



*Belfast  
Interface  
Project*

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## Belfast Interface Project

### Annual Report

October 2006 – September 2007

#### Overview:

New publications have included the first update to our collection of abstracts of interface-related literature and, hopefully by the time you read this, 'Parades and Protests' - a new collection of abstracts of parade and protest-related literature. We have continued to develop our website, adding a map and gallery of photographs of each of Belfast's NIO-identified interfaces together with a new web page devoted to our Conflict Transformation Support Project and we have modified the website so that it is now editable by us.

We have been represented on a Belfast City Council advisory group for a new research and dialogue programme for the public sector which aims to develop an integrated approach to the task of Conflict Transformation, and have widely disseminated the recommendations generated at the very successful annual conference which we held last year jointly with CRC and which provided a showcase for local interface community activists to talk about their work and needs.

We have continued to produce our *Interface* news-sheet (3 issues per year, 2,500 copies per issue) and to hold our series of city-wide thematic discussions, and our membership has continued to grow slowly. We plan to survey our members later this year in order to update information since our last (2004) survey of membership needs.

Our Conflict Transformation Support Project has signposted members and key stakeholders towards training opportunities and has provided support for the delivery of strategic planning facilitation and residential planning opportunities, locally devised projects including new mobile phone networks, and a new labour mobility project.

We moved thankfully to new and larger premises in May and, as a result, have been able to accommodate a new and welcome volunteer – Grace Bates – to whom we are very grateful.

Our staff team have worked hard to deliver the outcomes listed in this report and, as always, the management committee have operated on a consensus basis and have been helpful, supportive and, where necessary, directive. Thanks and acknowledgement are due to all concerned.

Chris O'Halloran, Director,  
25th September 2007

**Aim 1. To enhance and develop the knowledge base regarding Belfast's interface areas.**

**Objectives:**

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

i) We commissioned ICR to produce for us in May 2007 the first update to our collection of abstracts of interface-related literature. This was produced as a PDF file, rather than in 'hard copy', and made available for download from our website.

ii) Similarly, we commissioned ICR to produce for us in October 2007 a new collection of abstracts of parade and protest-related literature. Hard copies will be posted out to members and key stakeholders with a PDF version made available for download from the website.

**b) Identify & document areas of effective practice:**

Our next piece of work in this area will be in documenting effective practice in addressing issues relating to contentious parades/protests – this will follow the project described above.

**c) Produce a website of information, resources and links:**

We have liaised with our web designer to modify our website so that the current content is editable by us. This has allowed us to update sections where previously we had to pay for this work. A link to our Conflict Transformation Support Project is now included on the website with some documents available to download.

**d) Map NIO & residential interfaces:**

The website was updated in March 2007, adding a map and gallery of photographs (1 taken from each side) of each of the 41 known NIO-authorized interface structures in Belfast.

Meanwhile, we have used the photographs to create a PowerPoint slideshow of the interface images, available to members on request.

**e) Deliver 'Working with Diversity' module to University of Ulster:**

We have delivered this module to UUU in recent years but were not required to do so this year.

**f) Identify the support needs of Ethnic Minority communities living in interface areas of Belfast:**

After extensive effort in attempting to survey the support needs of ethnic minority communities living in interface areas, we were forced to conclude that the survey as originally planned was impracticable due to the need for one-to-one contact together with translation and interpretation requirements in order to complete this. BIP staff have reviewed this piece of work to try to identify learnings for the future in terms of how else this piece of work might be carried forward by a more appropriate agency.

**Other:**

**g) NVTV Interface series:**

Following BIP representation to them, Northern Visions (NVTV) have agreed to develop a series of programmes charting the history of and key issues for Belfast's interface communities. NVTV have fundraised and recently recruited a member of staff dedicated to this project; we hope to maximize participation of BIP members in this project.

**h) Frankie Quinn interface photography exhibition:**

We were successful in applying for funding to cover 2 exhibitions of a selection (40) of Frankie Quinn's photographs of Belfast's interfaces. The first exhibition launch was held in the Conway Mill on the Falls Road on Sep 7<sup>th</sup> 2006; the second was held on November 30<sup>th</sup> in the Spectrum Centre on the Shankill Road. Each launch was followed by a week-long exhibition of photographs.

**Aim 2. To lobby for change that is of practical benefit to interface communities.**

**Objectives:**

**a) Implement current lobbying plan:**

This is currently under review by the management committee.

**b) Membership of Community Relations Council and other influential bodies:**

Over the past year, BIP has been represented on the following: 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; CRC Funding Committee (Victims & Survivors Groups); Parenting in a Divided Society advisory group; Belfast Community Safety diversity group.

**c) Manage process of change with influential bodies:**

We have been represented on the advisory group for Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit's Conflict Transformation Project, a research and dialogue programme for the public sector which aims to develop an integrated approach to the task of Conflict Transformation.

We met with BRO team leaders for West & Shankill, with the result that we have added these teams to our news-sheet distribution lists for distribution to their contacts and hopefully possible articles from them.

We met with representatives of OFMDFM to discuss the recommendations arising from the BIP/CRC joint conference in November last year.

