



“Keep your eyes on the prize”



Before and after the process of transforming 'threatening' murals. Photo: Shankill Mirror

By Gary Mc Clean

A poster in Lower Shankill Community Association's meeting room proclaims “Keep your eyes on the prize”, which happens to be the title of a track from Bruce Springsteen's latest album and is used to underpin the group's philosophy of never giving up.

Interface met recently with Brian Watson who is the association's Community Relations Development Worker and Sam,

a former political prisoner whose life has changed significantly since he became active in the group.

Brian talked me through the history of the association and the work they are currently engaged in.

“The Lower Shankill Community Association (LSCA) was set up almost seven years ago primarily to assist in the regeneration of the area. Due to a number of factors, chief among them being the impact of

the Loyalist paramilitary feuds in 2000 and 2003, the management committee struggled to keep going and indeed all but collapsed totally on one occasion. Thankfully, we took up the offer of help from Councillor Frank McCoubrey who literally knocked doors in an effort to bring the community on board. It's thanks to Frank that we got a new committee formed, arranged training for them in a number

continued on page 2

Belfast City Council Launches New Conflict Transformation Project

By Caroline Wilson

Belfast City Council, with a range of partners, has started a new Conflict Transformation Project as part of its ongoing Good Relations work.

Under the project, there are three strands of work which seek to build an integrated approach to the task of conflict transformation in Belfast, in line with *A Shared Future*. The project commenced in April 2007 and will be completed by the end of June 2008. Over the coming months there will be a series of seminars, conferences and research reports on related themes.

A Project Reference Group has been established to inform the strategic direction

continued on page 2

THIS ISSUE

Corner House Cross Community Family Centre

Global Peacebuilders project

Interface conference - policy recommendations

Overcoming barriers to employment

Member's profile – Brian Dunn

Perspectives in conflict - epilogues

Community Dialogue training news

CFNI Summer Fund

of skills including Community Group Management and Community Leadership, and haven't looked back since.

Lower Shankill interfaces with three nationalist communities – Falls, Carrick Hill and Carlisle Circus – and there was a long history of sectarian trouble at all three flashpoints. Through hard work, goodwill and a partnership approach with community leaders from these areas, the interfaces are now virtually free from trouble and, furthermore, we are actively involved in working with these cross community groups on common issues of concern.

The area suffers from exceptionally high levels of social deprivation and the Lower Shankill Super Output Area is ranked as the second most socially deprived in Northern Ireland (out of 890) according to the NI Multiple Deprivation Measures 2005. It is the most deprived area for educational skills and training and for health deprivation and disability. A recent Neighbourhood Renewal Survey found that only 9% of household heads are in full time employment and that 66% of households have a weekly income of £200 or less, and 34% less than £100 per week. Our association works to address all of these severe disadvantages; we run regular training and educational classes, lobby for increased and improved services and facilities and are heavily involved in

regeneration which after numerous false dawns is starting to gain momentum.

The original aims and objectives of LSCA were basically to assist in the regeneration of the area and generally help improve the quality of life of the residents. About two years ago it was agreed that the group should broaden its remit, so we rewrote our constitution with help from NICVA who also assisted us in securing charitable status.

We also took the decision to increase our level of cross community and cross border engagement and over the past year or so have been building relationships with groups from the Falls, the Markets, Short Strand, Carrick Hill and New Border Generation from Co Louth.

We have had a number of very successful initiatives over the past year, including a Drugs Awareness course delivered by FASA and a programme of removing or replacing 'threatening' murals with ones based on local history, culture and sport. Before initiating this programme we consulted widely with all the stakeholders and worked the project with the help of Belfast City Council and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive."

Brian spoke of his admiration for Sam and the progress that he has made in a very short space of time.

"It is a credit to Sam that through his involvement with the association, more

young people than ever are coming through the door to avail of our services. This is very encouraging! One of the aims of LSCA is to bring young people up through the ranks, if you like, to play a positive role within their community and to become community workers themselves. Given that the most difficult part in this is getting those young people through the door, Sam's influence and example have been invaluable."

