassure participants that they only have one, fixed identity, that they are all identical with one another, and that they are all different from the ‘other side’. That is why it never leads on (as the document wishes to believe) to ‘cross community work’. Indeed, the document retains the unconscious stereotyping of the draft by bracketing all ‘Protestant’ ‘communities’ together and contrasting them with their ‘Catholic’ counterparts. Their needs, it suggests (again without evidence) ‘will be different’.

Continued reference to ‘single-identity work’ is now wholly out of line with the revised policy aim and should be removed. If Protestants want to talk only to Protestants (which is what this usually is), they have every right privately to do so; they have no right, however, to claim public funds from all

taxpayers for the purpose. If they should then decide they want to talk to Catholics, that is a different story. More positively, the revised ASF improves on the earlier draft in terms of recognising the specific contribution made by NGOs in the field of reconciliation, which complies with the new objective to that effect.

In line with the new objective on victims, ASF merely rehearses the March 2005 consultation paper seeking to update the 2002 victims strategy. But **there are no specific commitments on victims, such as to an archive of narratives or to a ‘day of reflection’ for Northern Ireland** (an idea dangerously close to being appropriated in partisan fashion by Sinn Féin). **And, yet again, the challenge of developing an objective ‘truth-finding’ process to produce a useable account of our troubled past is postponed, while *ad hoc* inquiries proliferate with much sense of grievance all round.**

Finally, while ASF speaks of the ‘economic imperative to address the costs of division’, it still undermines this by adding ‘... while recognising concerns around safety and security’. Safety should be guaranteed by the rule of law, not given illusory form by segregation and associated service duplication. As indicated earlier, the ‘3Es’ imply a privileging of integrated provision, reinforcing by the use of economic levers the efforts in other domains to engender a culture of tolerance.

It would be wrong to add yet another auditing requirement here, an *ex post facto* account of whether particular service patterns assist or do not assist ‘good relations’. **There should simply be clear guidance from DFP to departments and from departments to agencies that projects which are not hidebound by communal divisions will be much more likely to be funded than those which are.**

The structures

In terms of central government, the fact that this is *the* Northern Ireland problem has still not sunk in. The revised draft still insists: ‘Departments and agencies will, *having regard to all other competing priorities*, actively and demonstrably seek to shape policy and practice such that it [sic] supports the Government’s priority of promoting good relations.’ **This rider provides a let-out for any senior official minded to avoid foregrounding communal division in favour of what they would have done anyway.**

The cross-departmental ‘Good Relations Panel’ to ‘harness action across government’ still makes no reference to *non-governmental organisations*, even though their critical role is now recognised in the new objectives. And while it is to be chaired by the head of the civil service, there is no ministerial involvement. Oddly, it is ‘public authorities’ which are to ‘set the pace on movement towards a shared society and lead by example’. **It remains a curious aspect of this whole discussion that ministers—the government—are absent from it, despite the political leadership and policy steer that is absolutely essential for success in such a challenging area. As with the Race Forum, the responsible minister should chair the forum and NGOs and experts should be included in it.**

There is recognition that it is ‘timely’ to review the legislative underpinning of work in this area. But **there is no commitment to new legislation, despite the many new programmes, as indicated above, that are required if a serious assault on the culture of intolerance is to be made, and despite the need for a broad public and political debate in this regard.** Instead, the focus remains

on more auditing, with officials asked to consider how any new policy they develop ‘might be best *delivered* to promote good relations’ (my emphasis). Instead of the Northern Ireland Office ministerial team asking themselves what specific policies they might *devise* to tackle sectarianism or racism, ‘good relations’ will thus be swallowed up in the maw of the ‘integrated impact assessments’, routinised and marginalised.

Part of the case for legislation is, as the document admits, the enlarged role to be conferred on the CRC. Even if not legally necessary, this would be desirable symbolically, and would add to the (still contested) legitimacy of the CRC. **There remains a weakness in the proposed remit for CRC in that the challenge function is only vis-à-vis local government, whereas it is assumed that an independent CRC will nevertheless be ‘working in partnership’ with departments.** There will inevitably be tension here if CRC is to retain its independence.

