



Annual Report. 2004 - 2005

Overview:

To say that this has been a busy year for BIP would be an understatement.

Completed pieces of work have included our policy paper, 'A Policy Agenda for the Interface', which has been disseminated widely and received well in terms of raising awareness of interface issues. Our management committee are also, alongside staff, implementing a lobbying strategy and making contact with a range of agencies and individuals regarding their responses to the paper.

We launched our website (www.belfastinterfaceproject.org) in January and continue to add material to this regularly.

As I write, we're finalising issue #4 of our news-sheet 'Interface'. An evaluation questionnaire disseminated with the last issue has indicated that recipients have found the news-sheet useful and relevant.

This year has brought closure to our involvement with the East Belfast Conflict Transformation Project, as local people take direct control of the process without need of further support from ourselves as supplied in the past – this is as it should be and we wish them well with this.

Meanwhile, we have supported the development of a range of groups and initiatives including two new inter-community mobile phone networks in other areas.

In May of this year we held the first of our new series of city-wide Thematic Discussions – the topic was 'Gearing up for the summer – interface conflict management'. Attendance, participation and feedback regarding the event were excellent and we look forward to hosting further events in the series.

Projects which have begun but will not produce concrete results until the coming year include a collection of abstracts of interface-related literature, plus the creation of a library of source documents which will be available to members.

We have also commissioned the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) to document a range of effective practice in violence-reduction in interface areas – we expect this to be complete by Autumn of this year.

We aim also to create an online map and gallery of Belfast's NIO-built interfaces, as a first step in documenting the range of Belfast's interfaces, and have fundraised to have these professionally photographed.

We have recently begun a scoping study of the support needs of ethnic minority groups in interface areas, and expect this to take up most of the next year before completion.

Following the completion of the survey of membership needs we have applied for funding for a new 'Conflict Transformation Support Project' in order to seek to match the identified need for training and support in the areas of conflict transformation and 'coping with the legacies of the past' with supply in these areas.

We will also implement a membership development strategy over the coming year. Even without this, BIP membership has increased by 27% over the past year – so hopefully this means we are doing something right.

Management committee members have attended, with staff, team-building and forward planning sessions and this has brought a really positive team spirit to the project. The committee have been very supportive and directive in steering the project towards achievable and useful goals. On behalf of the staff, I'd like to thank our management committee for this much-appreciated support.

Finally, I'd like to commend my excellent co-workers Paul Donnelly (Development Worker), Marnie Kennedy (Support Worker) and Genevieve Lennon (temporary maternity cover Support Worker) for their work in contributing toward the output contained in this report, which would not have been possible without them, and finish by saying that we look forward to another busy year ahead.

Chris O'Halloran
Director
10.06.05

Objective 1: To identify the components of a regeneration strategy.

a) Prepare a bibliography of abstracts of interface-related material:

Last call for additions complete; document currently being finalized before publication.

b) Identify & document areas of effective practice:

Phase 1: 'Documenting effective practice in violence reduction in interface areas': Currently underway; will continue through the summer period; report due for completion and publication in autumn '05.

c) Map NIO & residential interfaces:

Phase 1: Mapping NIO interfaces: Work commissioned. Due for completion by end of summer 2005.

d) Create an internet-based updateable map of interfaces:

Phase 1 due for completion by August/September 2005.

Objective 2: To enhance and develop the knowledge base.

a) Identify, explore & document gaps in knowledge-base:

'Statutory agency perspectives on the regeneration of interface areas:'

Report compiled; distributed to members and key stakeholders; uploaded to website.

b) Evaluate & adapt UJJ current 'Dealing with diversity' module

Delivered to Community Youth Work students at Armagh and Magee

c) Create 'stand alone' module for delivery to statutory/voluntary sector by WEA or similar:

Nothing further to report.

d) Prepare a briefing paper for networks

With assistance from Dr Peter Shirlow (University of Ulster) and Brendan Murtagh (Queens University), BIP has drawn up a policy paper 'A Policy Agenda for the Interface' outlining key issues for interface communities.

e) Launch of Policy Paper:

The policy paper was launched at the Lord Mayor's Parlour on July 23rd. The launch was hosted by the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Tom Ekin. The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Joe O'Donnell and the

High Sheriff, Councillor Ruth Patterson also spoke in support of the paper. A range of BIP members were also present. A range of councillors, from all of the parties represented within the Council, also attended or relayed their support for the paper. The launch also received widespread press, radio & TV coverage.

f) Manage process of change with influential bodies:

Lobbying Plan: A lobbying plan has also been prepared, covering key stakeholders including 'multiplier' partner agencies, statutory agencies, political parties, the community sector, and the private sector. As part of the lobbying plan, the policy paper has been mailed to a wide range of constituencies and follow-up meetings are in progress.

Other:

g) Working party on racism and ethnic minorities:

The Management Committee's strategic planning day was held on October 18th 2004. One outcome of this was that BIP's overall vision was expanded slightly to incorporate a Belfast in which today's interface communities: '*... Have respect for cultural difference and diversity*'. Following this, a small group met to discuss the implications of this addition for BIP's future workplan. As a result, it was agreed that the Development Worker should implement a one-year scoping study, meeting with a broad range of minority ethnic groups to record their experiences as ethnic minorities within interface areas of Belfast and to assess the potential to engage in work with BIP to address issues arising. This project is underway.

