Belfast Interface Project

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Belfast Interface Project

Annual Report

June 2005 – August 2006

Overview:

This has been another busy year for BIP.

New publications have included 'Interface Issues', our collection of summaries of literature written about interfaces and 'Working at the Interface', a research document outlining aspects of good practice in reducing tension and violence in interface areas. We continue to develop our website and have mapped Belfast's NIO-identified interfaces and commissioned a set of photographs of each which will form an online guide to these.

We have continued to lobby a range of agencies for positive change in promoting the regeneration of interface areas, using our 'Policy Agenda for the Interface' document, and have influenced the Government's new 'A Shared Future' policy in this respect.

We have produced two issues of our news-sheet *'Interface'* over the past year. The most recent was disseminated during April/May 2006 and, at 12 pages, was 50% larger than previous issues. Feedback has been very positive. As I write, we're finalising issue #6.

Our total membership has increased to 56 over the past year. Many of these attended our annual conference in September 2005 which they reported as an excellent opportunity for networking and peer support. Similarly, participants in our joint project with Community Dialogue also reported that this was a very positive experience.

We have supported the development of a range of groups and initiatives including the Gasworks Network, Finaghy Crossroads Group and expansion of the Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group mobile phone network, amongst others.

We held the second in our series of city-wide Thematic Discussions in September 2005 – the topic was 'Reflecting on 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.

It's been a busy year, too, in terms of changes to the staff team. We were sorry to say goodbye to our Development Worker Paul Donnelly who left to take up a post with Ulster Peoples' College and to Genevieve Lennon and Maire McCotter, consecutive Temporary Support Workers (maternity leave), who left us in July (Genevieve to further education in Leeds) and December 2005 (Maire to take up a post with Belfast Healthy Cities). We thank Paul, Genevieve and Maire for their work for us and wish them well in their future careers.

Gary McClean joined us as Development Worker in November 2005, taking over Paul's workload. With a short period to acclimatise, Gary has quickly adapted to this demanding and varied post and we consider ourselves very lucky to have him on our team. Gary's work continues also in scoping the experiences and support needs of ethnic minority groups in interface areas.

We were very pleased to welcome Marnie Kennedy back on her return from maternity leave as part-time Senior Support Worker in February, and we feel very fortunate to have recruited Sam Askin, also in February, as part-time Support Worker complementing Marnie's post.

We were delighted, also, to recruit Erik Cownie as Development Worker with our new Conflict Transformation Support Project in March 2006. This new project stems from the findings of our 2004 survey of membership needs and is funded until Dec 31st 2008. The project aims to help 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.

This brings our total staff complement to 3 full-time and 2 part-time staff.

Management committee members, as always, have been very supportive and directive in steering the project towards achievable and useful goals. As a membership organisation, it's important to us that the committee are involved in the work of the project rather than simply 'rubber stamping' the work - they are and we appreciate that. It's a team effort.

Chris O'Halloran
Director
21.08.06

Objective 1: To enhance and develop the knowledge base regarding Belfast's interface areas.

a) Prepare a bibliography of abstracts of interface-related material:
We received delivery in July 2005 of 400 bound copies of the collection of abstracts document 'Interface Issues'. We posted most of these to members and key stakeholders and put a pdf file version of the collection document up on the website for download. We have also prepared an index for the library collection of source documents housed in the BIP office which is open to members and key stakeholders. We have issued a call to members and key stakeholders for suggestions regarding further literature to be included in our first annual update to this collection. We have also submitted applications for funding for a similar piece of work, this time concentrating on literature related to parades/protests in interface areas of Belfast/N.I.

b) Update 'Inner East / Outer West' publication:
We will receive Peace 2.5 funding to undertake this.

c) Identify & document areas of effective practice:
'Working at the Interface: Documenting effective practice in violence reduction in interface areas'. We commissioned ICR to produce this for us, with the welcome support of a small advisory group which met twice over the duration of the project. The document was finalised, published and distributed during May/June 2006 and a pdf file version of the document was uploaded to the website.

