

Community Relations Council



Challenge of Change Conference

Interface Working Group

30th March 2009



Acknowledgements

The Challenge of Change conference is the concluding event, in a series of consultation events, on a proposed strategy for the regeneration of interfaces across Belfast coordinated by the Community Relations Council (CRC) on behalf of the Interface Working Group (IWG).

This report highlights the process to date and more importantly, the views of the consultees who generously gave their time to participate in this important process.

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The next step for us all is to assist in the eventual creation of vibrant, safe and sustainable interface communities in Belfast.

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.” Maya Angelou

Dympna McGlade, Director of Policy, CRC

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Introduction: Duncan Morrow, CRC

Good morning; you are all very welcome to this conference today which is something we have been working on for almost a year, or maybe actually more. It is very much part of a conversation which, I suppose, in this formal sense we began among a few agencies and it now has to become a conversation not just of agencies, but a conversation of everybody. So from that point of view this conference marks both the beginning of a new conversation and the end of an old process where, we were thinking about how we could, as public agencies, at least get ourselves ready to have these conversations. We are delighted that everybody has made it here today and we look forward to an event which both deals with tough questions and takes us all further in at least putting those questions onto the table, because it's very clear that no conversation about something as difficult as an interface is ever an easy conversation. If it's easy it's not dealing with the real questions.

This isn't expected to be an easy conversation but it is a conversation that somehow or other we need to have and all conversations have to start somewhere. I'm very much looking forward to the opportunity to at least address some big questions which have big importance - most urgently for people that live beside interfaces, and in interface areas, and then beyond that to the whole of Belfast and beyond that, actually to the whole of the politics and society and future of this place. So this is certain, from the Community Relations Council's point of view, a conversation which we don't think should be avoided, or could be avoided and so this is a very good day to be here.

We all know that behind an interface barrier is something more important, the fear and insecurities of communities. Fear is not just thought up it is real and evidenced fear and insecurity. So for these reasons interfaces can be discussed as just walls and barriers and everyone can see those, and international visitors can come and be appalled that that is how we live. At the same time we all know, and certainly the reinforced message coming back from everything you ever do regarding interfaces, is that the walls aren't the issue. The issue is that the walls were the solution to a deeper problem and the deeper problem round them.

But at the same time we have to be honest that the barriers, as well as protecting people in the short run, also reinforce the senses of division and attract people to act on the notion that that's where you go if you want to cause trouble. So it hasn't in any sense been an easy ride for the communities that have to live up against them because it has a big, big impact not just on the quality of life of people living there in the short run, which is obvious, but the economy not only of areas but of this whole city is distorted. Getting investment in, keeping investment in, keeping jobs in, keeping people in, keeping facilities in, to make sure everybody can access facilities - all of those things are clearly affected by interfaces, and if you look at all the indicators, interface areas are the areas that suffer most in all of those issues.

And so this isn't just a question of niceness and nice conversations this is about seriously talking about how do people have a right for participation in the economy and so I want to say that from our point of view, this isn't just a question of resolving a fight; it is a question of making a society that works, and an economy that works. At the core of the Programme for Government was a commitment of building a sustainable and profitable society. This process is a contribution and a necessary element if we are to do that for everybody because the peace dividend, the so called peace dividend that we have all enjoyed has had much less of an impact in areas where there are interfaces. And yet, they are some of the places and communities and areas which had some of the most difficult times.

There is a question of what we want to change and how we want to change it. It impacts on society, on the notion of social inclusion, it impacts on the economy, it impacts on the government and politics, and maybe above all it impacts on what we in this society think of as normal. That it's normal that some people in this community live in fear of other people; or that some people feel that because the neighbours are of the wrong sort; or because we can't

get communities in some kind of way to live peacefully along side one another. That it is somehow a legitimisation which young people at least pick up as a reason to start or some young people to start, it's not fair to brand all young people, but some people pick up as a reason to cause what is now called anti social behaviour. It is still a plague on the same communities.

So, the issue is not the walls, but changing norms of behaviour and attitudes about violence; about neighbours; about who we are and, I suppose, the goal in conflict transformation. If we're not just managing this by putting up more walls, we're actually trying to find better ways of doing security.

It's about making violence unthinkable or at least unallowable on the basis of this kind of stuff. It's reconnecting communities to the economy and the city and the safety of everybody not the safety against everybody. And it certainly is about moving from containment of communities in difficulties, to a way in which people can be assured that the risk has gone and it is certainly not about putting communities at risk. Everybody has to know what is happening, everybody has to be allowed to express the fears that they have and those have to be legitimately experienced. So today is not about stopping any conversation happening, or driving a certain direction, except the direction that we think quality of life depends on.

Finding better answers than we have now to these problems and most particularly, for those who live along side them.

In some senses, barriers are still the immediate option when you get to an emergency. A ten year conversation has to start somewhere and if we delay this conversation starting for 5 years it will take 15; if we delay it for 10 it will take 20. So it's our view that the opportunity is now and we are very, very honoured to have the Junior Ministers here today to support this and start the conversations. We know that it's not one conversation, in the end it becomes a series of different conversations, in different places, appropriate to different experiences, different needs and different circumstances. So in the end this isn't about agencies or groups, or even governments having a policy, it is in the end about how policy makes sense for everybody on the ground and in real communities.

I suppose what I am here to say is, I hope this conference begins that conversation and that it is real and genuine and that the leadership that is required isn't just from one person or another, a politician; or from a community leader; or from an agency - it's a collective conversation and I think part of what we are trying to do here is make sure that there really is that and it becomes more than that as we go forward.

With that in mind, I would like to ask Tim Losty, whom we have been working with in the North Belfast Unit, to come up and say a few words about the context in which we are working and maybe something about this conference and the agenda on it.



Tim Losty, NBCAU

Some of us have met over the last few weeks because there has been a series of seminars, consultations, and individual meetings around this subject and I suppose we all know why we are here and the part that we have to play. What I want to emphasise is the issue of partnership - that the issue of interfaces and walls is not just a problem for the communities that live beside those interfaces and walls, who have experienced the problems in the past. We need to give out the message that we as a united community are here to deal with the issues and the reasons as to why those walls went up.

To some extent it was easy to put walls up because it was meeting a very definite need at the time, but having put the walls up we didn't have a strategy for how the walls would come down. What we need to emphasise at every stage of the conversation process is - we will not be doing this to you. This will be a process that will lead to actions and those actions will only happen when the communities themselves say they want these actions to happen. We need to be in there working with you and supporting you and when we talk about partnership, it's not just a term we want to throw about, as if it's just a name we're going to put to something, because there won't be change unless we have the community; the statutory; the political; and the ministerial involvement to make these things happen.

We also recognise that we need some small wins. We need some small steps to build confidence that we can continue on with the process. We know it will be a long process and it may not always be a straightforward one, but there is a commitment from everyone involved, that we will deal with those issues and that dialogue is the best way for dealing with those issues. There will be challenges for us in the statutory sector – maybe there are things that

we have to change. There may be some ways that we will be challenged; that communities will be challenged and the political establishment may be challenged but there is a commitment that we need to start the process so that eventually whether it's five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years we get the effect that we all want.

We are also very conscious, and I suppose that most recent events have highlighted this, that the process should never be taken for granted. We should always be paying attention to the detail of the process, as well as what we are trying to work towards in the long run. We have a community that has developed around the issues of interfaces. People have built a confidence of working with each other and working with the statutory and political establishment, so it is important that people know that we are all there to help and deal with matters whenever they arise.

Conference Address: Junior Ministers Gerry Kelly and Jeffrey Donaldson



Junior Minister Gerry Kelly

You're all very welcome here. I have to say, just on a personal note, that it sort of lifted my heart when I walked in, because I was brought up very close to here, and that's my playground, that dam out there. I can assure you that up to my early teens it had nothing to do with interfaces and more to do with swans and tin boats and all the rest of it.

So, we're really glad to be here. Thank you for the invitation, for the Challenge for Change and I'd like to begin by saying that we are pleased to be at this event and hope that it will assist in the work of the Interface Working Group.

I hope I can make a contribution towards the practical progress in exploring the scope for change in the interface areas and removing barriers. As many of you may know, myself and Jeffrey jointly chair the North Belfast Working Group, which also considers the problems and issues associated with interfaces and parades. And you may have heard a lot of talk about the Programme for Government and in particular a commitment to building a shared and better future for all. The Executive is determined that everyone in our society should have the opportunity to live in a fair and equitable society which is at ease with itself and where everyone can share and enjoy a better quality of life. We must give all sections of our community a stake in the future. We need to create and share wealth and build an inclusive society.

I was just looking through the programme – the problem with inviting two Ministers is that you get two speeches but I guarantee that it won't be too long. We try and work out doing half a speech each. But I do think it's important, Duncan and Tim mentioned this, that it is the two of us who are here; that there is a joint approach to this and that there is determination to bring this conversation forward. I believe that a strong economy is the backbone of any society and that everyone must be able to share in the benefits of economic regeneration, but as long as there are interfaces there will be barriers preventing some areas from reaching their full potential. This is a time to take stock of the past, but more importantly I think, we must use these lessons to help us to move forward.

We have seen great changes around Belfast during the past few years, both in terms of development and investment, but there is still much to be done for what has been termed the peace dividend, which is evident I think in the city centre and is enjoyed by everyone. I've heard it often enough that those living around interface areas may say the dividend has yet to reach them.

As a lot of you may know, I am an elected representative for north Belfast and I work closely with communities across the constituency and too many people continue to live within sections of those communities. As I was reading this, I noticed that there is a lot of talk about communities, and I try to talk in terms of having a single community. Without ignoring the cultural differences, we are essentially a community of different views, but there are too many people who continue to live within those sections of the community that experience high levels of poverty, disadvantage and exclusion and this is particularly profound in interface areas and whichever part of that you happen to live in.

Statistics show that people from interface communities are more likely to have a lower educational attainment, and experience higher levels of unemployment and limited lifetime opportunities.

For these sections of our community the benefits of recent progress are not always clear and people living there often feel marginalised and excluded. In order for us to move our society forward, I think we all must, and we are here as politicians and political reps, we are a resource for people, but we must use our collective imagination and be willing to take some

risks. We can't simply continue to accept that the limitations of the past will limit the opportunities of the future.

I fully recognise that it is important to innovate with interface communities to engage and encourage them to find their own solutions to local problems. Safety and trust must be developed to bring about any radical changes and people want to feel safe within their own homes and within their own neighbourhoods.

I think it's also worth saying that while there are a huge number of interfaces, especially within the Belfast area, and I suppose especially within north Belfast, and as a result of confrontations there is also the negative media that goes with it. I think it's important to say that I found some of the biggest steps were taken in these areas. There are people in this room that I recognise; in fact I'm surprised at the number of people that I recognise who, when things were really bad, and they have been really bad, still made the effort whether it was a personal contact, going to see someone across and over and having some yarn, even if the yarn didn't go anywhere at that time. There were people who were always willing to take those risks and I've always thought it was very courageous, because they didn't always do it with the support of people around them.

The creation of mobile phone networks opened up new lines and took a while to actually bed in. It took a while for people to realise that no matter what you had to tell the other person it was best to keep the phones open even if it meant listening and arguing back. It was a communication between communities and between people that was built on personal contact and relationships and as I said earlier, people in this room and elsewhere, were very much a part of that. Of course these measures alone cannot provide a long term solution to the problems of interfaces.