Sam talked openly about his own past and with pride about the ways in which the work of the LSCA has helped the people of the area and, in particular, the benefits that he has gained in relation to his own personal development.

"I have been in prison for a politically motivated offence. While in prison I met a Catholic for the first time in my life. Through my interaction with this guy from the Antrim Road, I began to realise that we were not so different, that we did in fact share a lot of similar problems. This guy was the nicest fella you could ever meet.

On my release from prison I decided that I wanted to do something positive with my life and since then things have just snowballed. I became involved with LSCA and have taken advantage of a number of training opportunities that were offered. These have included Negotiation Skills, Leadership, Active Citizenship, Us and Them, Conflict and Diversity and Irish History.

an integrated approach to the task of conflict transformation in Belfast

of the project. This group includes Chief Executives and senior officers from ten public agencies in the city, including the NI Housing Executive, Police Service NI, Belfast Education Library Board and the Community Relations Council.

The first strand, entitled 'Addressing Divisions', is a research project examining the implications of providing services in a divided city. It will profile good practice in inter-community work and move towards building an integrated strategy for communities living and working at the interface. The project will also record existing good practice in terms of regeneration and managing community cohesion in a divided context.

In line with recommendations from Belfast Interface Project's own *Policy Agenda*

for the *Interface*, the new project aims to influence and shape the policy and practice necessary for the process of supporting the transformation of a divided city. The Council has worked closely with BIP in devising the programme of work to ensure that the project will support positive change in the city.

The second strand is a 'Conflict Transformation Learning Consortium' which is an inter-disciplinary learning programme across the public sector. It will promote dialogue and training on the themes of conflict transformation and *A Shared Future*. Statutory participants will be drawn from the lead public agencies for Belfast and their senior officers are fully supportive of the project.

I now sit on the management committee of LSCA and my main interest would be in working with young people. When the young people see me taking part in this work it encourages them to get involved. As is common with most young people, they tend to look up to the older ones in the area and follow their example. My involvement sends out a positive signal. If he can do it, then I can do it!

Through LSCA and in association with the Job Assist Programme, I have organised a course of training for a group of 25 people which has given them the opportunity to gain a construction industry recognised qualification. This has increased their potential for gaining employment within the construction industry.

At the minute I am planning to start a training course which gives me an introduction to community development. This, I hope, will lead towards a certificate, a diploma and ultimately a degree."

So, in reference to the poster on the wall, I asked Sam, "What is 'the prize'?"

"This community has lived through the worst of 'The Troubles', which were compounded by two brutal paramilitary feuds. Our people suffer appalling levels of poverty, deprivation and marginalisation and this has to be addressed immediately. For me the prize has to be equality

"...the prize has to be equality in housing, in jobs, in education and in training so that our people, and especially our young people, have the same opportunities as other communities throughout Northern Ireland."

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Out of curiosity, I asked Brian where he sees himself in, say, three years' time?

"My vision for Lower Shankill is to work myself out of a job in three years' time. I would hope that in this time frame locals like Sam will have learned the skills, accumulated the experience and earned the qualifications to become not only community activists but community leaders in the area. Then I'll quite happily take myself off for some serious fishing in Donegal!"

Interview finished, I was heading out the door when I swear I heard Sam say something along the lines of, "You're going nowhere big lad!"

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the new project aims to influence and shape the policy and practice necessary for the process of supporting the transformation of a divided city.

This strand will include a series of discussions and seminars on key issues such as how we manage shared spaces in the city and the development of regeneration strategies which recognise the legacies of the conflict. The seminars will be an opportunity to learn from local and international best practice.

The third and final strand is 'Towards a Shared City' which will look at how we build *A Shared Future* into service delivery across the city. A research study will be conducted which will examine the potential linkages between Good Relations and local area planning.

The Council has been funded by Belfast Local Strategy Partnership under Measure 3.1 of the EU Programme for Peace &

Reconciliation in Northern Ireland 2000-2006. The Council-led project sits alongside a number of other complementary initiatives, including a community practitioners' forum, under the theme of Building Civil Society and Post Conflict Reconstruction.

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Corner House Cross Community Family Centre

By Paul Collins

Corner House Cross Community Family Centre is situated in north Belfast and was established in 1982, in an area that has been deeply affected by 'The Troubles'.