Objective 3: To influence change that is of practical benefit.

a) Deliver training to management committee in: team-building; interface issues; presentation skills; lobbying skills:

Management committee strategic planning day held on October 18th ; team-building / forward planning residential held in May 2005. Lobbying-skills training scheduled for June 2005.

b) Produce a website of information, resources and links:

BIP's website went online on January 19th 2005, at www.belfastinterfaceproject.org

c) Develop profile of interface issues within CRC/CR arena

Over the past year, BIP has been represented on the following: Inter-agency Oversight Group; CFNI Weak Community Infrastructure advisory group; CFNI Communities in Transition advisory group; Community Dialogue Executive; Stewartstown Road Regeneration

Project; Institute for Conflict Research; Community Relations Council; Parenting in a Divided Society advisory group; Ulster Peoples College and the Corrymeela Reference Group.

d) Help to develop further crisis response & signposting services:

Continued membership of the Oversight Group, which has taken on the role of overseeing the implementation of recommendations stemming from the review (which we also chaired) of the Interagency Working Group on Displaced Families.

e) Support development of mobile phone networks:

BIP has actively supported the development of two new mobile phone networks over the past year, in the Lower Ormeau/Donnegall Pass/Markets area and in the Finaghy crossroads area.

Other:

f) East Belfast Conflict Transformation Project:

The role of the Steering Group (BIP, Tides, MNI) has come to an end as local groups aim to continue this work without the need for external support as supplied previously. Very positive 'closure' meetings have been held with local groups. A new mobile phone network has been put in place with the active participation of local groups and residents, and local inter-community meetings are taking place.

Objective 4: To consult, develop and support the membership of BIP.

a) Identify membership support-needs:

Membership survey completed; report distributed to members and key stakeholders; uploaded to website.

Based on survey findings, BIP is currently sourcing funding for a new 'Conflict Transformation Support Project' whereby a new post will be created, dedicated to matching support/training demand with supply, as well as addressing gaps in current provision, in the areas of conflict transformation and coping with the legacies of the past.

b) Develop opportunities for peer-support:

The first of four thematic discussions for members and key stakeholders was held on 26th May. The theme was 'Gearing up for the summer – interface conflict management'. Guest speakers from different interface areas gave inputs on their plans, hopes and concerns about defusing conflict in interface areas over the approaching summer, followed by opportunities for discussion and networking. Attendance was good and feedback from

participants was very positive. Further events are in the planning stage.

c) Develop an interface 'newsletter' or similar:

Issue 3 of our '*Interface*' news-sheet was produced in April 2005. A questionnaire was distributed with this issue, seeking both quantitative and qualitative feedback regarding views on the news-sheet to date. Responses have been very positive, with approval ratings of 70%-80% on the extent to which the news-sheet has met each of its 4 main aims.

d) Produce a members' handbook of data to date:

Currently in process of redesigning our information pack.

e) Develop group, associate and individual membership:

The following have joined as new members of BIP over the past year:

The Crown Project; Lower Woodstock Community Association; Ligoniel Improvement Association; Markets Development Association; Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project; Habitat for Humanity; Institute for Conflict Research; Ulster Peoples' College, and the Workers Educational Association. This brings our total membership to date to 33 community group members, 12 associate members, and 3 individual members.

A dedicated membership development strategy is also in preparation.

f) Develop training routes for facilitators:

We are lobbying CRC to do more in this area. Apart from this, we aim to address this issue through the Conflict Transformation Support Project outlined in 4a) above.

g) Hold a regular conference outlining new information and progress to date:

First BIP annual conference was held in June 2004; report distributed to members and key stakeholders; uploaded to website. 2005 annual conference is currently scheduled to be held on 8th September.

Other:

h) Lord Mayor's Interface Reception:

At our suggestion, the Lord Mayor held a reception for interface community groups and activists on September 29th in Belfast City Hall. The purpose of the event was to express gratitude for the work in stabilising interface areas, and also to ask 'what else could the

Council do to support you?' A follow-up event was held on February 23rd.

i) Roden St / Windsor Women's Centre / CFNI:

BIP have helped to provide, through CFNI, access to external facilitation work with Windsor Women's Centre and Roden Street Women's Group – this work is underway.

Objective 5: To become an independent project.

a) Administer new wages & accounting systems:

Implemented.

b) Agree & implement new terms & conditions & pension arrangements:

Implemented.

c) Identify & secure new premises:

If funding applications are successful, we will need to move again to accommodate a total staff team of 4 – 5 people.

d) Institute regular monitoring & evaluation systems:

Implemented. CRC core funding interim evaluation report concluded that '...this organisation is most worthy of continued, secure, financial support from CRC'. CENI evaluation ongoing. Staff appraisal structure drawn up and implemented. Regular monthly team meetings and individual support/supervision sessions held, plus weekly brief 'catch-up' sessions with individual staff-members and joint single-issue meetings.

e) Identify & avail of appropriate training opportunities:

Development Worker training take-up: Peace II closure; evaluation

Support Worker training take-up: Peace II closure; evaluation; fundraising & events management;

Director training take-up: family-related employment issues.