Permanent solutions must come from within the communities themselves through dialogue, mutual understanding and accommodation. With as many people involved as is possible and I notice, and let me emphasise, and I think Jeffrey will as well, that Tim and Duncan went a long way to saying that this is not about trying to impose; or you get a report and so it's written in stone; it's about starting a conversation. The only way it will be started is by people in this room, not by a policy of government, although we are here and we have a duty. Part of our

duty is to show leadership but that's a combined leadership and that's you talking to us and giving us the support; as I said earlier, 'we are a resource.'

So let's be clear, no one here wants peace walls and interfaces to remain forever. They are, I suppose, an indictment, a sign of our past failures. When it comes to transforming interface communities and removing interface walls we must move forward, but at a pace dictated by the communities involved there and driven by them. Let's be clear that there aren't any quick fixes. We don't want any publicity stunts as there have been in the past; people coming over and saying 'why don't you take down a wall here?' 'It would be a great photograph there,' and 'the international delegation wants to do this'. What we've always said is that this isn't the way it works. What you do is go and talk to the community and find out what the community thinks about it and see if they think you have a good idea, then by all means go ahead, but don't be coming to us to try and get us to do some sort of publicity stunt.

I hope today that this conference will provide you with a real opportunity to share and consider the broader research which has been conducted into the issues faced by all interface communities, and to think about all the possibilities of ways to resolve these issues.



Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson

Well, good morning everyone and thank you for the opportunity to come along this morning and share some brief thoughts with you about this very important subject. It is very good to be back in Fasset, it really is an excellent facility and a very, very beautiful setting. I noticed that my colleague Minister Kelly talked about it as being his playground which just confirms what we all thought that he thinks he can walk on water and his life really is about swings and roundabouts! On a serious note, I would like to add my thanks for the opportunity to be here today at what I know will be an interesting and worthwhile conference and thank you all for taking time out of your lives to be here. I want to join with Minister Kelly in stating clearly and without reservation, my commitment to helping build a shared future for everyone in Northern Ireland and I know that this is the commitment of the First Minister and the entire Executive.

The tragic events earlier this month demonstrated the vital importance of securing the peace. I have spoken to hundreds of people and I'm sure you have too, from all over Northern Ireland, in the following weeks since those brutal acts and I have been told the same thing over and over again - people do not want to go back. They do not want to be dragged back to the dark days of the past. Most of us here have experienced those times, those dark and bloody days of the troubles and I know we will all be united in our desire and our earnest hope that our children and future generations will not have to experience this. We are committed to building on the foundations that have been laid and we are committed to ensuring continued peace and security. We are determined that we will not allow these people to prevent the continuation of our political institutions and the development of stability in Northern Ireland,

and I think we would all share the view that the leadership which has been shown in recent weeks, by the First and Deputy First Minister, in particular, has, I think, been reassuring for many people; that against a backdrop of violence and clearly a challenge to the peace and the stability that we are trying to build, people have stood together. The people of Northern Ireland have come together; we saw it at the vigils out in our towns and cities, and we've seen it in the political process as well, and I think that is encouraging for all of us. It is clear that these objectives, the objectives of preventing the continuation of the political institutions and the development of stability – that is what those who want to destroy the hope for peace want to achieve and we must ensure that they don't succeed. Politicians alone can't do that. We want to work with you, community leaders, church leaders and the many organisations throughout the province, who graft on a daily basis towards the aim of a more peaceful, better and shared future. As Gerry has said, it's in those local communities where people in the past have courageously reached out across the divide and have sought to engage and have built friendships and relationships, that are helping slowly but surely to build that better and shared future. Without your hard work, and commitment we would not be where we are today.

Working with some of the most disadvantaged communities, working on building relationships between the people here and ensuring the end of segregation and division, is essential to securing our long term peace. I welcome the work that has been done thus far on interface areas on the ground in organisations, and also the research that has been carried out, and we'll be hearing a bit about that later on.

The so called Peace Walls are a tangible demonstration of the deep divisions that still exist within our community. Many who come to visit Northern Ireland are shocked and saddened when they realise the experience that still exists for communities and the impact these walls have. Working within OFMDFM, I have come to realise the complexity of the issues surrounding these areas, and I would have to say representing an area where we do not have peace walls; coming from an area that hasn't experienced those barriers to nearly the same extent, has been an eye opener for me, to see at first hand the impact that the barriers have on community life within Northern Ireland. I am indebted to Frankie Quinn our photographer for the day, who very kindly gave me his book, *Streets Apart*, which I have had a quick look through. The photographs that are in here are very stark and I think they demonstrate very clearly the impact that those barriers are having, not just a visual impact, but the impact that

they are having on the lives of communities. And I was struck by one in particular in Madrid Street where there is a fence across the middle of the street, and there is a mural which depicts what the street scene might look like if the wall, or the fence, were not there. And above it, quite poignantly are the words, 'Love thy neighbour'. Perhaps we're not at that point yet where in communities that are divided that we can love our neighbour, but what we need to do is find a way of trusting our neighbour, because it is in building that trust that we create the circumstances in which the walls of division can be removed.

We are very clear that we cannot as a Government just come into an area and say that this wall is coming down. The decisions have to be taken by the communities in which those barriers exist. That's absolutely the case. And I also acknowledge that there is no doubt that barriers have served a useful purpose over the last number of years. There was a reason for them being there, we acknowledge that and I know that there are some communities that when they hear politicians talking about taking down the walls, that this demonstrates a lack of understanding about the genuine concerns of those who live around that wall. To them it seems that this is the wrong focus. The wall or the fence is not the problem, but the reasons for the division and separation in the first place and that is what we have to get to. As I've said, much hard work has taken place around some of the interfaces; to work on building up relationships and challenging some of the issues; to build that trust that is necessary; to build the respect that will be an essential ingredient of creating the environment, within which the walls can come down.

I believe that the current climate provides a unique opportunity to tackle the problems which interface communities are facing. The time has now come surely, to tackle this problem head on and to ensure a coordinated approach that means no community is left behind. The latest work by the Institute of Conflict Research has now brought together the existing information on interfaces in Belfast into a much more meaningful format. And I hope that this research, along with the findings from the recent public consultations will provide a good basis for your discussions today and will help to provide a practical tool to enable real progress in exploring the scope for change, and ultimately the removal of those interface barriers.

Government of course has a role to play. We can demonstrate that a better future is not only possible but that it is achievable, but it takes the determination of the whole community to

break out of what is the acceptable position. No one likes living in conflict, or in poverty; we need to challenge our own communities to change. That can be a daunting task, but when everyone shares a common hope, I believe anything is possible.

We all look forward to a future without barriers. Where society is characterised by respect, tolerance, and interdependence and the blights of sectarianism and racism are things of the past. I would like to commend the Interface Working Group, for the work that it has done, and I hope that this conference will give you an opportunity to explore the latest research and to share and learn from your own experiences and those of others. Hopefully it will inspire you to make a difference for all our communities and at this stage I would like to wish all of you every success and to reiterate our commitment that we will work with you, we will seek to facilitate you in whatever way we can, to create the conditions in your community in which it is possible for the barriers and walls to be removed. That is our commitment. We want to see it happening. We believe it will be powerfully and symbolically important and significant in Northern Ireland if this were to happen, because it is a constant question and when you get people coming to Northern Ireland to talk about the Peace Process, they see this contradiction between on the one hand, power sharing at Stormont and divided communities on the ground. That is what we have to address and we in government have got to find ways in which we can help you to take the steps that are necessary to bring that to an end.

Question and Answer Session with Junior Ministers



Question: Duncan already addressed the issue that the Peace Dividend hasn't got down on to the ground in interface communities, yet if you go along the Lagan bank, you'll see plenty of where the Peace Dividend has reached. Would it be possible for you as Ministers to introduce legislation, which makes it not only incumbent but also legal, that before they can make huge profits on the Lagan bank they have to equalize that with some sort of investment in the interface communities?

Junior Minister Donaldson: One of the things we have done recently is to ensure that there is now a policy that when private developments are taking place, developers have got to make a contribution towards social housing and community development. Secondly, we recently passed in the assembly the Financial Assistance Bill, now the Financial Assistance Act that is specifically designed to tackle poverty in areas where we need investment, and interface areas would be seen as a priority in that regard. We have now got the power within OFMDFM to initiate schemes or require Government departments, all of them, to initiate schemes to ensure that there is the investment and that poverty and social disadvantages are tackled in those areas. So, we now have the tools in place to do it.

The challenge that we face at the moment is, obviously that we have an economic recession and the Treasury in London have really tightened our budget, so we have to find ways of prioritizing the resources that we have, so that they are directed into the areas that need them. In my view, if we are to bring the walls down then regeneration of the areas of the communities in which those walls exist has to be a priority. If people don't see the benefits of the Peace Process, through regeneration of their areas, investment in their areas,

employment opportunities, tackling social disadvantage, then the concerns, the fears, and to be frank the prejudices on all sides that have led to the walls being there, it will be difficult to remove those, to deal with them, to address them.

So regeneration and investment in interface areas we believe, is an integral part of removing the barriers and a necessary pre-requisite.

Junior Minister Kelly: I don't want to repeat anything that Jeffrey has said. I suppose, because your question was about legislation I actually think the legislations there ought to do it. You can have the best of legislation but what you need is the will to implement it. The 'will' is certainly there within the OFMDFM and within the Executive. The difficulty comes, to be honest, when there are particular departments which have to take on particular chunks of that work. For instance there is a sub committee on Children and Young People and we have a strategy on anti poverty and we have an anti child poverty strategy. Some of that deals with disadvantaged areas and deals with vulnerable children. All of which goes into the same arena that you are talking about.

The last thing I would say is that while this discussion is really centered around barriers and interfaces and these so called 'peace walls', there are areas which do not have peace walls up which are interface areas. There are issues of regeneration which are at an early stage and we do have an ability to drive those forward but it does take the connection with the community. I've good connections across the community; people in this room have good connections across the community; but really what we want to get to is a connection which involves meetings where you don't have to have separate meetings with housing, you don't have to have separate meetings on whatever, you can have joint meetings when people come together and some of those are taking place now.

Question 2: My question follows on from the last one and is about the continued resources for people to be able to build and create, and demonstrate how those relationships are built, and that is often funded on very short term basis. But, while I'm very encouraged to hear your responses in terms of regeneration, if we look at the recent efforts in terms of regeneration particularly in Neighbourhood Renewal that is not a heartening experience. And it seems to be while there is a will there, we need to see some sort of structures and some sort of concrete mechanisms whereby, that if communities are taking risks, Governments are taking risks to actually back them; that land that is available to interface areas, and there isn't always

land there, but that it is used to the mutual benefit of both communities and things like social economy projects and the public services and some private investments that are used for people, and it's not sold off to the highest bidder. So there is something about good will yes, but some people need to see some concrete proof of that.

Junior Minister Kelly: I think that you are right; I can't find myself disagreeing with anything that was said. There are opportunities under these difficult economic circumstances, in terms of the type of land which gets sold off is becoming much more difficult and ironically that is an advantage to us. An advantage to Government and especially when you're talking about not just social housing, but social amenities, the social economy and all of that, we have been talking to the Social Development Minister and talking to the Executive in terms of dealing with this. In fact we had a sub committee meeting on Poverty and Social Inclusion yesterday straight after the Executive meeting which involved the whole Executive so we are trying to focus down in spite of the economic downturn to see what are the advantages in front of us. We are concentrating on that and that was the first meeting of that Ministerial Sub Committee. I know this flies off the top when I say Ministerial Sub Committee, but it is very important because a Ministerial Sub Committee means that all the partners attend and one of the difficult qualities in a power sharing executive is that clearly there is a series of departments that have their own authority and they want to do their own thing, as you know better than most. It is a particular size of a cake; it's an advancing economy, so it's the way you split it up that counts. When you get all the different departments into the room at least you can then have a sensible conversation if there are 2 or 3 or 4 departments who agree on policy you at least have 2 or 3 or 4 departments who are prepared to help. Whereas if you are trying to fight with just one department it becomes very, very difficult because they say just ask another one.