d) Regularly update website information, resources and links:
We have sought members permission to put their (public domain) contact details on the website, with no refusals to date, and have posted these to the site. We have also uploaded our conference report, previous issues of *'Interface'*, annual reports, booklets and other publications. We are in the process of working with our web designer to make as much as possible of the site content updateable by ourselves.

e) Map NIO & residential interfaces:
Phase 1: Mapping NIO-built interfaces: The mapping of these is complete. The map has been 'tweaked' to be more rigorous (an uninterrupted structure will be classed as one structure, although it may have various sections built at different times, etc). Frankie Quinn's work in photographing them is almost complete and he has supplied us with these in both hard copy and digital format. Next we aim to
i) Match the photos to the list of interfaces
ii) filter down the interface photos (approx 400+) to a more manageable number of useful photos

iii) enlist our web designer to create an online map and gallery, using the map and photos.
Phase 2: We aim to overlay this upon a map of demographic segregation.
Phase 3: Next year we aim to commission the mapping of the locations of the non NIO-built walls and barriers which often join onto the NIO-built barriers.
The ideal then would be to update these annually and document and photograph changes.

We have secured funding for two exhibitions of a selection (40) of Frankie Quinn's interface photographs, to be held in the Spectrum Centre (Shankill Road) and in the Conway Mill (Falls Road).

f) Deliver 'Working with Diversity' module to University of Ulster:
We helped to deliver this to UUJ students at Magee in January 2006.

g) Create 'stand alone' module for delivery to statutory/voluntary sector by WEA or similar:
Nothing further to report.

h) Scoping study of needs of minority ethnic groups in interface areas:
Our Development Worker (Communications and Membership Support Project) Gary McClean is implementing a scoping study, meeting with a 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 any issues arising.

Objective 2: To lobby for change that is of practical benefit to interface communities.

a) Prepare a lobbying plan:
The management committee and staff are currently implementing the lobbying plan which was drawn up last year.

b) Manage process of change with influential bodies:
Meetings held and inputs on the 'Policy Agenda for the Interface' document given to Community Relations Unit – OFMDFM, NIHE, DCAL, BRO, and others. The management committee have also met with Atlantic Philanthropies to discuss Atlantic's interest in interface issues.

c) Membership of Community Relations Council and other influential bodies.
Over the past year, BIP has been represented on the following: Inter-agency Oversight Group; CFNI Measure 2.7 Peace II Extension Panel; 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..

Objective 3: To consult, develop and support the membership of Belfast Interface Project.

Note: Our Communications and Membership Support Project Development Worker, Paul Donnelly, left BIP in September 2005 to take up a post with Ulster Peoples' College. We are very pleased to have recruited a new Development Worker, Gary McClean. Gary took up this post in November 2005. This transition caused a temporary delay in delivery of some programme elements including, for example, our '*Interface*' newssheet and series of Thematic Discussions.

a) Develop opportunities for peer support:
The second in our series of city-wide Thematic Discussions was held on September 29th 2005. The theme was a review of practice/success/learnings/needs in relation to summer interface conflict management/transformation. The event was well attended and discussion was lively.

b) Continue to produce 'Interface' news-sheet.
We have produced two issues over the past year. The most recent, issue #5, was disseminated during April/May 2006 and, at 12 pages, was 50% larger than previous issues. Feedback has been very positive.

c) Update members' information pack.

Contents updated.

d) Develop individual, group & associate membership.
We have drawn up a membership development strategy and will begin to implement this later this year. The following have joined as new members of BIP over the past year: Dee Street Community Centre, Families of the Displaced, Dispersed and Distressed (FODDD), Lower Shankill Community Association, Norn Buzz, Sandy Row Community Forum, Suffolk Community Centre, White City Community Development Association, and Transition Training. This brings our total membership to date to 40 community group members, 13 associate members, and 3 individual members.

e) Hold conferences addressing critical issues.
Our second annual conference was held on Sep 8th 2005 in the Europa Hotel. The format included a range of panel speakers from statutory agencies and from political parties who each gave an input on their perception of the role of their agency/party in promoting the social and economic regeneration of Belfast's interface communities, together with opportunities for small group and plenary discussion. Attendance was excellent. Both informal and formal feedback on the conference has been very positive.

f) Evaluate and adapt BIP/Community Dialogue joint project:
This project was very well received by participants and we aim to repeat it in the future with support through Peace 2.5 funding.