The succeeding section on action at local-government level continues to avoid any discussion of power-sharing in district councils or the display of flags from town halls. This is now incompatible with the new policy aim, in terms of resolving differences through dialogue and ensuring the state—including its local representation—is neutral. And the Review of Public Administration, which devotes only a few paragraphs to the issue of local division, does not provide any answers. Any ‘good relations strategy’ will mean nothing unless these issues of local governance are tackled.

On ‘community’ level action, there is a mistaken assumption that anything that happens outside government happens in ‘communities’. Yet much that can and must be done by departments will only be done in conjunction with NGOs, which may be regional or sectoral, rather than neighbourhood-based. This section testifies to the value of trade unions, for example, in this regard, but the ‘community’ lens, so commonly and unthinkingly applied in Northern Ireland, gets in the way of turning this into concrete activities.

On finance, as indicated earlier there is a good case for privileging projects which contribute towards the policy aim. But **a further incentive would be a ring-fenced fund for which departments and agencies could bid, but only in conjunction with other departments/agencies or NGOs, for ‘joined-up’ projects.** Some of the most innovative projects in the equally challenging area of social exclusion—the Foyer projects for young homeless, for example—have been the product of multi-department/agency collaboration brokered by an NGO (in this case the Simon Community). Given the huge, and now admitted, cost of sectarianism, investment of a relatively small sum in robust projects would be very prudent indeed. With CRC’s meagre resources committed to core-funding for a small number of key organisations, the victims/survivors scheme and the EU measure, such a fund would be invaluable for innovation and lesson-learning.

Progress

On monitoring and evaluation, **there is no reference to the numbers of pupils in integrated schools and, despite this now being referred to in the objectives, mixed marriages.** It is important that the indicators included in the CRC’s triennial health assessment are driven by the outcomes the objectives are intended to achieve. The document recognises that much of the attitudinal data required is already collected by the Life and Times Survey. It also rightly points to the value of qualitative research to assess the success or otherwise of particular programmes and projects.

What is missing after this section is any policy feedback loop. What evaluation, as distinct from monitoring, should entail is a constant process of iteration whereby the experience of practitioners and the evidence of research is used to renew and reform policy as it develops. So while the three-year ‘health’ check, and the report to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, will be useful, there needs to be a sustained commitment to this policy framework, including a recognition that it will evolve over time in what can only be a very long haul. A wider forum bringing together government and NGOs (and academics), as suggested earlier, would have been better than the Good Relations Panel in this regard.

Conclusion

There is still no official recognition that improved ‘community relations’, far from being an occasional minor item on the agenda for further inter-party ‘negotiations’, is the *sine qua non* of a stable constitutional settlement and its only secure foundation. The ASF document in its final version is an important step along that road, but three key further steps are required to rise to the very severe challenge we face:

- 1) There must be direct and sustained political engagement and leadership from the direct-rule team, and from all the key civic actors in Northern Ireland.
- 2) The centrality of this task must be drilled down into departments and agencies, by a mixture of political direction and financial leverage.
- 3) There must be formal and iterative dialogue between departments/agencies, the CRC and non-governmental practitioners and experts.

None of this would mean everything would be got right overnight. This would be impossible in such a complex policy area, where mistakes will undoubtedly be made and even successes will often only be apparent over the long run. But it would ensure we set in train a process that would see the policy, and its effectiveness, gain more and more traction over time in realising the outcome it now seeks.

CONFERENCE CHAIR CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The most important point to highlight from this year’s policy conference was the tremendous job done by Dympna, Dave, Peter and other CRC staff in making the affair such a success. The venue was also an inspired choice, making a useful connection with the Indian community and signalling publicly that the CRC is not confined in its work to a ‘two communities’ straitjacket blind to Northern Ireland’s growing ethnic-minority population.