Question 3: It's around the issue of connectivity and transport in the city. There is a high reliance on private transport in the city and whenever you are looking at a public transport system which very much runs along arterial routes, along the sort of segregated lines of the city, it somewhat consolidates segregation and also restricts access to some of the shared spaces that already exist in the city and those that are planned. So, I was just wondering what engagement is planned with the Department of Regional Development, particularly

within Translink and about how they may play a part in transforming the connectivity in this city?

Junior Minister Donaldson: One of the things that we are investing in is a rapid transport system for Belfast, and we are hoping that will help to alleviate some of the problems that some of the people experience in travel within the city. But it's not the only way that we need to address this. Clearly, if we can get to situations where travel through communities becomes easier because barriers are removed, that hopefully will help to ease some of the problems that some of the people experience in a very practical way. At the present time, what should be a fairly easy journey becomes quite a long detour, so we would hope that the culture of re routing in Northern Ireland could be changed in more ways than one! And there are those practical impacts on people's lives that make the difference and lots have gone on for years and we shouldn't take it for granted and we shouldn't take it as a given and if we can demonstrate to people the practical benefits of removing barriers, even just in terms of transport, then I think that helps us to move towards a day when things can get easier. And there are some studies done on the cost of division in Northern Ireland and Gerry talked about the cake that we have, and it is a limited cake, but if you take the money that is spent on maintaining division and segregation and we're talking about millions of pounds of public money and if that could then be re-directed to schools, hospitals, housing, tackling poverty what a difference it would make. And I think at Government level we have to get that across more effectively; that there are real substantive practical benefits to removing the barriers because it means money is freed up to tackle poverty, social exclusion, housing, healthcare, education etc. and that's what we mean when we talk about regeneration. It's about demonstrating that there is a benefit, not just in social terms but in raw economic terms to removing barriers because it means the cost of segregation and division reduces, and the amount of money we have to spend on public services increases in return.

Junior Minister Kelly: This is an interesting point that points to the fact that all Departments are involved and it's not all about DRD. As an example, the rapid transport system debate goes back some years and probably pre-dates the present Executive and has been an ongoing project. When we looked at it we saw that north Belfast was left out, so we are immediately aware that if this is about a regeneration of Belfast, if it's about connectivity, if it's about all that then 'what are you going to do about north Belfast?' That conversation changed

the scene in terms of bringing a whole community together; I'm talking about bringing vast numbers of communities or sections of communities together to have a conversation. The biggest meeting I was in was in the Whitewell Road, which involved something like 400 people. It took me by surprise; it evolved because it drew in all the politicians, all of the statutory bodies and of course the residents, who were all speaking with one voice. And I think that is the type of situation that we are trying to get to now. That hasn't been happening in the past but the more often it does the better. I said at the beginning of this that I know people know this, but we are elected as a resource, we are there to be used. Put us under pressure; that's what it's about and the only frustration that comes to us is if we can't deliver. But, we need to have the knowledge that comes from the ground; it doesn't come from us.



IWG Report Presentation– Neil Jarman, ICR

The overall background of the situation is that after a period of 10-12 years of relative peace, all the city centre security structures have been removed in Belfast. The barriers have been removed around the border and the border has been opened up. The military architecture and army architecture have been removed across Northern Ireland and what remains of the security architecture are the residential barriers. All the barriers are in residential areas and one of the consequences which we have already heard is that the interface areas have suffered continued high levels of tension and violence.

One of the things that everybody who lives and works in interface areas knows is, that although the barriers were put up to attempt to prevent or reduce violence they do not stop it and there has been evidence that they have helped to perpetrate it because they define who is on the other side and where that boundary is.

So the interface areas continue to suffer from tension, violence, from deprivation and from lack of investment and what we've had over this past 15 years is really more of a focus on managing the tension and the problems in interface areas which has undoubtedly been a necessary stage. Though this has undoubtedly been necessary and we do effectively manage those tensions, we shouldn't see that as the end point. It's a stage in the process and as Duncan has highlighted, we are coming to the stage now where we need to engage on the next stage of that process, which is moving beyond managing those tensions and moving towards longer term sustainable security.

Part of the problem is that the building of barriers has come to be seen as a normal response. It's what is expected to happen when you get persistent and recurrent bouts of violence in areas; a barrier is the solution to the problem.

If you look back historically, what you see is that barriers were always presented as a short term response; they were presented as an immediate reaction to acts of violence or ongoing violence. But, the short term responses for which nobody had an exit strategy became permanent structures and there is no strategy, no overall strategy for their removal. In fact, in some cases, where people have been actively advocating for barrier removal, we've found that there are actually impediments in getting some of those barriers removed so the process of even getting them removed is complex and there is no clear pathway for that.

The Interface Working Group, which has convened and led this process, was set up as a response to the announcement that there was going to be a fence built through Hazelwood Integrated Primary School, in the Whitewell area. An announcement was made just after the May 2007 elections and the establishment of the devolved administration. This appeared to be the first opportunity for a stable administration and the contrast between the two – on one hand the administration moving forward to a new future; on the other hand we're still building a barrier in an integrated school.

The work has been initially focused around Belfast and addressing the barriers and the interfaces used in Belfast but the intention is that it should be rolled out right across Ireland. So far all the key statutory agencies have been engaged in the process in Belfast, led by CRC and North Belfast Community Action Unit but Belfast City Council, the Housing Executive, PSNI, and any other number of agencies have been involved at various times. Two main areas of work that have been progressed so far have been a series of meetings, consultations, and engagements around the broader Whitewell area, to start the process of discussions about creating more shared spaces and a more cohesive environment. And the other piece that was commissioned, which I was involved in, was providing some background research on interface issues and interfaces in and around the Belfast area. I should state that what we were trying to do with that research was to provide some sort of a baseline for our understanding of interfaces and interface barriers, rather than doing an extensive piece of

consultation. It was looking at what material was already there; what facts and figures were already available that we could put together and say, 'in the summer of 2008 this is where we are with interface barriers; this is what we know about interface barriers in Belfast'. It wasn't about engaging people's opinions on those barriers.

Part of the reason for this research was that there was not really any comprehensive documentation of how many barriers there were across the city. Any time you read a newspaper report you get any number of figures, - 27, 35, 46 – it seemed to be people pulling numbers out of a hat, so we tried to provide a baseline of the number of barriers that we could identify across the city. We have come up with a figure of 88 so far, but that was last year, so the numbers have possibly changed since then. I'll emphasize that within the list we've included all the well known Peace Wall, Peace Lines and interface barriers that Frank has documented but we've also included other such barriers, that aren't physical barriers. They may be open spaces, they may be pieces of wasteland which serve to keep communities apart and mark interface areas. They are a part of the deprivation of the interface areas because houses get abandoned, they get vandalized, and eventually they get knocked down so you get growing wasteland areas in some areas rather than physical structures.

So, we've got 88 barriers across the city, and we hope it's fairly comprehensive, but if anyone knows about any that are missing out of the list please let us know because we will be reviewing them. We know that barriers are still going up. Most of the barriers have been built in the past by the NIO but more recently the Housing Executive builds some of the barriers, Belfast City Council have built barriers, and there are also a few barriers that no one seems to know who built them; who's responsible for them, which creates problems if you want to try and take them down, because if you don't know who owns them it's not very easy to get them removed.

A few of the barriers have been removed; one of the positive signs coming out of the research is that a few barriers have been removed. Not very many and not the big eye catching barriers that you tend to think of as peace lines but there have been some. There has been some movement and most of that movement has been within the last year or so, so this may be the effect of a tiny snowball beginning to roll. We have also documented all the police interface cameras around the city, and we've also documented some of the police security apparatus which remains in some communities. Not just the run of the mill high security

walls, but where the police stations impact on the general, wider environment and block roads off, or block pavements off.

We also documented some of the attitudes to barriers. Partly from a series of questionnaires and surveys in a number of, I think 3, interface communities on either side of the wall in 2007. There was a very strong sense coming out of these that the barriers were felt to provide a sense of security for people; provide a sense of security against serious persistent violence, not total security but some sense of security. But there was also recognition that the continuation of the barriers and the presence of the barriers also had an impact on enforcing segregation. There was also some considerable degree of support for the removal of barriers, but that depends on how you read the statistics; whether you want to emphasize the positive or the negative side. I'm going to emphasize the negative and positive sides of it. There was some considerable support for the removal of the barriers but with the caveat of, 'when it's safe to do'. Not tomorrow maybe, not next year; maybe in a couple of years time - people by and large want the barriers removed.

What they also emphasized was the importance of dialogue; both cross community and inter community on this issue and also leadership. There was some significant criticism of the leadership, or lack of leadership from politicians. It was acknowledged that as well as those on the ground and in communities showing leadership it was critical that politicians did too. The survey highlighted that ongoing discussions in interface areas which are important to these processes were already underway. It wasn't something that needed to be started from scratch and as we've alluded to already, there have already been at least 3 or 4 areas in Belfast where the communities are pushing or have agreed that the barriers in their locality should come down, or be replaced.

What we concluded from the report was that we needed to develop an overarching strategy for the issue of interfaces and interface barriers across the city with 4 main elements. The process has four main interwoven elements; they're not in any particular priority but ultimately we want to look at creating a situation where communities feel safe and secure. That's the baseline issue. Wherever you live you want to feel safe and comfortable; that you're not going to be coming home and attacked by petrol bombs; you're not going to have a riot going on out on the street; you're not going to feel threatened or intimidated. But part of that process of

creating a sense of safety also involves a process of physical, social and economic regeneration of those areas. Along with this, we need to ensure that violence and intimidation and tensions are reduced and are kept low and kept managed. It's not assumed that this can be managed easily; it's going to require active involvement of people working in partnership with the communities on the ground, who are already doing this. And ultimately we are looking for a situation where we can remove or replace the barriers. And we say remove or replace because in terms of regenerating those areas, we're looking to a situation where the starkness of the barriers may be removed but recognizing that something else may be needed to go in its place - something that has a more positive impact on those communities; can provide economic impetus; can provide work, facilities and resources. So, it may be that other forms of buffers are put into place as has been done in, for example, Suffolk and Lenadoon and Duncairn Gardens in north Belfast, where the community still have a barrier between them but it's a barrier that provides a resource and a facility for the communities, rather than just starkly keeping them apart.

If we're talking about the removal of barriers, we're not just talking about blanket removal, taking them away, but thinking about how you can regenerate them whilst creating a sense of safety and security. What we propose within this report, is that there should be a process of consultation with community activists, with community leaders; with those residents who are most immediately affected by the barriers and are living closest to the barriers. But that's not just a 1, 2 process but a dynamic process of moving back and forward that leads to the process of developing local regeneration plans for each of those areas. We recognize that these have to be done at a decentralized level, specific to individual barriers or clusters of barriers. It's not a simple strategy of 'one size fits all' for all the barriers across the city. Each group of communities; each local area has got to look at the specificities of its own environment and what needs to be done and how best to do it.