The ultimate objective of the Corner House and each of its projects is to strengthen, develop and empower the local community and its families. We aim to achieve this objective through a variety of holistic programmes of work.

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The Early Years staff at the Corner House endeavour to respond to the developmental needs of all the children in their charge, in a professional and caring manner. This work is carried out, first and foremost, through valuing early childhood in its own right and by regarding this period as being the foundation of all future learning.

The staff aim to provide a safe, stimulating and inviting environment where equal opportunity is paramount and individuality is recognised and supported. We hope to identify individual needs in children and respond to them by providing a quality structured play programme that encourages and promotes all areas of young children's development in a holistic manner.

The staff team aims to support families through providing advice and respite for parents and carers. We also hope to ensure ongoing training for workers and ongoing networking and liaising with other professional bodies concerned with early years.



This area of work has been funded by Peace 2 and Children in Need for the past three years. Two posts are funded by

Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety, under the Sustainability Fund. This funding has enabled the development of our early years provision for 0 to 3 year olds.

The Kidzone/homework club provides additional support for children who are currently undertaking the Transfer Test. By working closely with children, parents and local schools, we are able to offer a structured programme which encourages children to participate in and enjoy extra homework in a small group setting. We try to balance learning by providing activities, creative experiences and educational visits which encourage social and personal development, build self esteem and confidence.

The emphasis and aim of the work is on integrating young people, who are often excluded from society, back into the community

We also aim to encourage and develop work with young people at risk from paramilitary groupings, from solvent and drug abuse, at risk from their families, or who have been caught up in the criminal justice system.

The emphasis and aim of the work is on integrating young people, who are often excluded from society, back into the community via formal and informal education processes. An example of this work would be the Duke of Edinburgh

Awards scheme which encourages greater community participation, while at the same time helping young people to develop an awareness of social learning through recreational type programmes. This in turn, we hope, will help enhance the quality of young people's lives, while at the same time encouraging greater community participation and better relations between the community and its young people.

Our After School project caters for an average yearly membership of 120 five to twelve year old children, incorporating four groups each attending two afternoons per week. A session usually lasts one to two hours depending on the activity organised. The project aims to promote stimulating physical, emotional, creative and constructive play opportunities in a safe and friendly environment and provide the space for children to develop and discuss ideas.

The type of in-house activities involved in our programme ranges from arts and crafts to co-operative games, drama and cookery, concentrating on both individual and group creativity and encouraging confidence-building in a fun orientated environment.

Physical development is also of great importance for young people so, as often as possible, we organise activities outside Corner House including visits to local leisure centres and adventure playgrounds both indoor and outdoor.

At present the Corner House facilitates five women's groups. Home Furnishings, Complementary Therapies, Storytelling and Stress Management are just some of the courses high on the agenda at present. Representatives from each of these groups form the management committee and actively ensure the smooth running of House projects.

The 'Drop-in' is open five days a week, and everyone is welcome to call for a cup of tea and a chat. The centre is open Monday to Friday, 9.30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Work with Probation Board (NI) is ongoing and as a result of this partnership Corner House have developed links with a variety of organisations, enabling the organisation to develop a wide range of programmes and



Global Peacebuilders

Building community capacity for peacebuilding worldwide

By Sarah Maitland



activities for an ever increasing number of young people at risk within the two communities that we represent.

Working in partnership with Workforce and PBNI to develop our car maintenance programme, our target group is young men at risk. This programme operates each Friday morning and is run as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award skills section. The programme is designed to offer young people from socially excluded backgrounds and coming through the juvenile justice system, an opportunity to participate in a 12 week car mechanics course. Through this work they may gain accreditation and move on to NVQ training.

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Photographs from top left:

Kids at play in our crèche.

Photo: Execution Charitable Trust

Car mechanic instructs young men on how to do an oil change at Workforce Training Agency.

Photo: Workforce Training

The Global Peacebuilders project, managed by Springboard Opportunities Limited, is going live soon. Comprising an innovative online information-sharing portal, unique best practice catalogue and an international conference located in Belfast, the Global Peacebuilders project will connect researchers, academics, practitioners and organisations working on peace and reconciliation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding worldwide, and will provide a platform for disseminating achievements and building capacity for the future.