The volume and range of attendance, particularly from voluntary- and public- (though not private-) sector bodies, was very encouraging. The *A Shared Future* framework, launched in March, set the tenor for the day; it will be impossible to ‘deliver’ this agenda in a mechanical, top-down fashion. Rather, what will be involved will be a complex network of organisations and individual actors, within government certainly but also in a wide range of civil-society associations. The conference suggested there is already the nucleus of this network, with CRC (as it should be) at its hub.

It was unfortunate in this context that the conference was not addressed by a minister, with Billy Gamble standing in from OFMDFM. Billy himself said that there was no more important public policy area, but the focus of ministerial attention in subsequent weeks was on the conventional bargaining agenda of the ‘peace process’. This takes the unionist-nationalist antagonism for granted and thus has so far left communal division entirely intact (indeed the effect of government initiatives since the latest IRA statement has been another lurch towards polarisation). Billy did say however that Jeff Rooker, whose brief this is, would relaunch *A Shared Future* with a ‘major campaign’.

Billy identified the challenge of ‘putting good relations at the centre of policy’. This has two aspects: substantive and procedural. Key to the first will be the triennial action plan. Billy said it should fulfil the objectives set out in section 1 of ASF, which would imply significant strengthening of what is proposed by departments so far. Procedurally, the proposed Good Relations Panel is central. Billy said this would ‘have the full backing of ministers’ (ie it would be chaired by an official), ‘supported by mechanisms’ which would ‘draw in the views of wider civil society’. The latter might be a means, without making the panel unwieldy, to allow greater impetus and innovation to emerge.

For the CRC working group on ASF I have prepared a ‘gap analysis’ (set out above) between what is currently in ASF and what we would ideally like to see. In this regard Mike Morrissey made a valuable contribution in terms of the language that needed to be adopted to express what we were trying to achieve. He said that ASF was welcome in that it rejected the ‘Balkanisation’ option of sustained segregation, but he doubted whether ‘shared’ was a sufficiently robust term to underpin a new future. He proposed a focus on reconstituting and reforming the *public realm* in Northern Ireland.

Mike argued that the public realm had been distorted during the ‘troubles’ with the growth of the assumption that ‘government should solve everything’. There was a need to define and police unacceptable social behaviour (as was to be subsequently conspicuously absent in terms of the UVF takeover of estates in its prosecution of the feud with the LVF). Good practice should be supported, and beyond that we all had individual responsibilities as citizens. While the public *sector* had expanded over the last four decades, the public *sphere*—the space where access was universal and security guaranteed—had shrunk, he said, as civil society had been eroded. The ‘rule of law’ had to be a key value in the policing of bad behaviour, and space had to be created for safe conversations.

One aspect of defending and promoting the public realm is the removal of sectarian/paramilitary symbols on walls, lampposts and streets. Gordon Gillespie made it plain that while graffiti was frequently removed murals—often more intolerant—were not, and that there would be more resistance to the removal of ‘national’ than paramilitary flags. He said the protocol on flags arising from ASF (which has yet to be clearly implemented, as a recent story on the flying of paramilitary flags in central Belfast indicated) had to be backed by local protocols. These could be linked perhaps to wider environmental clean-ups.

John McGrath addressed the issue of ‘community development’ in the light of ASF, which he stressed should not be seen by government departments (his being DSD) as an ‘add on’. Much work on community development hitherto had been of doubtful outcome, by implication being too narrowly focused: ‘We can’t build lots of little silos’. He linked this to ASF via the (intercommunal) concept of ‘community cohesion’, developed in Britain in response to the warning in the Cattle report that in some English towns white and Asian populations were living ‘parallel lives’. He also stressed

immigration into Northern Ireland by members of ethnic minorities had to be seen as an opportunity to inject fresh talent, rather than treated as a threat (as, for example, in the hostility of some Sandy Row residents in Belfast to the multi-ethnic population of an apartment block there).