**Aim 3. To consult, develop and support the membership of Belfast Interface Project.**

**Objectives:**

**a) Develop opportunities for peer-support:**

Thematic Discussion #3 took place on Friday Sep 15<sup>th</sup>, following our AGM, on the subject of 'Youth offenders at the interface - developing the potential of young people in interface areas'. The event was very well attended and completed evaluation forms indicate that participants found the event useful and informative. Thematic Discussion #4 took place on March 16<sup>th</sup> with a planned panel of speakers from the main political parties discussing their visions for interface areas. Speakers included Alex Attwood, Caral Ni Chuilin and Fred Cobain and each paid tribute to the work of interface community groups and workers. Although attendance was low, the level of participation at this event was high and the discussion was stimulating.

**b) Continue to produce 'Interface' news-sheet:**

Our *Interface* news-sheet issue no. 6 was produced in September 2006, issue no. 7 in March 2007, and issue no. 8 in July 2007. We currently produce and distribute 2,500 copies of each issue. The distribution database has also been developed and expanded.

**c) Update members' information pack:**

This is updated regularly.

**d) Develop individual, group & associate membership:**

While some member groups have folded over the past year, the following have joined as new members of BIP: Suffolk & Lenadoon Interface Group; the Voice Reconciliation Project; Shankill Stress and Trauma Group; North Belfast Community Action Unit; Bill Meulemans;

Gerry Skelton and William Boyd. This brings our total current membership to 63, made up of 43 community group members, 14 associate members and 6 individual members.

**e) Hold conferences addressing critical issues:**

Our third annual conference was held, jointly with CRC, on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2006. The format included a keynote address from Nigel Hamilton, Head of the Civil Service, plus presentations showcasing the work of a range of members and key stakeholders in interface areas across a number of different kinds of work (conflict management through to conflict transformation and regeneration) in different areas within the city. Alongside this, participants had the opportunity to suggest improvements to the next Shared Future Implementation Plan that would assist in better supporting each area of work. Feedback following the event was very positive. NVTV also produced a DVD of interviews filmed at the conference and a conference report was drawn up. We forwarded the conference report executive summary, including recommendations for the Shared Future Triennial Action Plan and also the DVD to all BIP members and conference attendees, with the main report made available for download from our website.

**f) Evaluate and adapt BIP/CD joint project:**

We have issued invites to members to take part in the second BIP/CD project, with few responses to date. We would prefer to enlist more groups to sign up for this project and will be in contact with newer members to ensure they know that this opportunity is available to them.

**g) Identify further membership support needs:**

We aim to carry out a new BIP survey of membership needs later this year (the last survey was completed in 2004). We would aim to commission an external agency to carry this out on our behalf this time as our membership is considerably larger now than in 2004.

**Other:**

**h) BIP/W5 project:**

W5 informed us in February of this year that their funding application to the Big Lottery for this project was unsuccessful.

**i) Housing Affordability Review:**

We were commissioned by AdviceNI in January 2007 to consult with our member groups regarding housing affordability issues. A number of groups were interviewed and a report compiled which was forwarded to AdviceNI for inclusion in their larger submission.

<b>Aim 4. To assist interface communities in addressing conflict.</b>
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**Objectives:**

**a) Support interface communities in developing and gaining access to crisis-response mechanisms:**

As last year, we have uploaded the annually-produced 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:**

We have continued to support the development of the Gasworks network and have also fundraised for and supported the administration of two other new networks in support of local agencies and groups in South Belfast and Outer North Belfast. It is important to note that these networks are internally managed and that the crucial conflict transformation work that these networks provide 'on the ground' is carried out not by BIP but by committed local community activists generally working on a voluntary basis.

**c) Provide signposting services:**

As part of the work of our Conflict Transformation Support Project (CTSP), BIP has signposted groups to training providers, funders and other conflict transformation resources such as Intercomm, North Belfast Conflict Transformation Forum, LINC and others.

**d) Provide a forum for informed debate on models of conflict transformation:**

See 3 e) above.

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

Over the past year we have worked with local agencies and groups to support the development of inter-community dialogue mechanisms in South Belfast and in Outer North Belfast.

**f) Maximise levels of uptake of training and support in the areas of 'addressing the legacies of the past' and 'developing conflict transformation skills':**

Two mail-outs of information regarding available training courses - with input from key training providers - have been sent to members and uploaded to our website. A survey of members' training needs has also been carried out. BIP has also worked in partnership with Ulster Peoples' College (UPC) in the delivery of UPC's Community Development Programme to interface groups. Feedback from the survey, and other issues arising from identified gaps in provision are addressed with key training providers at regular liaison meetings.

ii) We have also recently developed a new Labour Mobility Project. This project encompasses: anti racism and anti sectarianism training and workshops, route-to-employment training i.e. construction safety training, and a commitment from the project's partners to remain engaged with the project participants after training, to the end of assisting them to secure employment / further training. The project is currently being piloted in the Lower Shankill area following an initial support for VOICE's 'Barriers to Employment' project in Highfield. Improvement opportunities identified within the pilot will be implemented in a planned 'rolling out' of the project to the wider BIP membership.