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While every conflict across the world is distinct, the underlying causes are often similar, and there is much to be gained by building bridges between practitioners and sharing in the positive work and successes that have taken place.

Not only across the island of Ireland, but also beyond, there is a need for a positive place in which all conflict resolution and peacebuilding organisations can come together, share strategy, build momentum and increase their capacity for transforming conflict and creating the conditions for sustainable peace.

The Global Peacebuilders project will help build such a platform for disseminating achievements and sharing strategies for the future. Creating a transnational network of conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, the project will provide a platform for learning, exchange of best practice and development of international partnerships

for peace and reconciliation and peacebuilding. Specifically, a fully-searchable online database of individuals and organisations working in conflict resolution and peacebuilding will be developed. The database will bring together organisations from across the island of Ireland and beyond, and, stemming from this, a comprehensive catalogue of best practice examples in conflict resolution and peacebuilding from around the world will be produced.

By building new relationships and spanning continental divides, the project will enable organisations to 'broaden their horizons', offering inspiration and strategic direction, and affording them a portal through which to share and incorporate innovation and best practice. By offering a solid support network for conflict resolution, reconciliation and peacebuilding, Global Peacebuilders will help organisations to learn from one another, increase confidence, build capacity and ultimately make a more effective contribution towards stable and inclusive societies across the world.

*an online database
of individuals and
organisations working
in conflict resolution
and peacebuilding*

If you, your organisation, or any organisation you know would be interested in joining the online database of peacebuilding and conflict resolution organisations, contributing your best practice examples, or simply learning more about the Global Peacebuilders project, contact us. A spirit of inclusivity, diversity and participation is at the very heart of this project, so we would be delighted to hear from you!

Sarah Maitland is the Global Peacebuilders Project Coordinator.

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Interface Communities' Conference Generates Recommendations for Building A Shared Future

By Chris O'Halloran

Last November's joint Belfast Interface Project/Community Relations Council (CRC) conference (reported on in last issue) took place on the theme 'Belfast Interface Communities: Building A Shared Future'.

The event was a showcase for existing good practice across a range of interface work. A valuable outcome was the positive recommendations generated by community representatives and key stakeholders, with the aim of influencing government policy in relation to interface areas.

Three themes were addressed: managing conflict, transforming conflict and the regeneration of interface communities

Following addresses by Nigel Hamilton, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, Jean Brown (Chair, BIP) and Duncan Morrow (CEO, CRC) there were presentations outlining current practice in specific interface areas of Belfast. Three themes were addressed: managing conflict, transforming conflict and the regeneration of interface communities.

Workshops aimed at identifying practical actions and recommendations to progress each area of work took place after every set of presentations.

BIP and CRC will submit these recommendations to the Government's Good Relations Steering Group. This group is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the *A Shared Future Triennial Action Plan* which cites 'reducing tensions at interface areas' as a priority action and 'positive and harmonious relationships between communities that live beside one another' as a priority outcome.

We hope that the recommendations will be taken on board in order to enable existing good practice to be built upon and replicated elsewhere, and for the gaps in provision to be resourced, developed and delivered as part of the *A Shared Future Triennial Action Plan*.

Northern Visions DVD

NVTV recorded interviews with several of the conference speakers and delegates on the day, which they later broadcast, and produced as an informative and insightful DVD. The DVD will be another tool to help inform Government policy and practice on the ground. It is available on request from BIP and NVTV.

Conference-generated Principles and Recommendations

BIP and CRC will seek to ensure that all these matters are formally raised with the Good Relations Steering Group chaired by the head of the civil service and will keep members updated on progress.