Mervyn Rankin tackled the responsibilities of local government in this regard. He pointed to the fragmentary nature of community safety partnerships, district policing partnerships, local strategic partnerships and work on community development and equality issues. Assisted by Future Ways, Ballymena had sought to bring that together under its good-relations policy, he said, but this had met opposition such that it was merely 'adopted' by the council rather than publicly launched. The question remained as to how this fitted with the Review of Public Administration, and in particular the challenges of power-sharing and civic leadership (on which see the paper on the RPA submitted by the CRC in September 2005).

The politicians' panel in the afternoon revealed, as expected, no consensus. Only the Alliance and SDLP speakers echoed the themes of the new policy agenda. Stephen Farry (Alliance) pressed the case against segregation in public services, while Alban Maginness (SDLP) argued that we put too much emphasis on identity and religion and that community relations had worsened since the Belfast agreement due to 'bad politics', of 'recrimination' rather than 'reconciliation'. The unionist politicians did not really engage with the agenda at all and the SF speaker, John O'Dowd, made plain that his party's focus was on the 'equality, or lack of equality' which he said had been 'at the heart of the conflict'. While Nelson McCausland chaired the session with impartiality, the lack of support among the representatives of the 'ethno-nationalist' parties on both sides for the development of a culture of tolerance raises challenges for the CRC in the light of the prospect of greater party-political representation on council as a result of ASF.

Duncan Morrow summed up the conference by saying that the alternative to a shared future was a *scared* future. He stressed (as of course ASF does not commit) that more resources needed to follow the new policy framework. And he concluded with a more profound political comment. The strategy of the governments, he said, had been to 'put devolution first'. ASF implied that this was the wrong way round: the challenge was to set out that shared future clearly, and *then* stable devolution could be established. Subsequent events, with renewed power-sharing years rather than weeks or months away, have underscored this assessment.

More positively, the conclusion we can draw from this event is that CRC has many actual and potential friends out there, in civil society and among public-spirited officials. Its task will be to advocate the rebuilt and expanded public sphere with which those allies and others will feel at ease, and which can temper fear and engender security. That will entail a new political discourse on the part of ministers, a comprehensive action plan to flesh out ASF, visible change which engages practitioners on the ground, an effective system for continuing dialogue on policy development, and the remodelling of power-sharing and civic leadership in local government via the RPA. That sets a frame for the policy committee of CRC over the months ahead and for next year's policy conference.

APPENDIX 1 DELEGATES' COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Councils

- Good Relations Programme should be placed in the Chief Executive's office.
- Important to get good relations embedded in the work of councils as they often are the immediate connection to the community and have responsibility for giving civic leadership.
- Need for good relations training and education for all council staff and elected representatives.
- Checks and balances and accountability on local government to work together and promote good relations.
- Promote good and best practice eg in councils. Advertise these in local communities to raise awareness. They should also be highlighted and replicated.
- Investment in capacity should be bottom-up (i.e. in local communities) as well as at top level (with politicians).
- Make sure good practice is highlighted and shared so that everyone can find out what works well, cf Equality Commission website.
- Ensure there is always good/high quality training on equality and the good relations duty.
- Make sure you check what happens in practice.
- Good relations policy will not work unless it includes focussing on sectarianism, cultural intolerance, etc.
- Ensure funding is available to sustain the work.
- Not necessarily about paying consultants to do work for you.
- Compliance is not commitment – fear of enforcement.
- They must work with other agencies – health/education to produce holistic approaches to benefiting local communities.
- There should be a set standard for good relation practice and delivery for all councils and appropriate sanctions if they don't comply.
- Consider aspect of sanctions, eg withdrawal of funding for inadequate good relations policy proposals by councils.
- Promote innovative risk taking local community relations work – through councils (safe CR work not enough)
- Link community relations partnerships and Policing Partnerships and Community Safety.
- Council officers should be allowed to encompass dialogue with all sections of the community.
- Develop shared community centres.
- This match between *A Shared Future* and democratic views expressed at the polls.
- Need a minimum standard of delivery of good relations at district council level.
- Incentivising and penalising councillors and councils who are not dealing with top 3-5 hard community relations issues. These could be identified by council officials or an independent regional body.
- Every council to carry out external audits and be compelled to deal with outcome.
- External monitoring of councils and how they perform (delivery, outputs, outcomes). Publish this data and impact on Triennial Action Plan and wider policy issues to address any issues which have been revealed.
- Find out what councils want to do?
- Linking environmental improvement and/or economic development to producing community relations outcomes.
- Councils need to consult and assess equality impact of their own policy on flags. Lead by example.
- People/communities may be looking to councils to take that 'leap of faith' to build trust and good relations.
- Keep engagement of council good relations policy with the wider community who are the critical and most important piece of good relations policy.
- Councils need to engage the local community if their actions are to have real impact.