We would then move from a position of having developed those local strategies with political endorsement and funding for those processes and I think this is why it is so important that the junior Ministers are here today. If this strategy that we need to pursue has been supported and signed off at high level, it's got to be funded, otherwise we're all talking in the wind and there has to be a commitment, and resources made available to pursue this process.

And finally, thinking about the future work of the Interface Working Group, much has been achieved in building the support and engagement within the devolved Government, amongst political parties and within and through the statutory agencies. Further engagement is needed with political leadership at community level and with residents. The agreement of an overarching strategy and the translation of that into local regeneration plans will enable the identification of indicators which can measure the process. This will allow for measuring any reduction of violence and tension and any increase in sense of safety and security so although the end point might be, and hopefully will be the removal of the barrier, that needn't be the only indicator of progress. As we've seen already, the work done in interface areas has made people feel more comfortable and the broad strategy outlined in this document will serve as the basis for more conversations.



Challenge of Change Consultation, Responses overview:

Dympna McGlade, CRC

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

Following those discussions CRC decided to set in motion a process to begin to explore the future of existing interfaces and avoiding potential new interfaces. Thus, CRC formed the Interface Working Group (IWG) which brought together key statutory and voluntary organisations with responsibility for interfaces.

On behalf of the IWG, CRC commissioned the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) to produce the document ***Towards Sustainable Security - Interfaces Barriers and the Legacy of Segregation in Belfast*** which draws together all of the available material on interfaces in the Belfast area and makes suggestions as to how this difficult, but vital issue, could be addressed and on which Neil Jarman presented an overview earlier.

The IWG recognised the crucial role of interface communities and the voluntary and community sector working with them. Therefore, the Belfast City Council and CRC co-funded a consultation process leading to a major conference to give communities on the ground the opportunity to explore the role of interface areas in the peace process.

The title Challenge of Change (CoC) for the consultation process around the Sustainable Security report was thought up by Ali McAllister from CRC and quickly adapted as a good

working title by the sector. The title speaks for itself and tells us that change is challenging and especially at interface areas.

The CoC consultation focused on discussions with practitioners working at interfaces and discussions were open, honest, challenging, constructive and forward thinking. It was important to capture the issues, find the solutions and begin to consider the development and delivery structure and process for the regeneration of interfaces.

What people said about the “Towards Sustainable Security – Interfaces Barriers and the Legacy of Segregation in Belfast”.

In the context of moving forward from conflict management to conflict transformation the report was generally welcomed as a factual document which would help stimulate the debate and challenge existing views on interfaces. It offered the opportunity to begin to address issues that have previously been talked about in private to be talked about in public, now people are ready for that challenge.

The Peace Process and a devolved Government were felt to be a helpful development in progressing this work but the needs for security at interfaces must be paramount and this is a point that came up time and again throughout the consultations. People are aware that the interfaces went up for a reason and would need to come down for an even better one and only when interface communities were ready. It was agreed that for some areas this might take a very long time but at least we are beginning to think about it now.

The four key principles within the document were generally welcomed:

1. In responding to the legacy of physical segregation the perceptions of safety and security of the people living near to interfaces and interface barriers must be the priority.
2. Notwithstanding this point, we should aspire to the removal of all interface barriers across the city of Belfast over time.
3. The process of removing interface barriers should be undertaken on the basis of sustainable regeneration as part of a process towards building a shared city for all the people of Belfast.

4. No more security barriers or structures that effectively serve to segregate communities should be built, rather priority must be given to other forms of investment in people and place that will provide appropriate levels of safety and security.

Good practice on the ground must be acknowledged, built upon, shared and set within an overarching and resourced strategy to make a meaningful impact on the ground. The other point that was stressed was that lots of research had been carried out in interface areas, which people didn't mind participating in if it actually brought about change, but they did complain that research recommendations rarely see the light of day. Their recommendations were never carried any further forward and they sent out the call that this report should not be another one of those missing research reports but rather is acted upon.

What people said about community engagement

Interface communities know best what their needs are.

They know the disadvantages, advantages and sensitivities around the interface barriers. The views, concerns and needs of interface communities are paramount in any process. They must come first and it has been stressed and stressed again, that they must take a leading role and their views and perceptions are central to the process.

Difficult issues need to be addressed and we need to be prepared for that. One of the most obvious is around housing and the example that was given during the consultation was Crumlin Road/Girdwood and the needs of a 'bursting at the seams nationalist population' in dire need of additional housing and the concerns of neighbouring PUL communities who feel squeezed out and unheard.

Other key issues that will need to be addressed are around parading, particularly in areas where parades are contested. Existing and developing paramilitaries/dissidents/armed groups; flags/emblem/sectional symbols and the thorny issue of sectarianism itself are other major problems to contend with.

Consultees were in agreement that a safe and considerate space must be made to facilitate communities in first-step discussions about interface areas.

Careful consideration must be given to the consultation process by those working with interface communities in recognition of the fact that communities are at different stages in this work, with varying needs and will progress at different paces. Some are quite sophisticated with developed infrastructures with paid workers to work with them and work across the divide. Others are just starting out on the journey and may not have the skills and resources to begin this long and often difficult process.

The models of good practice that have been established must be acknowledged, built upon and shared.

Strengthening community infrastructure in PUL communities was identified as an area which needed to be addressed to ensure they have the opportunity to participate in this process if they so wish.

Sensitivities within the Protestant community in relation to feelings of losing identity and sometimes equality, need to be acknowledged, explored and shared in order to help some communities engage in the work.

Paramilitary/combatant/armed groups were another area of concern for both PUL and nationalist consultees i.e. although we are working in a 'peace process' we still have a long way to go and it is still very fragile. This work must be about both intra and inter community work and community relations work.

The demographic changes, shifts in population and territorial issues were discussed. The growth in the nationalist community coupled with an older PUL population has led to housing demand growth in some areas and decline in others. The key question was how do we address the housing problem in and around interface areas to ensure there is room for everyone whilst taking on board people's needs balanced with fears? It was also noted that housing is often used as a political weapon in a destructive rather than constructive way.

The report brings together the factual information about the interface areas where they are physically placed and whether or not they are still in use.

The key message from consultees is that the barriers are symptomatic of fractured relationships. People living at interfaces need time and support to reflect on the legacy of the past which led to the interface, how they feel about it now and what short, medium and long term work needs to be done to regenerate the areas. This is the key. This is the next piece of work that we have to address when we actually engage in community dialogue. It is not just about the physical regeneration of the areas but also about the needs of the people who live there.

What people said about politicians

Consultees felt that overall our political representatives did not have a history of, or the opportunity for, real and sustained collaboration across the divide, on key sectarian issues including interfaces.

People talked about politicians usually working with their 'own' community but rarely with both communities on either side of the interface, as the collective 'we'.

It was recommended that politicians were going to have to find ways of advocating for both sides of the interface by supporting work in key thematic issues such as addressing the needs of young people in interface areas, through leadership training, education programmes, recreational and sporting activities, health projects etc. and all with an overarching good relations remit.

Political parties working as a collective in Councils and the Assembly on interface issues is one of the biggest challenges for politicians.

Concerns were expressed about some politicians continuing to use interfaces for political bargaining. Credit was also given to those politicians who have engaged on interface issues and the Junior Ministers today have committed themselves to moving forward in a realistic way to assist with this work. But there was also criticism of politicians who at this very moment are actually seeking the erection, lengthening or strengthening of barriers in interface areas as a first, rather than last, response. The recommendation is to find ways to build communities and build relations and not build barriers.

Absence of adequate funding was a big issue also. Economic downturns tended to hit the weakest worst. Not investing in interface areas, which tend to be amongst the most socially and economically deprived, is likely to lead to continued visible segregation, sustained and possibly growing sectarian and racial incidents, and ensures they are less attractive for perspective investors.

The peace dividend was mentioned throughout the consultation. Junior Minister Gerry Kelly referred to the fact that the interfaces have not felt the impact of the peace dividend as yet. To help address this issue, consultees called on the Executive to ensure that the Departments made two important changes:

1. Mainstream good relations and the regeneration of interface areas throughout all central and local Government policies, strategies and resources;
2. Work together within and between Departments and local government to deliver joined up approaches to the social and economic regenerate of interface areas.

These changes were not necessarily about additional money being found but often about smarter ways to use existing resources and strategies which generally do not identify interface areas as such and often tended to work with single identity areas rather than up to and over interface barriers.

Government intervention tended to ignore the special circumstances of interface areas that were desperately trying to bridge the divide often in very difficult local circumstances. An example of this was in relation to the Suffolk/Lenadoon Peace Plan which worked for many years to create a strong cross-community social and economic project which secured major private sector funding. The decision by the Department of Education to close Suffolk Primary School which is based in the heart of the PUL community may have followed Government criteria but did not take into consideration the importance of the school at local level. The call for integrated status was denied and the school has since closed, leading to young families within the community seeking transfers to areas where there are schools. This Government intervention undermined the work of the peace programmes on the ground, as the small and fragile PUL community did not feel supported by either the Education Department or the two leading political parties.

The message from the community is that if communities are expected to take risks for peace then so should Government. They need to think and behave in different ways to accommodate the peace process that is happening on the ground.

The fact that politicians were publicly supporting the report itself was welcomed and the Junior Minister's comments earlier are applauded.

It was acknowledged that long term political stability is an ongoing pre-requisite to this process but this must be coupled with an agreed official framework that contains long term actions.

What people said about statutory engagement

Government departments continue to exercise a degree of autonomy in relation to issues impacting on communities with no agreed approach, within or between Departments and across Government overall.

In fact, several departments maintained a view that interface issues were not something within their remit and this was very evident in relation to planning for housing and business in and around interface areas.

Departments needed to go beyond endorsement and become actively engaged with interface interagency approaches to the social and economic regeneration of interface areas which also addressed the conflict transformation and reconciliation of communities.

The need for a common approach and framework within and between agencies through an agreed implementation plan with set dates for transforming or taking down barriers was again called for by consultees.

It was stressed that statutory agencies should not make a knee jerk reaction to security reports in respect of interfaces. They need to think outside the box in terms of exploring alternative actions to building good relations, rather than new or strengthened walls.

People tried to be positive about policing at this difficult time of transition and change for some. But the reality of policing at interface areas is still that it is a serious problem in both nationalist and loyalist areas with a history of poor relations with the police. This issue must be acknowledged to enable it to be changed but it was felt that it was being skirted around and many people on the ground felt that they are getting no policing service at all. However, it was acknowledged that the PSNI was crucial to the safety and security of interface areas and will play an even greater role in their regeneration.

What people said about regeneration

Regeneration was identified as a big theme for interface areas, including social, economic and physical regeneration and should be tied in with existing and future government regeneration strategies such as Neighbourhood Renewal.

It was noted that there were other regeneration strategies throughout the years that had failed and the evidence is still on the ground in the communities which suffer the highest levels of social and economic deprivation, coupled with the impact of the conflict.

There must be more than good intentions in delivering an interface strategy. It must be based on effective and efficient delivery by all key stakeholders. It is crucial that this process succeeds where other regeneration strategies have failed and through a long term politically supported and resourced plan of action.

Interfaces must be identified as key areas for consideration in the Review of the Public Administration, especially in relation to community planning. The process and structures put in place to assist interface regeneration should fit very neatly into the Belfast City Council community planning process.