**Other:**

**g) CFNI 'An Introduction to Peacebuilding for Community Groups' handbook:**

We were commissioned by CFNI to edit and revise this handbook. The handbook was published in June 2007.

**h)** BIP aims to support groups in processes of strategic planning, and have recently funded planning residentials for LSCA and groups within White City.

<b>Aim 5. To manage Belfast Interface Project effectively and efficiently.</b>
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**Objectives:**

**a) Update policies and procedures:**

Training policy and tendering policy drafted; amendments made to procedures regarding travel expenses, TOIL, sickness absence notification and holiday entitlement.

**b) Ensure that management of finances is accountable and transparent:**

All funders' quarterly claims up to date; Peace 2:1 claims now being submitted quarterly instead of 6 monthly to improve cash flow; 2006-2007 annual accounts finalised with accountant, and audited by Grant Thornton; Peace II decommitment forms signed off; proposed re-profiling of IFI CTSP budget agreed, taking account of our shifting emphasis

towards supporting the provision of strategic planning, facilitated residential and locally devised CTS projects and the new labour mobility project; quarterly meetings held with Treasurer.

**c) Identify and secure premises that meet the needs of membership and staff:**

We moved on May 3<sup>rd</sup> into new premises at 109-113 Royal Ave, with two-year lease beginning 1<sup>st</sup> May. New trust deed (rent) account set up.

Two car spaces secured in Lower Donegall St.

**d) Maintain regular monitoring and evaluation practices:**

CENI commissioned for the evaluation of our Communications & Membership Support (Peace 2.1 extension funded) and Conflict Transformation Support (IFI and CRC core-funding) projects. (CRC core-funding carry out their own external evaluation so we don't need to arrange this.) CENI final evaluation report of our CMS project under its previous Peace 2.1 funding completed. We continue to monitor take up of BIP Peace 2.1-funded services and activities, as required.

**e) Identify and avail of appropriate training opportunities:**

Erik Cownie continues his 2<sup>nd</sup> year degree course in Community Development at UJJ and has completed a short personal development training course. Marnie Kennedy is continuing her training in proofreading, provided by the Publishing Training Centre. Sam Askin has completed the (12 week) Women's Studies course at WEA and is considering management training opportunities. Chris O'Halloran has completed the Common Purpose Matrix training programme.

**f) Deliver training to management committee and staff in: team-building, interface issues, lobbying skills:**

Annual team-building and forward-planning residential for management committee and staff was held on May 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Clandeboye Lodge hotel in Bangor. The residential report has been forwarded to committee members.

**g) Hold a regular Annual General Meeting:**

Our 6<sup>th</sup> AGM was held on Sep 15<sup>th</sup> 2006. The event was well-attended and a new management committee was elected of existing committee members plus Brian Watson (Lower Shankill Community Association) and Brian Dunne (White City Community Association) plus William Boyd (Cluan Place resident), bringing total committee membership to 14.

**h) Maintain an effective staff team:**

We recruited a volunteer worker, Anthony Watson in September 2006. Anthony worked with us for a number of weeks up to his wedding in mid-October. We were very grateful for Anthony's assistance and support. A staff appraisal process was designed and implemented with full staff involvement in December. An internal staff review of BIP effectiveness was held in mid-April and was useful – we plan to repeat this twice per year. Following an application by us to VSB for volunteer admin support, Grace Bates started with us in June as part-time (1 afternoon per week) volunteer admin support and has quickly become a valued member of the staff team.

**i) Maintain and develop organisational planning process:**

Our operational plan has been updated and is regularly discussed and reviewed with staff.

**Other:**

**j) Xmas Dinner:**

Our annual Xmas dinner for committee and staff was held on Dec 14<sup>th</sup> at Belfast Castle. An excellent time was had.

**k) Management Committee membership:**

Management Committee membership over the past year has included the following: Muriel Bowyer (Lower North Belfast Community Council), William Boyd (individual member), Frank Brennan (Short Strand Community Forum), Jean Brown (Suffolk Community Forum), Mandy Cochrane (Skegoneill & District Residents Assoc), Brian Dunn (Whitecity Community Assoc), Katie Hanlon (Ballynafeigh Community Development Assoc), Bernie Laverty (Forthspring Community Centre), Pauline O'Neill (Ligoniel Improvement Assoc), Deirdre MacBride (MacBride International), John McQuillan (Crown Project), Sean Montgomery (Markets Development Assoc), Ken Orr (Donegall Pass Community Forum), Bill Shaw (174 Trust), and Brian Watson (Lower Shankill Community Assoc).

**l) Change of BIP Legal Status:**

Following our move to new premises in May, it became clear that our longstanding legal status of 'ordinary unincorporated association with charitable status' means that individual management committee members can be liable for some debts and liabilities of the organisation (lease signatories, for example). With this in mind, BIP has retained the services of Phil Nicholls in assisting us with a change in legal status to Company Limited by Guarantee with charitable status while retaining our current vision, mission, aims, objectives, work plan, membership structure and accountability mechanisms.