Councillors

- A statutory duty should be imposed on councillors through a code of conduct to promote good relations.
- Make public servants accountable.
- Training for councillors should be encouraged, but it should be transparent and accountable.
- Councillors need to and should engage/consult with communities.
- Increase capacity of councillors to be involved in good relations work.
- Mandatory good relations training for councillors.
- Local councillors should be accountable in terms of good relations responsibilities, eg public statements, reported meetings, etc.
- Power-sharing should be made a legal duty.
- Good relations training should become a standard for local councillors.
- Councillors must show civic/public responsibility.
- Councils should be surcharged for bad relations, such as flags and emblems.
- Make council code of practice compulsory for councillors.
- A code of conduct needed for public representatives.
- To change attitudes of councillors there must be a community relations code of conduct enforced with legislation.

Community Relations Officers (CROs)

- There should be CROs in place in all councils and more when the RPA reduces the number of councils.
- Need for CROs to take more authority and be given high status if good relations is to have status.
- Make CROs into Good Relations Officers to include race relations.
- Bring together all relevant staff with good relations input, eg CRO, DPP Manager, Community Safety Officer, Community Development Officer, Equality Officer, and write strategies to include all these.
- No more funding for Christmas tree lights as a community relations project.

Section 75(2): the promotion of good relations

- Equality Commission should publish good relations guidance and a partnerships with practitioners should be established.
- Equality Commission should be more proactive in promotion of good relations through incentives and tackling differential status between Section 75(1) and Section 75(2), ie good relations is seen as the poor relation.
- Good relations programmes are optional. There should be incentives to achieve buy-in and sustainability – mainstreaming.
- ECNI, CRC and different organisations have different definitions – need for review.
- Give clear definition of good relations, and make available sufficient training and advice.
- Clear targets for public bodies for implementing good relations should be set.
- Make good relations awareness programmes compulsory.
- Other bodies affecting society are not subject to the good relations policies.
- Need to find a way to foster an ethos of good relations with sanctions for those who don't and enforcement for those who are reluctant to participate.
- No consequences if people/organisations do not withhold or promote good relations strategies.
- Good relations – poor relation to S75(1). No real enthusiasm in the public sector and no push to implement by Equality Commission.
- A mechanism to hold people to account beyond S75(2) – stronger sanctions.
- Partnership is the key and ECNI should provide forums for exchanging best practices.
- Put good relations legislation on equal footing with equal opportunities legislation.
- Existing legislation framework should be expanded – Bill of Rights.
- Is Shared Future now Section 75(2)?

Review of Public Administration

Code of conduct for local government – through RPA:

- compulsory sharing,
 - promotion of good relations, and
 - respect among councillors.
-
- RPA may encourage competition and better class of political representative but could also move them away from local area – less representation.
 - Power-sharing must be way to go in new arrangements.
 - Widen debate on review of public administration – let everyone be aware of what is happening and how it affects them.
 - Difficult to engage people and bring people on board to discuss these issues that affect everyone.
 - Use money from Exchequer better – this may be a prompt for change.
 - Public sector – too large.
 - Departmental sharing.
 - Need somewhere to have difficult conversations – a safe environment.