Interface work is about more than a process for taking down barriers and should be viewed in the broader context of regeneration. It must have a holistic approach which puts people first creating good, safe and welcoming places for people to live. This includes supporting access to schools, health facilities, youth services, play space, playgrounds, employment and training initiatives, and community activities etc.

It was stressed that each interface area will have different needs in terms of its capacity, local tensions, educational attainment, partnership, health issues, needs of young people etc. The common thread is that interface areas are amongst the most poverty stricken areas in Belfast.

Acknowledgement was given to the valuable input and willingness of some agencies that were particularly good at working on the ground within developed models of good interagency partnership working. Hazelwood was cited as one of these models. This practice was felt to be worth rolling out across other interface areas that would benefit from similar structures.

What people said about the private sector

The role of the private sector is important for interfaces but needs to be explored a lot further.

The private sector tended to be difficult to engage with but, with the support of Government, this is a conversation that needs to be had as soon as possible.

Planning for private sector developments and business is often too far removed from the process on the ground. One example given was the approval for a local off license without consultation of the potential impact on that community including access to alcohol by underage drinkers.

Private developers tend to have no concept of social issues because they are not engaged in the community. So called 'gated communities' and 'yuppie' apartments look good but people living in them have little or no engagement with, or benefit to, the local communities in which they are built.

Redevelopment should be engaged in an holistic way in terms of the partners involved and how they can bring best benefit in relation to potential employment initiatives, housing and access in relation to new or improved roads, environmental planning and business development etc.

The community sector itself must play a full and active role and should start by following up on the Junior Minister's comments around making sure the regeneration of interface areas was a key area for Government.

What people said about youth

Every area involved in the consultation process put the issue of youth as a key priority and usually the top priority.

However, it was also felt that it was the most difficult and neglected area in terms of how youth issues at interfaces areas were addressed and supported. The Youth Service came in for particular criticism in not meeting the needs of young people in interface areas and a great deal of frustration was vented on this matter.

The second point was about Youth Workers and Interface Workers. Quite often their roles interacted but difficulties existed about roles and responsibilities. Interface workers are not youth workers and youth workers are not interface workers. They need to be more effectively interconnected.

Interfaces often impacted on young people in a mostly negative way. Young people felt as if they were living in a goldfish bowl and that often led to them feeling frustrated, hemmed in and cut off. This caused conflict in itself, within and between the interface communities.

There was a call for a specific consultation with young people, tailored to inspire and engage them and which will follow through on actions emerging. In particular, new ways of engaging with young people who do not go to the youth centres, including young people that hang around street corners, parks, shopping centres etc. and feel most alienated from the communities they live in who they feel blame them for everything but do not want to engage with them.

General comments made by consultees

Consultees talked about the wider overarching network of interface groups and communities and the great work that has been ongoing on the ground for many years and the need for this work to be interlinked in a consolidated approach, which supports them to collectively address the work of interfaces.

Shared space was part of the discussion at consultation events. Creating new shared space on any new land that becomes available to avoid it becoming derelict or for private investors to come and do with it what they will.

Creating connectivity to all parts of the city was another thematic area with recommendations such as free transport at night for young people to enable them to explore other areas in the city rather than just being trapped in their own area.

Black, minority, ethnic and faith groups (BMEF) were acknowledged as an integral part of this new and changing era as the mix in the areas change and the idea of single identity is challenged i.e. we are not just two main communities anymore and will continue to grow as a multicultural society as a benefit of peace.

Interfaces must be approached as a collective 'we' and not 'them and us', and the Hazelwood project was cited as a very good model of good practice where there is an inter-agency approach. The community has decided that they stand together. When they look at youth issues it is for that whole area around the Whitewell and when they look at issues for older people, for transport for education, that it's a collective 'we' and not 'them and us'. It is intended that this approach will be carried forward in all aspects of its work including dealing with political representatives.

Consultation recommendations

In summary the following recommendations were made in each of the key areas of interest raised during the consultation events:

Recommendation 1 (Community Engagement)

Develop engagement process with interface communities that:

- Ensures interface communities play a leading role and their views and perceptions are central to process – only change where they agree;
- Provides safe space and support to reach those living at interfaces and be prepared to address the legacy of the past;
- Builds trust and confidence;
- Gives careful consideration to the consultation process;
- Acknowledges and builds upon expertise of interface workers;
- Makes sure communities are not left with total responsibility to address interface issues.

Develop local steering groups to:

(NB - CRC met with its funded north Belfast groups to:)

- Begin the process of addressing the above issues;
- Draft a rationale and action plan for engagement with interface communities;
- Assist in the positive transformation of interface communities;
and with a view to developing a broader Belfast wide community partners group.

Recommendation 2 (Political Leadership)

- If communities invest their time, energy and reputation in this process they must be reassured that the Executive will deliver on the requirements needed to facilitate the different processes and initiatives.
- Finalise CSI which should include the regeneration of interface areas and put it out for full and open consultation at the earliest opportunity.
- CSI should include measures to:
 - Transform existing interfaces and avoid new barriers where possible;
 - Deliver a joined up departmental approach with targets, resources, long term actions and moves at the pace of interface communities;

- Plan interfaces into regeneration strategies in an holistic way, considering the need for jobs, houses, road and environmental planning that recognises the nature of contested areas;
- Promote the regeneration of interfaces as local, regional and international best practice;
- Collaborate and advocate for the communities on both sides of the divide (not one or other and set aside party lines);
- Extend the work of the North Belfast Ministerial Group to cover all interface areas;
- Encourage private sector engagement with interfaces through regeneration which could create employment and training at local level.

Recommendation 3 (Statutory Engagement)

- Endorsement not a concern - engagement and action needed.
- Need common approach from all agencies through an agreed implementation plan with set dates for transforming or taking down walls.
- Too easy for statutory agencies to erect peace lines as knee jerk reaction.
- Acknowledged input and willingness from some statutory agencies but lack of input from others.
- Statutory agencies need to think outside the box.
- Issues around police reports leading to more interfaces.
- There is a reluctance to admit it, but community policing is not happening at interfaces.
- PSNI crucial to the safety and security of interfaces to allow breathing space to plan for change.

Recommendation 4 (Regeneration)

- Important that interface areas succeed where other regeneration strategies have failed
- Interfaces were identified as a key aspect of the RPA Community Planning.
- Interface work is about more than a process for taking down barriers and should be viewed within the context of regenerations.
- Long term, supported and resourced plans for interfaces.
- Use creative approaches to addressing the landscape of interfaces
- Each interface area is different in terms of social and environmental issues including:

- community capacity;
- tension and incidents at interfaces.
- levels of partnership within and between communities; with statutory agencies and with political representatives:
 - ◆ health issues;
 - ◆ educational attainment;
 - ◆ levels of unemployment;
 - ◆ needs of young people etc.

All these must be taken into consideration when developing a process of intervention and regeneration.

Recommendation 5 (Private Sector)

- Role of the private sector important for interfaces.
- Planning is too removed from the process.
- Private developers have no concept of social issues.
- Redevelopment should be engaged in an holistic way.

Recommendation 6 (Youth)

- Calls on key children and young people service providers to provide a leadership role.
- Service providers should commit time, support and resources to a long term process which aims to do the following two things:
 1. Give young people from across Belfast an opportunity to share their experiences and work in partnership with statutory, voluntary and community organisations with responsibility for children and young people to;
 2. Assist in the *Challenge of Change* process to create a solution to sectarian and interface conflict and the transformation of interface areas;
 3. Build on the Face2Interface consultation model with young people.

Recommendation 7 (General)

- Wider, overarching network of interface groups need to be interlinked and interconnected.
- Interface areas must be the concern of everyone
- Create new shared space in any new land that becomes available.

- Create connectivity between all parts of the city;
- Minority ethnic and faith groups and individuals are changing the make up of interface communities;
- Interfaces must be approached by all as the collective we and not them and us.

Two Parks Youth Project: Maureen Doyle & Sean Montgomery



Sean Montgomery

Thank you very much for inviting us here today and I'm just going to do an open introduction, before I get into the presentation. I want to say that there are a number of people who aren't here today, one is Hugo Armstrong, who is my co-worker in the Two Parks Project he was instrumental in this project, he's unwell after an accident last week. And Dane Richardson, who for different reasons can't make it today, so to Hugo best wishes and speedy recovery.

We've all spoken about the importance of contacts and dialogue with young people, I want to make a very political point here and it is with regard to these conversations and contacts, particularly in North Belfast. As of Tuesday, North Belfast will lose approximately 30 Youth Workers Employed by the CEPs, this is an important point to bear in mind, based on the fact that we are saying that youth and youth work is an important contribution. You can't have youth intervention if you don't have youth workers to deliver this intervention with young people. So that's the political speech over, and I hope people take heed to what has been said. Let people know exactly what is going on, instead of keeping decisions hidden behind closed doors until the last minute.

The Two Parks Project and The Terry Enright Project developed a partnership, this was supported by the North Belfast Community Action Unit through Intercomm's Developing Leadership Programme. I would particularly like to thank John Loughran for his support and financial assistance in making sure that this project was successful.

Like anything else, we needed to have our context and we needed to have something to frame our work from. We based our model on work that has been previously done in the

Whitewell Road, “The Whitewell Youth Mediation Process”, engaging with disaffected youth in the interface context. The Two Parks Project in partnership with “The Whitewell Transformation Project”, this initiative dated back to 2007, we developed a process that enabled young people to be engaged in creating local solutions to local conflict.

It was felt that if a concept that worked on local interface areas, why not share the practice, we thought why not expand this out, why not share this out. There was no sense in holding on to things; or being precious about our practice. There were a number of people who came together to ensure that this process worked and it did work. It was successful; it reduced violence on the interface in Whitewell by at least 80%, in anyone’s book that’s a success and it still continues to produce results. We built partnerships with all the people working on interfaces, people came together at that time, they gave us advice on how we should run and develop the relationship, and some statutory agencies provided us with support and advice.

Like any process and we talked about this earlier, risks were involved, but risks do pay off if people take the opportunity to move them forward. The success of our process was due to the make up of our Youth Sub Committee, coupled with the ability and support to make decisions. This committee brought in 4 major interface areas - The Limestone Road, Tiger’s Bay, Whitewell and Whitecity/Graymount. We brought young people from those areas together to form this sub committee. There was no big fanfare or highlighting of our conference. This was to protect our young people from negative influences and ridicule.

In the run up we were preparing our young people, we were saying, we’re going to be doing this conference and you’re going to be exposed to different thoughts and people are going to try and influence you and what you’re going to say at these events.

These are things that we have learnt from experience of our past events. Not everybody who was invited took part in the conference, but what they didn’t say, was that it was a bad idea, they didn’t say we’re not taking part because it’s wrong. They didn’t take part because of practical reasons, time restraints, and not enough youth service infrastructure to aid their participation in some local communities.

The inclusion of our pre workshops was critical, as it gave the young people the chance to familiarize themselves with the discussion. Like any process, you need to know what you're talking about before you go in. No one gets it right the first time round, so we thought we'd bring the young people together, bring them into pre-workshops and give them the questions within their smaller comfort zones. This gave the young people an understanding of what they were going to say, to share their views and be able to discuss this in their smaller groups and come up with better ideas.



Maureen Doyle

As young people, we thought our process would be simple, but when we came together and talked, we thought it was really going to be hard, because it took so long for such a process to come about, as young people we thought our voices were never being heard. After discussions with our youth workers, we knew we had to do something, because failings on the interfaces had an effect on all the community. We identified people to start a steering group; it wasn't just Catholic or it just wasn't Protestant, we all came together and worked as one.