Principles

a) Interface community groups have an important role in articulating their needs in moving toward an achievable shared vision of the future and in jointly lobbying for this shared vision.

b) Work with young people now is essential in helping to ensure that the younger generation and the next generation are equipped to address the legacies of the conflict and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by peace.

c) It is important to acknowledge the important work which has been done to reduce wide-spread civil disturbance at interfaces in recent years. At the same time, however, sectarian behaviour and low-level violence, including 'recreational rioting', remain a significant problem.

d) Government engagement with the interface community sector should:

- respect local knowledge, expertise and authority;
- sustain the people and relationships that made 2006 a quiet summer;
- sustain and develop proven conflict management and conflict transformation strategies;
- support investment which improves the quality of life for interface communities;
- promote good practice and encourage innovation;
- support the development of medium & long term strategies in which the community is the client, not simply the recipient of services;
- support the development of trust and the reduction of bureaucracy between communities and statutory agencies;
- support freedom of speech to counter fear and paramilitary action
- promote celebrations of positive issues in interface areas.

Conference ns for ure

Recommendations

a) Conflict Management and Transformation recommendations:

i) Standardised templates for single identity work and inter-community conflict management, inc. telephone network operation, are collated and their adoption is encouraged.

ii) Further support is provided in the encouragement of adults, including volunteers, to take part in training in:

- Conflict resolution;
- Community Relations;
- Good Relations;
- Relationship building.

iii) A Belfast conflict transformation practitioners consortium is formed, through which to share best practice, provide peer-support, develop proposals for change and engage with key stakeholders.

iv) 'Respect' protocols, through which to counter anti-social behaviour, are developed and promoted.

b) Recommendations to support work with young people:

i) Joined-up longer term and all-year round programmes of work with young people, which have clear objectives and outcomes in terms of promoting *A Shared Future* and improving life-opportunities, are supported and developed.

ii) Programmes such as the Prince's Trust target interface communities for support.

iii) The integrated schools movement, similarly, should promote integrated education within interface areas.



Photo: Christopher Heaney

iv) Schools and interface communities should work together more with the support of education authorities.

v) The extended schools scheme should include more work with families.

c) Recommendations for delivering *A Shared Future*:

i) Government instigates a high-profile campaign (like the drink-driving campaign) to promote the principles of *A Shared Future* (ASF).

ii) Government makes regular public statements of intent in terms of its commitment to ASF.

iii) All government policies and strategies are ASF proofed. This is not happening at present.

iv) A Code of Practice is drawn up, which politicians are required to sign up to and follow, and which includes a commitment to the principles of conflict transformation and ASF.

v) DETI / InvestNI target interface areas for the creation of realistic opportunities for employment leading to proper jobs with good wages for local people.

vi) Government agencies work with interface communities to create shared spaces that bring people together both during the day and at night e.g. Girdwood site.

vii) Government agencies work with interface communities to carry out an audit of any physical environment upgrade required in interface areas, and address findings.

viii) Public transport connectivity should be improved to the city centre and other developments within the city.

ix) Government targets interface areas both in terms of PSNI recruitment and in terms of seeking representation on policing boards, and promotes a Community Policing approach.

x) Each statutory agency monitors and evaluates levels of equity of access by interface communities to its services and facilities, in order to measure levels of sharing.

xi) Greater training and support opportunities are provided for volunteers, to stem the flow of good volunteers who leave youth work.

xii) The issues for all are demonstrated to be more shared than different, building an inclusive role for Minority Ethnic led organisations.

The full conference report can be downloaded from www.belfastinterfaceproject.org

Innovative Approaches - Overcoming Barriers to Employment

By Maire Grattan and Emma Donnelly

Since 2005 North Belfast Partnership's Equal Employability Access Project (EAP) and the Local Employment Access Partnership (LEAP) have successfully developed employer-led approaches to tackle worklessness in North Belfast. Innovative practices to engage employers in the public and private sectors have effectively matched labour market supply and demand, enabling long-term unemployed participants to effectively compete for jobs in the open labour market.

Integrating the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust into the core of its Development Partnership, EAP has unlocked access to live job opportunities in healthcare for 70 trainees to date. Its combination of *Steps to Excellence training*, employability training and structured job shadowing has provided the employers with a previously untapped skills pool, improved HR recruitment policies and practices whilst creating sustainable employment for the Trust within North Belfast.