Shared space

- Public spaces should be neutral – territorial marking should be actively discouraged and removed.
- Local agreement only way to tackle problem – different arrangements in different areas.
- Agree with principles, difficulty putting into practice.
- If paramilitary flags and symbols are illegal then what are the PSNI doing about it?
- Neutral shared spaces where all can get involved if wish. But in interface areas there are people who dare not speak out.
- Is sharing space neutralising space? Or is it more than that?
- Take down the flags and murals but through dialogue and get local agreement and community relations programmes in place.
- Decision makers need to buy into concept, not just see it as something they have to do!
- Need to monitor and evaluate access to shared spaces.
- A focus on neutrality on main arterial routes and town centres.
- Training on providing a shared space among those responsible for managing society as a whole.
- Enforcement in the first instance of neutrality. The removal of wearing football shirts etc.
- Issue of safety and security is very important: what's real and what's perception.

Integrating education

- Education is seriously fragmented – can we get to the place where we have an educational realm? Is the spirit there? (Look at Costello).
- Support for integrated education (both adult/children).
- Merge the teacher-training colleges.
- Money for pupils at integrated schools.
- Controlled/maintained on same site.
- Enhancement of schools community relations scheme, ensure top priority.
- Look at shared space in universities.
- Activities that bring children together.
- Celebrate diversity.
- Make sectarianism something for idiots – uncool and embarrassing.
- Education – parenting; citizenship schooling – share resources; sectarianism is wrong.

Housing

- The NIHE got us into this mess – how are they going to get us out of it?
- Learn from sectarianism and not end up with black ghettos as well as Catholic and Protestant ones.
- Greening and orangeing must stop somewhere.
- Create opportunities for mixed housing.
- Culture change – how can you change ‘public sector’ culture – ‘delivery to all?’
- Where do we house the growing Catholic community in north Belfast?

Mixed communities

- Need to value and learn from existing mixed communities.
- It’s not easy to be a mixed community – need supported and sustained to survive.
- We have mixed communities under threat – how can *A Shared Future* help?
- Mixed communities are put under threat from outsiders. More policing in these areas or we will lose them.
- Ballynafeigh – a good example but little support.
- Most mixed areas are too expensive for first-time buyers. Give financial help to people wanting to buy in mixed areas. Maybe co-ownership scheme?

Flags and emblems

- Research/understanding of why people want to paint kerbstones/bonfires etc?
- Is this what the whole community want or just sections of it?
- Need to engage much more proactively with those who actually put up flags, paint kerbstones etc.
- Stronger enforcement of existing legislation on flags, street furniture etc.
- The law needs to be clear and enforceable (and enforced) regarding the flying of flags.
- More consultation needed with key players at community level from policy makers,
- eg protocol launched before anyone had knowledge of it.
- Honesty about who is talking to whom.
- Public bodies need to take issue of flags etc much more seriously.
- The sighting of flags can be just as intimidating as the nature of the flag itself.
- Constant dialogue of learning and respect, among everyone as everyone is affected by symbols.
- Engage with local community/residents first for voluntary compliance, then enforcement if necessary.
- Priority to maintain mixed areas re flags and emblems, eg housing estates, with strict enforcement.
- Paramilitary flags must be removed – local accommodation.
- Local protocols need to be developed by looking to the successes and replicating them.
- Start taking flags down where there is consensus on the issue.
- An anonymous means of reporting flags.
- Process of dialogue/discussion around flying flags – softly, softly approach to reach common understanding.
- Models of good practice would be helpful/informative in what, for many, remains an ill defined area.
- Need for communication strategy, but one that demystifies the jargon to make it meaningful at street level.
- Establish local protocols as mechanisms to promote engagement and consensus.
- Government must invest in promoting diversity – a concerted approach will not come cheap.
- Whom do I contact to get a flag taken down from the lamppost outside my house and the painted kerbstones and the mural on the gable wall?