We consulted other young people and their youth workers and we identified the questions to ask. We then identified communities in North Belfast affected by interface violence. We set dates for our pre workshop and grouped together suitable communities, the groups were Catholic and Protestant - we didn't put Catholics and Catholics together. We set out our conference date and worked towards the success that we aimed to achieve, we all played our part, and there was no role too big or small.

The questions that we came up with to ask at our conference were, 'What are the main reasons why young people from Protestant and Catholic communities get involved in interface violence and disorder?' and the other question was, 'How would you attempt to address the issues of violence and disorder and what types of solutions would you suggest?'

Sean is now going to express the views and experiences of young people.

Sean Montgomery.

Young people expressed a range of views and experience. Their experience of violence was very similar – the context and level of violence was different from community to community. This meant that the act of getting involved was the same thing – throwing bricks, bottles, etc, that was the same but the reasons for doing it differed from community to community.

In some areas strong links and lines of communication developed between interface workers and community and youth workers from both sides, this meant that there was good dialogue and good practice being implemented. This made stopping the trouble much easier. Other areas suffered a lack of engagement between local young people and the individual organizations that were responsible for dealing with incidents along the interfaces. This shows that there needs to be a strong partnership, people need to be working together, there needs to be relationships built with everyone who has a responsibility.

Youth workers are not interface workers and interface workers are not youth workers, but they do have a shared responsibility and that came out earlier in some of the other presentations, it's very clear that we have a shared responsibility and it doesn't just pertain to those two different groups (youth and interface workers) of people because they can be multi faceted in their responsibility.

Some communities had a very negative experience of policing while others were making an effort to develop relationships so what we were doing was an holistic approach in bringing to the debate every agency and trying to tackle relationships in an holistic manner, using every system out there to develop conversations about relationships. That doesn't mean that every young person out there was up for working with the PSNI, but also not every young person was saying no.

Young people have given a number of different reasons for getting involved in interface conflict - boredom, excitement, flags and bonfires. Sometimes they were provoked by insults about young people in their community who had died; family members who had died or things about people in their community - these were seen as pretty big issues. There was a clear view about hatred of others. We talked about violence having changed, the nature of it and the different labels attached, but there is still an abhorrent core of sectarianism there which leads young people to dislike and hate each other.

Other reasons include - supporting friends – and not always with the intention of making it into a fight, but you're going to back them up; that's pure and simple stuff. The influences of drugs and alcohol and Dymyna spoke about this earlier, about the location of off licences and the ready availability of alcohol and in the present climate, the increased use of drugs and their availability within our communities.

Some riots fell under the category of organized violence and disorder – young people from both sides of the interfaces were aware of and knew each other. They were meeting each other through various different avenues – through the internet, websites, such as BEBO, and mobile phones and text messages. Sometimes they were also meeting through the integrated schools systems. It is important to highlight here that the pre-determined nature of this violence is really difficult and unseen because of all these various avenues of contact.

There is a potential danger for all those involved in interface rioting and that was recognised. The young people that we spoke with were mainly from the age of 14 up to 20, there are children as young as 7 who are involved in all of these riots. So, it brings a big question of parental responsibility. Where are the parents? Who's taking responsibility? What are social services doing to impact on this? More young females are becoming directly and indirectly involved in the conflict. Usually it is seen as the male, the big macho person out there throwing bricks, bottles, fighting, but young girls are out there involved in the attacks. They're actively creating the situations at times and at times organizing and implementing times of riots. Adults no longer have a role in rioting - that is very clear. It's probably a move on from the past that it's now mostly young people predominantly who continue to engage. In the past it involved a bigger section of the entire community. Again, there are tons of young people out there who, for whatever reason, decide to get involved in this type of activity and a bigger

section who don't. We also have to bear in mind that there is a context to all of this. Young people have been fed a diet of distrust and a lot of this here is a product of that. So they aren't totally at fault themselves and I make no excuses for some lad who does go out or some young girl that does get involved.

There's a change in the nature of violence as seen previously. In the past communities actively defended their territory and they were respected as defenders contributing to the wellbeing of their community. That's a reality whether we face up to it or not. Some people were out there purely in a sense to defend their communities and it was seen and recognised by young people within that context. But it has changed recently and the young people are being condemned by large sections of the community. It is no longer seen as a defense mechanism. There are organizations and groups out there that are working tirelessly and I know that the North Belfast Interface Network is working tirelessly out there, to deal with these issues. So there is no longer a need for the defensive option.

Young people are constantly reminded by adults of the courage of local people and how the community engaged in rioting but now they are being lambasted for similar activities that many local adults once encouraged and engaged in. I think it's important for adults to remember; that we're not all pure, we all have our past. We all have our thoughts and views. Sometimes we try to hide them a wee bit, but we can't look around the room too far, to find people who were involved in it at one stage or another.

Young people in the process were asking, 'Who is the law – the PSNI or the paramilitaries? That's what they're asking and that's what young people are saying. Some young people felt it was wrong to put both these groups in the same category. However, the majority of young people who participated in the conference felt that these groups represented local authority and have the potential to deliver formal and informal policing. That's the reality in some communities - that paramilitaries are the people who are stopping trouble. Sometimes they are the deliverers of justice within our communities and we've got to live with those realities and those facts. Hopefully this will be short lived and an agreed policing arrangement that serves the community will emerge.

As for the PSNI, the majority of the views were that it's difficult to engage and communicate with the PSNI and there is a lack of respect for organizations and individuals who engage with the PSNI. Very few young people have been on programmes aimed at developing relationships with the PSNI. Although the majority of people at our conference were saying this, there were aspects of good practice out there - particularly on the Limestone Road where you see the Terry Enright Foundation and the Two Parks Projects, trying to engage in projects to hold policing to account and increase knowledge and relationships with young people.

Paramilitaries didn't have a role to play in the communities - this is a very positive thing for young people to be saying – it indicates that we are moving away from the past; that they aren't seeing them as having a role, whereas in years past they might have been role models; they might have been people who were looked up to. Some young people felt that they (paramilitaries) were getting money from the Government and diverting it away from the wider community. There was a perception from young people that money was going directly or indirectly to paramilitary groups in one guise or another and it wasn't being seen to be filtering to young people and members of their community. 'They work with the PSNI' – this was viewed as a more recent aspect that young people spoke about, people who would have been seen to be from a paramilitary background and who have moved beyond that, are now engaging with the PSNI. They used to engage in rioting but now punish young people for their behaviour they themselves instigated – again it is important in recognising the historical context of interface conflicts.

I think this is the most important bit. Who has roles and responsibilities? Within their conference, young people freely debated and discussed this issue. They looked at some of the issues around local residents and the responsibilities. It was more a lack of engagement and relationships between them. Local people were suspicious of young people and young people recognised that rioting can cause physical harm to resident's homes and the impact on their health and social well being. No mechanism is in place to bring young people and residents together to discuss issues within their community. Like any issue, people need to talk and discuss and you can't separate any section of the community; it has to be done in an holistic fashion. Young people acknowledged the impact that their actions are having on their local community. There is a realisation that they have to take responsibility for their own behaviour, but rioting is seen as an acceptable activity by young people and replaced the lack

of youth services in their community. There is a lack of suitable leadership and these impacts on current activities. We need to create role models for young people; we need to ensure that they are positive and we need to ensure that they are engaging young people in the right direction.

Youth workers, interface and community workers were discussed and again we talked about the blurred lines of responsibility; these are things we need to clarify for young people. We need to actually sit down and have the discussion - what is a Youth worker? What is an interface worker? How can they fit neatly when strategically positioned?

Young people could relate and trust some youth workers and some interface workers as they felt that they could be the people who could facilitate the relationship building with other members of their community. So there is a crucial role there and a major responsibility for all those people within those roles. Maureen will now make her closing comments for this section of the conference.

Maureen Doyle.

When we had completed our conference and had brought all of our findings we found that young people felt alienated within their communities and felt as if they didn't belong. They felt disengaged from the decision making processes and unable to contribute to the issues pertaining to their area. They realised that they must shoulder a significant amount of responsibility for the violence and disorder and one of the solutions is to be bound up within a partnership approach.

Solutions will take time to instill the confidence and trust required, all key players must commit time and resources to the long term process. This should include engagement with young people, cross-community programmes and an engagement versus enforcement approach.

As young people, we will take responsibility but we need help for a fully resourced youth structure with a vision that meets our needs. Surprisingly, large numbers of participants acknowledged the impact that their own actions had on the wider community.

There is a realisation that they have to take responsibility for their own behaviour. However, for many, rioting was seen as an acceptable activity and something that has replaced youth services in their areas. A large section of respondents indicated that there was a lack of suitable leadership within their communities or people providing guidance on alternative activities.

‘Our success will be the laughter of children.’

We would like to thank the CRC for letting us present today. We would also like to thank all the young people who took part in the conference, all the North Belfast youth workers who supported our young people and to the support staff who worked so hard to make the conference a success.

So we have taken up the challenge – let’s work together to create the reality.

Feedback from Roundtable Discussions



Group 1

We feel that there needs to be the development of an overall policy for this to fit into, so basically our recommendation is to develop the overarching CSI policy with the main focus on youth relationship building and shared leadership and most importantly an interagency strategy.



Group 2

We started off talking about the need for political management and political leadership particularly down to the local level so that politicians are seen to work in partnership with each other, across their constituency and to take on board all the different points of view that comes out of their constituency so the message back to the Executive and political parties is about managing your political parties; managing the messages and managing through whips offices, and through PR offices. There was also a strong sense that this work needs to start on a short term basis but with local communities quickly, Government might take a long time

to catch up. There was an understanding that there were good things in a shared future which should go into the community cohesion strategy and most importantly that there are clear timetables and mechanisms of implementation attached. There needs to be a clear sense that this is about moving towards sharing; it's about supporting joint and cross community approaches and approaches across interfaces. This will take the conversation forward in a creative way, using things like arts, people studying with young people. It will mean really knocking doors, working with older people, women, young people and victims in different ways. There should be a very strong mechanism put in place to ensure that the steering group represents all the sectors, so that there is accountability, and making sure there is no gate keeping but real conversations.

Group 3

I think there is a sense of cynicism from our workshop. People felt that although the Junior Ministers were giving a positive spin on the CSI policy, it isn't actually being implemented. So there is a sense of cynicism about the amount of support that issues will receive and in terms of recommendations what people felt was that there was a need for an integrated strategy, an integrated fully resourced strategy that would resource the consultation required with the development required to implement the recommendations.



Group 4

A lot of the points that we have agreed have already been mentioned. Strong, political leadership, an integrated strategy and joined up thinking and connectiveness. One strong point that came out was that people's expectations could not be allowed to be devastated and an example used was the Neighbourhood Renewal Projects which didn't meet expectations and there was a wish that we wouldn't want to see happen again. There was a great debate

about moving people along in the consultation process with walls coming down and then, when they did come down, nothing happened.



Group 5

We had two issues to consider. One was how we'd make young people a priority? The group recognised that young people are a spectrum from 4 – 24, but also a spectrum of needs and those have to be addressed in the current system. We also felt that in a sense we had to prioritise young people's needs, but that had to be in the context of society's needs as a whole with young people understanding how they fit in and are important in the scheme of society.

If the private sector engaged with the local communities they could increase the value of their investment and profits and this needs to be clearly demonstrated to them.