Working with private sector companies designing employer-led pre-employment courses, LEAP has demonstrated the ability of the third sector to deliver skills at the commercial and competitive pace of the open labour market. Extended partnership with other employability services in Belfast, co-ordinating and pooling knowledge of employer contacts, has effectively promoted this pre-employment model guaranteeing interviews for unemployed clients to a diversity of live jobs citywide.

LEAP is funded by Urban II and Belfast City Council to produce over the course of the project an integrated employability strategy to tackle worklessness in North Belfast. A number of local agencies and groups have always felt North Belfast is a 'poor cousin' in comparison to the resources and focus on employability in other areas. We see it as our task to work strategically to bring together the diverse stakeholders through our Stakeholder Forum to really put employability issues for North Belfast in the spotlight. We want to ensure that our area

has initiatives in place so that local people are not excluded from the job opportunities which a revived economy will deliver for Belfast.

*we provide a full
range of supports
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LEAP also currently partners with JobSelect North Belfast, the local employability service provided by Ashton Community Trust and North City Training, to deliver pre-employment programmes for unemployed people in the area. These are short training courses designed to link local people with live citywide job opportunities in growth economic sectors. These courses give local people a range of skills necessary to apply for live jobs as they could otherwise miss out on such opportunities through more traditional job recruitment processes. LEAP also works closely with Stepping Stone in East Belfast and GEMS NI in South Belfast to co-ordinate citywide courses.

Over 100 people across North Belfast have been trained on LEAP pre-employment courses and a range of employers have been involved including Halifax, Merchant Hotel, Security Guard Company NI Ltd and Debenhams.

Employers have found the courses an effective way of filling vacancies by designing training with LEAP which really reflects the skills needed for their jobs. Also, the companies we have worked with have genuinely wanted to offer opportunities to unemployed job seekers who are keen to return to work.

People looking for work appreciate the real opportunity a LEAP pre-employment course can provide. LEAP organise free short courses with guaranteed interviews to live jobs on completion of training. Being unemployed can impact on your confidence so we provide a full range of supports to every course participant to help them succeed in securing a job and get the most out of training.

EAP is delighted to announce that 24 participants involved in the EAP pre-employment programmes have gained employment or are due to commence employment at the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Personal development, confidence building, job preparation training and help with the application process has been delivered



Successful North Belfast graduates from LEAP's Security Guard NI Company Ltd pre-employment course. Photo: Aurora Photographic Agency

to 70 participants over four week periods followed by a two week job shadow at the Mater Hospital and/or North & West Belfast Community Sites, experiencing entry level posts (domestic, laundry, catering and care assistant (elderly units) roles). All participants are guaranteed an interview for an entry level post upon successful completion of the programme.

In addition to the pre-employment programme the EAP is reviewing, and where appropriate, amending the health sector employer's recruitment policy and procedure. Potentially restrictive and bureaucratic policy and practices (such as job advertising/wording, employment package, job titles, the application form, gaining references, medical assessments and interviews) are being reviewed to assist those furthest removed from the labour market to access and sustain entry level employment within the health sector in North Belfast.

EAP is funded by the European Social Fund under the Northern Ireland EQUAL Community Initiative Programme and the Department for Employment and Learning. A Development Partnership of 12 statutory, community, employment and training organisations, led by North Belfast Partnership, steers project development and activity.

The final two EAP pre-employment programmes will be delivered between September and December 2007. Places are available and free to anyone living in North Belfast, aged 18 or over who has been out of work for six months or more.

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member's 
profile



Brian Dunn - Whitecity Community Development Association

Post: Chair of the Whitecity Community Development Association (WCDA) and 'general dogsbody'. Ha! I am responsible for co-ordinating the work of the association, fundraising and representing the community at various meetings with statutory and public sector agencies ensuring that this community is not forgotten about.

Your community: Whitecity is an estate in north Belfast that lies within the Bellevue Ward. We have about 300 houses in the estate with between 800-900 people. The population of Whitecity is made up of a large number of young people (around 300), senior citizens and a high level of single parent families.

The area is surrounded by the nationalist community, with interfaces at Whitewell Road, Longlands and upper Whitewell Road. In the past I have described this situation as being like the bull's-eye on a dartboard.