- They are allowed to carry paramilitary flags at parades so why would they be afraid to put them up in streets?
- Cannot be forced on any community – has to be from choice. Have to go through a process that engages community.
- Recognise that there has been a change re flags and murals but in most cases has come from communities.
- Most people are afraid to complain about flags and emblems even when it devalues their house and bring down their area.
- Find out who puts them up and work with them or charge them, but put a stop to it.
- Easier to identify obvious signs, much harder to address institutional sectarianism.
- Key is to find things that the community are willing to accept. Change has to be community led and driven, especially if it is to be maintained.
- Public policy maybe should be concentrating on symbols/flags murals etc in/around arterial routes.

Bonfires

- Where is financing and motivation behind these coming from?
- Do people contribute to this due to intimidation/fear?
- Education to understand and discourage this.
- Who will deal with illegal materials such as tyres?
- More festivals, less bonfires that are a nuisance and danger to communities.
- Why do councils fund these? They are not a cross community event.

General *A Shared Future* policy

- Have key competencies relating to good relations and equality as part of the objectives civil servants have to meet.
- Measure evidence on annual basis.
- Often see situations where actions send out a louder message than the words of public documents and commitments.
- Local public services should be shared and justified on economic grounds.
- Central government policy should complement policy of local government.
- Mechanism for engagement between departments and local government.
- Ownership to communities to decide what they want for themselves.
- How do we engender responsibility for ‘a shared future’ among individuals?
- Work on what is wrong, unequal in society – held accountable and legislated for rather than ‘nice happy dreams’.
- Follow up promises of help when progress is made – no more empty promises.
- In relation to racism it might be possible to learn from other countries as this isn’t just a problem in Northern Ireland.
- Monitor public statements by elected representatives – use of inflammatory/sectarian/racist language – should there be penalisation for this?
- Need creative way of working with communities on issues of flags, murals, cultural expression.
- Hard conversations which allow reflection and reality checks. Community can develop ways of expressing cultures, eg have process right.
- People feel that their cultural identity is under threat.
- LOSS – feelings of loss must be acknowledged/recognised and worked with.
- Revenge is a huge issue.
- We need to work collectively to get to a place where people can be who they are, i.e. expressing identity, culture without causing/taking offence.
- Politicians need to articulate their visions for shared future.
- Politicians must be challenged on their vision for the future.
- Politicians use excuses of not bringing communities with them – so they can’t move on.

- Community relations branches of government departments should be more central and prominent. This should be the case in local government and other public authorities.
- Faith-based beliefs can run counter to rights-based values and beliefs.
- Whose role is it to promote good relations within the private sector?
- Acknowledgement and respect of ongoing good work taking place, eg at grass roots level.
- Less bureaucracy for groups seeking funding for community relations work.
- If measures are statutory/law this may cause some reluctance.
- Training and working with people on the ground.
- Protestant community not getting 'fair share'.
- Encourage diversity as this encourages enterprise and should divert energy from conflict.
- Use economy as community relations issue.
- Measure reducing public sector and new businesses.
- Training people who have influence in local communities, eg councillors and other community leaders and influencers – should filter through to everyone.
- Discussion about under-pinning shared value base.
- Local answers to local questions – localise.
- Need to disseminate info re good practice.
- Diversity training should be compulsory, comprehensive with accredited and non-accredited variety.
- Need major initiatives to promote attitudinal change, as per smoking, drink driving etc.
- Wider distribution of *A Shared Future* but quickly put in place structure and actions.
- Peace will not happen on its own and *A Shared Future* will help the peace process.
- Should address confrontational language/terminology of politicians/public representatives.
- Training re ASBOs/policing for sectarian incidents.
- Explore further role of legislation, especially effecting civic change by politicians.
- Challenge of civic leadership in contentious issues, .g flags, emblems and parades.
- Need to address challenges of engagement with those who exercise power at a street level, including paramilitary organisations.
- Relationships are extremely important – need to be raised up.
- Develop dedicated space for safe conversation.
- Equal partnership with community.