Other:
g) W5/BIP project:
Our Development Worker Gary McClean has facilitated a series of discussions involving a number of member groups and W5 (Odyssey) with a view to developing a project to be carried out within W5 which would be free and of benefit to member groups. The project aims to develop programs to cater for Parents and Toddlers, Intergenerational Projects, and an Adolescent Multi- Media Project.

Objective 4: To assist interface communities in addressing conflict.

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a) Support interface communities in developing and gaining access to crisis-response mechanisms.
As per last year, we have uploaded the annual multi-agency 'Operational Procedures for Displaced Families' handbook to our website and notified members.

b) Support and assist in the development of mobile phone networks, within BIP resources.

Gasworks Network:
We have supported this group to implement a local mobile phone network and to consolidate through consultation with local communities and agencies.

c) Provide signposting services.
We received funding for our new 'Conflict Transformation Support Project' (CTSP) early this year and recruited our new Development Worker Erik Cownie in March. The project is dedicated to matching support/training demand with supply in the areas of 'conflict transformation' and 'coping with the legacies of the past'. Present (initial) areas of project work include:
- introductory meetings with members, training providers and funders.
- Setting up of CTSP update mail-out, (beginning July 2006)
- Collating and dissemination of available training.
- Initiate quarterly liaison meetings with training providers.
- Updating BIP website to enable input of curricular information
- Identifying and addressing areas of weak infrastructure in the field of conflict transformation.
- Initiating inter-community dialogue processes.
- Devising Conflict Transformation Support Projects with specific groups. Including sourcing training, networking, events and support (including crisis response provision).
- Collating and researching existing provision (including peer educators) in the field of assisting and supporting communities addressing the legacies of the past.

d) Provide a forum for informed debate on models of conflict transformation.
We have been commissioned to edit and finalise CFNI's 'Introduction to Peacebuilding for Community Groups' handbook. The handbook should be complete during autumn 2006.

e) Continue to practise conflict management, reconciliation and transformation in communities.

Finaghy facilitation:
We have worked closely with the Finaghy Crossroads Group in facilitating the group to design a strategic plan for future work. The group launched their strategic plan at a public event held in Finaghy Library on June 29th 2006. President Mary McAleese was a keynote speaker at the event which received widespread media coverage.

Other areas:
We have received a number of requests to explore possible interest regarding the establishment of inter-community contact. This exploratory work is ongoing.

Objective 5: To manage Belfast Interface Project effectively and efficiently.

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a) Update policies and procedures.
Data protection policy drawn up.

b) Ensure that management of finances is accountable and transparent.
IFI, CRC Core Funding and Peace II returns and reports submitted.
Peace II.5, CRC, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, IFI Community Bridges Programme and Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit applications prepared, submitted and progressed successfully.
Online banking set up.

c) Identify and secure premises that meet the needs of membership and staff.
Nothing further to report.

d) Maintain regular monitoring and evaluation practices.
Implemented. CENI evaluation ongoing.

e) Identify and avail of appropriate training opportunities.
Temporary Support Worker: one day training in Race and Ethnicity at the Ulster People's College. Director and CMS Development Worker: WEA training in Principled Negotiation Skills. Senior Support Worker: training in proofreading, provided by the Publishing Training Centre (PTC). CTSP Development Worker: Diploma in Conflict Studies completed, Degree in Community Development course at UUJ commenced.

f) Deliver training to management committee and staff in: team-building, interface issues, lobbying skills.
Lobbying skills training held on June 23rd 2005 at Stratagem. Annual management committee and staff teambuilding and forward planning residential held on May 17th/18th 2006.

g) Hold a regular Annual General Meeting.
Our 5th AGM was held on June 21st 2005.

h) Maintain an effective staff team
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. Part time Support Worker (Sam Askin) recruited.

i) Maintain and develop organisational planning process:
Currently updating operational plan.