Plenary, Duncan Morrow, CRC

I suppose, all of us, whether it's in the statutory sector or community sector have all seen strategies before; very pretty strategies written by consultants, but if they sit on the shelf and don't actually achieve anything they're not actually worth the paper they are written on. We've had those debates with Ministers and I think the point that is being emphasized, that we want to pass on to you as Junior Ministers, is that we don't want a strategy that doesn't have a clear objective to aim for. We also want something that can be measured and we need to see improvement. In achieving that there are challenges for all of us - we do have to work more in partnership, not just joined up within Government but joined up within community. It's about managing expectations as well as fulfilling them. If we say that we are all going to be doing something then we all have to be held to account to do that. That includes all of us, including the Junior Ministers, and they are here today and they will be back and we need to hold them to account.

Resources are required but it is a fight now to get resources, so we need to make sure that resources are clearly targeted to where they are needed. This means there will be more emphasis placed on effectiveness of the people who will be delivering or managing those resources, whether it's in the government organisations or community organisations. Effectiveness and efficiency will be important if we are going to deliver towards the end objective. There are challenges that the statutory and political sectors need to take on board. People are voted in on what they achieve and the sense that we get from many of the conversations we have had with Ministers, is that they are going to be taken to task. We are going to be held accountable by them to make sure that CSI Strategy works - that it's adaptable, it's flexible but that it must work in partnership with others, who are also involved in the delivery services.

What becomes clear here is that somehow or other we have to get over ourselves about a shared future. By that I mean I don't care about the name of the policy and whether it's ours as a directorial, but I do care that the principle, that we have to move forward in some kind of joined up way, is not somehow a taboo. And whatever language people want to wrap around that then wrap it around it, but the key point is that we should all know what the key agenda is. There was an interesting conversation here today about costs. There is no doubt that there

are massive costs being borne by communities, by people, and actually by the whole of society.

I think there are signs now, in what I hear from Ministers, that it is actually beginning to become clear. So whatever you want to call it, we need a plan that ensures that the symbolic power of Ministers standing together and making direct statements, in very clear ways, is now turned into a practical set of policies that joins up.

The big issue with CSI; the big problem with replacing it is if we don't watch out it will turn into a small departmental policy, which only focuses on communities. What becomes clear to me, is that the joining up requires a whole set of different agencies to work together with communities, if there is actually going to be significant change. In other words, you can't just expect communities to do the business. Police need to be a part of this; housing needs to be a part of this; education needs to be a part of this; local government needs to be a part of this; cultural policy needs to be part of this and it's not that any single one of them can do all of the job, but everything ends up getting short circuited if we don't have a common agreement.

There has to be some alignment and some contribution in these areas. I suppose I am saying to you here is, I still think that the agenda is on the table, because in terms of changing interfaces – you can't change interfaces without all that lined up.

There appear to be big frustrations on a very practical level with agencies such as the Road Services. There has to be a legitimate claim on people to say rules are rules and they were developed for good reasons. In other words you don't just get traffic calming because you want it, there has to be some reason, but when you are talking about interfaces, you have to make some changes; you have to think outside the box. You have to acknowledge where your policy made a set of presumptions on one scale and it doesn't make it on another scale. If you can't actually put in traffic calming to replace an interface wall because there wasn't any traffic going through it, what are we talking about?

The Roden Street Bridge and the Bridge at Whitewell have come up as classic examples, where engineering and planning were at odds. We have to understand we are coming out of something quite complicated and we need sometimes to factor some complicated new things

in, because it doesn't actually have equal effects. The impact of not putting a school in one area over another is the death of the community. That's not an equal outcome - it may look like equality but it's not an equal outcome and I think that there is some very important thinking about what equality looks like which allows people to be really serious about equality at last. We have often looked at this alternative question, but the goal here is equal services for people across the board. That's the stated goal and in order to get there we have to do some quite strange things. Equal outcomes require some complicated jiggling about, in order to get there, as long as it is clear and transparent and within the principles.

Listening to the conversations there are a number of important things, we need to take something away with us.

The word consultation is so destroyed that it now just means there is something thrown out to people and people are given a rough chance to say something and then they get ignored. We need something that looks like a permanent conversation over this process. In other words, it's not a single item that is consulted on - there are some parts that might look like that but most of it is a channel of communication that makes sure that what the statutory agencies are doing; what government is doing; what the communities think its doing are part of an ongoing conversation. It won't be one where everyone agrees and decisions will have to be taken, and people will have to do something, but at least it creates a situation that isn't the end of the world.

The City Council, as well as government, is going to have a very key role in making sure that community planning becomes the culture, and we are a small enough place where this could actually work. We're not England, we have advantages of being very small and that is one of them – community planning could become something quite interesting if we want to make it one between statutory and between statutory and communities.

We need to talk about the PSNI and policing. Policing has been so associated with enforcement and last ditch enforcement. Actually policing is something where the police act on behalf of and with the community and there needs to be a really long conversation. It requires people to talk to each other and be part of solutions which are not then left to the police to enforce all the time but where the police come into this and what their role is needs to be thought through with communities.

Two more things I have on my list. One is the very strange notion of leadership. Leadership in my understanding of it means somebody going first. It's always a task and leadership also depends on the notion that somebody follows. The issue of leadership here is that people are going to be asked to do things that are hard and will have to get used to quite difficult new idea i.e. 'we could survive, not just survive but flourish if that wall came down.' That's a mind set shift and somebody has got to make that real. We've got to think hard around not just managing the interface but doing things that look odd to people and initially a lot of people might balk at. I would like to see opportunities where leadership can be recognized.

I would just like to take my hat off to some of the young people who did their presentation today and I think that was a very useful and important contribution to this process. Young people are always regarded as an issue and somehow it never gets joined up with the question of the relationship of young people to their wider communities. How things are passed on and what kind of response we want to make to this is the Cinderella every time. Part of me is saying that maybe in the Interface Working Group, we need to be saying somehow or other that young people get the raw end of the stick. We may need to go back and rethink what it is we want to do in the area, of connecting young people with communities. We need to be more creative, but we also need to make it more of a priority - it always come in at the end of the budget. In the Community Relations Council we didn't get a role for young people initially because it was met by the Department of the Education but the Department of Education doesn't seem to see young people in this area in the same way that we were told today. The issue of how young people are acting out things for communities or with the history of communities, as you said Sean, because they were told the heroic stories of the past. Government and the Ministers are keen to see an intervention here but we need to think of how resources are currently being used. The youth sector has always been treated as the Cinderella when it should really be a core concern.

Finally there are 3 communications that need to go on from here -

- There's the one with people living in communities. That really needs to be built on and we need to take this back and think about how we make that a common and regular experience and part of this conversation.

- The second one is how do we keep political leadership in this? There is no doubt in my mind that without political permission this doesn't happen. I'm very heartened that political permission, at least at this level, was given but we need to talk about what that looks like in practice, in local communities.
- The third one is for us who have a job to do, but need authority and need to engage with people to make it a real job. The question for us is to make sure we've aligned what we're doing to what we're hearing and actually try and make some practical progress. These three elements will certainly be part of what we take back to the Interface Working Group and to the Junior Ministers Working Group in the form of a presentation.

Appendix I

Full workshop discussions

There were five discussion groups convened during the conference to address those issues that were raised during the three public consultation events. The following document draws together the key themes that emerged from comments raised by the conference delegates.

1. Message to political representatives and the Executive

Leadership, Direction and Control

There was a strong feeling from participants that at the highest level (OFMDFM) there was an appearance of partnership and a general commitment to addressing issues around good relations. However, there was also a belief that this approach was not emanating at the grass roots, local level. This was specifically in relation to councillors, MLAs and party members. Delegates indicated that senior party members and government representatives had to exercise a stronger influence at a local level so as communities realised that this initiative/process was being supported collectively by all political parties. One potential method of providing confidence was regular cross-party plenary surgeries within communities involving all of the political parties.

Community capacity to deliver

It was noted on several occasions that there are distinctive differences between Nationalist/Republican and Unionist/Loyalist communities. Specifically it was felt that a number of Unionist/Loyalist communities were not in a position to either engage in this process or begin the internal conversations required to develop the environment for an approach to be examined. It was about developing confidence within these communities and highlighting the positive benefits to examining these issues. This could be done through more cross-community programmes at a local level, where those from areas side by side engage in a process that is unique and distinct to their local geographical place.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Document

A number of discussions were focused on the lack of information surrounding the CSI document. It was noted that this did not engineer a sense of confidence in the Government's commitment to engaging in a process to address 'interface barriers'.

Commitment to the process

The Executive and political representatives need to recognise that there will be no quick visible (photo opportunity) successes and that communities who commit to the process need the support of their political representatives. If communities invest their time, energy and reputation in this process they need to be constantly reassured that the Executive will deliver on the requirements needed to facilitate the different processes and initiatives.

Resources

The question was raised – who is going to fund this process? Who is going to support the community consultations? And if there is community agreement across peacelines who is going to support the regeneration plans? Considering the current economic climate there were serious concerns around the economic viability of this process.

2. Consultation with those living on the interfaces

This was viewed as a crucial aspect of any consultation. It was interesting to note that as it was unclear as to what communities were to be consulted on, a number of delegates felt it was difficult to discuss methodologies. However, participants were clear that any type of consultation should not simply focus on the issue of whether 'barriers should come down?' This was viewed as damaging to the process. Any form of consultation must take into consideration the community's history; the social and economic issues; levels of youth provision; access to services; along with regeneration concerns and aspirations. Essentially, any consultation must be wide ranging and allow for conversations on a multitude of issues prevalent within these communities.

Individual community differences

Although it was recognised that it was essential that communities had to be consulted on the process, it was also reinforced that as communities were very different, that various approaches/methods may be required. Therefore, what is successful in one community, may

fail in another. Furthermore, it may simply be that one neighbouring community simply does not want to participate in any form of consultation or conversation around interface barriers. In this case, those responsible for initiating this process need to be in a position to provide support, encouragement and facilitation so that the community in the future may be in a tentative position to look at the issue.

Community led

Any type of consultation must be grounded within the community. This meant that the local community have ownership of the process and can utilise existing social and community groups to assist in the delivering of the consultation. Delegates discussed women's groups, youth groups, pensioners groups as ideal environments to interact with, and lead the consultation. The essential criteria for those tasked with delivering this consultation was 'trust'. They had to be seen to be coming without an agenda or any preconceived notion about peacelines.

Local steering groups

A crucial aspect of this process is communication and the sharing of information. Mistrust in the process through poor communication can be prevented through local community steering groups. These would provide each area with a mechanism to up-date on the process/consultation, feedback key community findings and facilitate links with those from statutory organisations and political representatives tasked with delivering on the outcomes from the community consultation.

Gate keepers

It was interesting to note that several delegates felt that a new, more novel approach had to be given to a community consultation. There was a perception that previously the same types of people would be approached to gain 'approval' to discuss this issue within their community. However, for this approach it was suggested that although gate keepers had to be made aware of the process, they should not be able to influence its outcomes.

Existing work

It was also important to recognise that a number of organisations have already begun the process of 'looking at the long term sustainability of interface barriers'. These groups have

facilitated discussions with local residents and begun the slow process of building an initiative that may in the future examine the potential for regenerating communities with interface barriers. It was crucial that this expertise, knowledge and skill base was not lost, and that their experiences assist in any future city wide community consultation.

3. Youth

Conference presentation

This was very positively received by the delegates and provided a fresh perspective on the issue. It was recognised that young people have an integral role in the discussions and that their input can widen the debate within communities. It was also important that the presentation highlighted the lack of funding and youth provision for those both living and working within interface communities. Furthermore it was felt that both young people and interface workers have the potential to play an integral role, in future local consultations surrounding interfaces and regeneration.

Young people

Continue to be the main protagonists in violence and disorder along the interfaces. As security and safety is seen as paramount, steps must be taken to address the continued role of young people who engage in violence and ultimately perpetuate the sense of need for the barriers.

4. Role for local departments

Engagement and communication

There was a general consensus from participants that government departments continued to exercise a degree of autonomy in relation to issues impacting on communities. There was also a belief that several departments maintained a view that interface issues were not something within their remit. If communities are going to fully participate in this process then they must be in a position to influence policies that have a direct impact on the areas they are attempting to transform/regenerate.

Examples focused on the Planning Department and their apparent lack of awareness on issues that have direct consequences on communities. There was a lack of consultation or consideration of their decisions or an apparent willingness to incorporate community views on issues pertaining to community cohesion and social interaction.

Joined up approach

An interagency approach is needed that delivers tangible outcomes, along with a commitment to support communities to participate in a process around interface regeneration. Reference was made to Neighbourhood Renewal and its perceived failure because it did not bring departments together to address community issues.

Further points for consideration

1. Security was seen as paramount. There was a general consensus that communities, especially those living at the interfaces needed the reassurance that their personal safety would not be compromised in any shape or form. Therefore, it was recognised that the PSNI along with existing community based initiatives would have an important role in creating environments devoid of violence and disorder.
2. According to delegates the recent calls for two new peacelines to be constructed in Mountainview and Hillview Road is a worrying development. The fact that peacelines continue to be viewed as a potential response to community tensions is a concern.

Is it impractical for the OFMDFM with the PSNI to state publicly that the construction of peacelines will no longer be considered as a viable response to communal violence and disorder?

3. On a number of occasions the individuality of communities was noted, with specific reference to their capacity to deliver on this type of process. It was important to state that a generic approach to this issue would not be successful. However, a positive message and commitment from the government and an acceptance that success would be difficult to measure would limit expectations and allow for each community to develop the mechanics required to begin the process.

Appendix II

Individual Workshop comments

- Excellent – message clear and concise - very positive to have young person input.

Issues arising:

- Need for more youth workers in North Belfast – especially when CEPs end;
- BELB has a lack of funding; it is piecemeal and not fit for purpose;
- Lack of funding for outreach workers; some areas North Belfast only have 2 hours per month;
- Potentially over 5,000 young people will be on the streets over the summer – youth workers are already ‘burnt out’;
- Is the PSNI a presence at Interfaces? The young person in the group stated they are developing relationships with the Police at interfaces, they now know the individual community police officers by name and feel more confident in dealing with them;
- While recognizing that the Two Parks project was successful, it should be taken in context, and it covered a small area with relatively small numbers of young people involved.

1. How do we take this discussion out to the people living in interface areas?

- Go out to the people living on interfaces, mobile clinics, pass the gate keepers.
- Ask people what they feel about the peace walls, interfaces. Do they need them, still want them to stay? What are the problems they see living beside or near an interface?
- Discussions need to be localised, don't go out with an agenda and don't offend people by presupposing that everyone is ready for their removal.
- The discussions should also focus on good relations across communities and good relationships within one community, as some issues are not just on physical barriers.
- Resolving the issues always requires the full involvement of the people who are most affected.

- Some people living near interfaces were more ‘tuned’ into the issues than others. Parts of the community were not involved, or wanted to get involved. Some residents were afraid of offending people.
- Need to use the correct language. Consider location.
- Use schools, women’s groups, GAA clubs. etc. - people must feel safe.
- Use ongoing projects as a basis for consultation (i.e. arts/community education, build into wide variety of interactions with young people particularly where this affects the harder issues such as bonfires).
- Belfast has talented community facilitators – use them.
- Discussions need to be localised using local expertise.
- Discussions need to be with “Joe Soap” – i.e. local residents.
- There needs to be feedback given so communities know their voices have been heard.
- Consider forming a steering body to represent all sectors.

2. What could the Departments do to address the transformation of interfaces?

- Launch the Cohesion Sharing and Integration (C.S.I) document and implement it.
- There needs to be more engagement between Departments and the community – more communication but not more consultation.
- There should be clear targets and more resources made available. It was felt that there was a need to create the right conditions to transform interfaces, e.g. not just removal of interfaces but regeneration at interfaces for the communities most affected.
- Interface communities need to see real economic benefits before the peace walls come down as people need reassurances.
- There needs to be an Inter-Agency approach (at present on paper only). A clear Government commitment that peace-lines should come down by 2020. There is also a need for agencies to encourage more cross-community dialogue. The example of Torrens was quoted with the perception that NIHE should have engaged earlier in the process. Government Departments need to adopt a common approach for the removal of peace walls and not the recent examples of two new peace walls being proposed for Mountainview and Hillview Road. Also the fence at Hazelwood School was quoted as another example of building barriers to solve issues that required cross-community dialogue.
- There is a need to be involved for the long haul.

- There is a need for a coordinated approach, with existing processes/networks continuing to be used. There will still be a need for a Lead Agency and someone to facilitate or co-facilitate, although not everyone in the group agreed on this.
- Some community groups and communities need mentoring support. CRC and OFMDFM could provide support and best practice.
- Reconciliation is a long term process and should start with a five year plan.
- Local structures needed cross-community dialogue e.g. the Girdwood site has not had cross-community dialogue for the past two years.

4. How can we make young people a top priority and see them as a solution not a problem?

- Need for young people to meet with MLAs and Children's Commissioner to highlight needs - often the lost voice within the community.
- Interface violence by young people considered recreational – alienated by their own community – only 'good' kids respected.
- Lack of role models – especially in PUL areas.
- Reduction in services will have huge negative impacts. Youth provision is so poor and precarious and seen as a patch job without any real long term strategic plan despite youth being continually being identified as a core issue.
- Any solutions need to be grounded within a partnership approach involving local residents, the young people and interface/youth/community workers.
- Young people likely to be demonised within the process – should not be seen as a specific group within society/community.
- Solutions must take time to instill the confidence and trust required.
- All key players must commit time and resources to a long term process.
- Not just an NI issue – conflict with young people a global issue but sectarianism has intensified the natural/normal conflict – the hurt within communities is being played out by the young people.
- Need local role models not gatekeepers – the communities should be supported to challenge gatekeepers and to think more long term.

5. What message do we want to send out to the Executive and political representatives at local level about interfaces?

- The message from OFMDFM does not match that of local representatives and councillors on the ground. There needs to be a common party line. Manage people on the ground so they are better informed and less destructive.
- Ministerial comment not being reflected in CSI action – causes confusion and negative opinion. Weakness in Ministerial presentation because no CSI.
- There is a need for regular cross party plenary surgeries in communities from all political parties, perhaps quarterly.
- Political reps need to be visible and seen talking together.
- Some communities may not be ready (PUL) and may need more time.
- Need a joined up approach that translates Executive messages to a local level through positive political leadership and management.
- People in communities want to move on. They want to see more cross community activity with reflective aspects so lessons can be learned.
- Key message to Executive – need to resource and support more cross-community joined up working across interfaces.
- Any initiatives need to be agreed with community. Statutory agencies need to do more. Money and resources need to go into what's working – not what's not working; it doesn't always have to be through statutory bodies.
- Give weight to different shades of opinion within constituencies. Political reps need to acknowledge this.
- Absence of moral reference, cannot put it all down to deprivation e.g. the recent riots in Holylands.
- There needs to be a co-ordinated Government response on interfaces across all relevant Departments.
- While in some cases women are being held back in discussions, others are moving forwards.
- Shared Future was a good start, but now need stronger actions in any new strategy. Need to build on what's happened so far, need a timeline for action.

Appendix III

Conference Delegates

Sean	Montgomery	2 Parks Project
Claire	Connor	Ashton Community Trust
Geraldine	McGreevy	BELB
Caroline	Wilson	Belfast City Council
Sabine	Kalke	Belfast City Council
Shauna	Murtagh	Belfast City Council
Bill	Groves	Belfast City Council, Antisocial Behaviour Officer
Chris	O'Halloran	Belfast Interface Project
Erik	Cownie	Belfast Interface Project
Daniel	Jack	Belfast Reconciliation Network.
Sandra	Buchan	Belfast Regeneration Office, Greater West Team
Gerry	Robinson	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum
Manus	Maguire	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum
Ali	McAllister	Community Relations Council
Duncan	Morrow	Community Relations Council
Dympna	McGlade	Community Relations Council
Gemma	Attwood	Community Relations Council
Grace	O'Sullivan	Community Relations Council
Jacqueline	Irwin	Community Relations Council
Paul	Killen	Community Relations Council
Niamh	Downey	Department of Foreign Affairs
Gerry	Spence	Developing Leadership Institute
Sara	Cook	East Belfast Mission
Antoinette	McKeown	Equality Commission
Hookham	Simon	Equality Commission
Richard	Cory-Wright	Equality Commission
Colin	Patterson	Finaghy Crossroads Group
Stephen	Magennis	Finaghy Crossroads Group
Johnston	Price	Forthspring
Aislín	Curran	Forward Learning
Mary	Kelly	Glandore
Ciarán	Shannon	Groundwork NI
Robert	Lee	Groundwork NI
David	Blake	Habitat for Humanity NI
Jude	McCann	Habitat for Humanity NI
Tom	O'Dowd	Habitat for Humanity NI
Anne	Carr	Independent Facilitator
Brid	Ruddy	Independent Facilitator
Jonny	Byrne	Independent Facilitator
Neil	Jarman	Institute for Conflict Research
Lorraine	Butler	Interaction Belfast
Noel	Large	Interaction Belfast
Roisín	McGlone	Interaction Belfast
Sean	Brennan	Intercomm

Teena	Patrick	Interface Residents Groups
Susan	McEwen	Irish Peace Centres-Corrymeela
Sean	McMahon	Lenadoon Forum
Deborah	Anderson	LINC
Deirdre	Mac Bride	Mac Bride International
Brendán	Clarke	NBIN
Gail	Barbour	NIO
Ronnie	Armour	NIO
Jenny	Douglas	North Belfast Community Action Unit
Joe	McGouran	North Belfast Community Action Unit
Ricky	Irwin	North Belfast Community Action Unit
Tim	Losty	North Belfast Community Action Unit
Sam	Cochrane	North Belfast Community Development
John	Howcroft	Nth Belfast Community Development and Transition Group
Thomas	Whiteside	Nth Belfast Community Development and Transition Group
Malachy	Mulgrew	North Belfast Interface Network
Rab	McCallum	North Belfast Interface Network
John	Read	North Belfast Partnership
Deirdre	Crawford	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Jennifer	Hawthorne	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Colin	Jack	OFMDFM
Frankie	Quinn	Photographer & exhibitor at conference
Moyra	Wylie	REAL Good Relations Project
John	McVicker	Shankill Mirror
Jean	Brown	Suffolk Community Forum
Brian	McKevitt	Terry Enright Foundation
Maureen	Doyle	Two Parks Project
Sarah Jane	Beattie	Two Parks Project
Brenainn	Brunton	University of Ulster
Janice	Beggs	Upper North Belfast CEP
Maura	Kavanagh	Workers Educational Association