Your typical day: As my role with WCDA is carried out on a part-time voluntary basis, it is very difficult to define a 'typical day'. A large part of most days would be taken up with fundraising and funding issues, meetings on issues that impact on the community, and assisting the other voluntary staff to cater for the kids and our senior citizens.

Low points: One of the ongoing 'lows' for us is the fact that we do not have any paid workers in the association, which makes our job that little bit more difficult. Working as we all do in a voluntary capacity, the job takes up a lot of our personal lives.

The negative impact of the trouble that this community has experienced, as a result of the interface problems, has meant that morale within the community has been very low. It has been down to myself and a small number of individuals to rebuild that morale.

High points: One of the major highpoints for us was the building of the centre here which allows us to operate more effectively. It also means that we are more established within the community and are taken more seriously by, for example, statutory agencies.

We have noticed an increase in the number of people from within this community who are now engaging with us around the issues affecting the community. This is evident in the fact that we now have a better mix of people on the management committee, young and old, which helps us to better represent the views of the community.

Examples of good practice: Whitecity is currently working with the neighbouring areas, in a very positive way, on an issue which is of great importance to all of us collectively. There are plans afoot for work to be carried on the local motorway bridge which we see as an opportunity to improve the issues around that particular interface, if handled properly.

We have a mobile phone network across the interface which works well to reduce rumours and for defusing situations when they arise.

Hobbies: Ha!! I have none! I have no time! No, I like socialising, spending time with my family and going for drives in the car.

epilogues: Perspectives in Conflict

By Gary Mc Clean

What are the moral dilemmas facing a community in the aftermath of an act of extreme political violence perceived to be aimed against them? How should people deal with the loss they have experienced? What are the factors that push some to support the taking of life? And can the use of violence for political ends ever be justified?

Coming out of violence, is forgiveness necessary for reconciliation and enabling people to move on? How significant are justice and human rights to the building of a sustainable peace? And at a deeper level still, what does violent political conflict reveal about the nature of 'democracy'?

'epilogues'

The above is taken from a flyer about *epilogues*, a workshop education programme being delivered both here and in mainland Britain, which is taking an innovative approach to peace building by exploring both the origins and the drivers of the conflict in and about 'Northern Ireland'. By all accounts, the programme is having a very positive impact on its participants. However, on reading the flyer I was left with a number of unanswered questions, so *Interface* travelled to Derry/Londonderry to meet with Gaslight, the community based media company that produced the programme, and to learn more. There I met with Stephen Gargan one of the co-directors of Gaslight and the manager of the *epilogues*, Project. Below is an extract from our interview.

So Stephen, where did the idea for *epilogues*, come from?

"We set up in 1998 to exploit the potential of new media for progressive education. Our first project was the drama-documentary film 'SUNDAY' about the events of Bloody Sunday, which we produced for Channel 4. It took four years of painstaking research to produce and was finally broadcast on the 30th anniversary in January 2002.

Clearly, Bloody Sunday was significant for the people of Derry and highly significant in terms of the militarisation of the conflict, but it should also be seen in its wider context as one tragic event in a conflict that spanned 30 years of tragic events.

So coming out of 'SUNDAY' we wanted to use what we had learned to look at the conflict in its broader sense, to give voice to the many other stories, the many injustices on all sides that comprise it. We were aware of the power of TV drama to confront people with the emotional truth

an open educational space where every view is respected but equally every view can be challenged.

of an event and the research had revealed to us the poignancy of personal interview testimony. We were also aware of the limitations of television. That's what gave rise to the idea of a structured programme, an open educational space where every view is respected but equally every view can be challenged. So from that basic idea we then spent three years developing the core concept and researching and conducting the interviews so that the DVD, which is the primary educational resource for the programme, would be as inclusive as possible of the spectrum of perspectives that comprise the conflict."

How did you decide who to interview for the DVD?

"We knew from the outset that we didn't want party political broadcasts, so we only interviewed people who were on the frontline if you like, people who were prepared to speak personally from first hand experience. In broad terms we spoke to members of: the RUC, British Army, the IRA, UVF and the UDA - the combatants if you like - and victims of

those organisations which included the family members of the respective 'sides' as well as innocent civilians. We strove to be as inclusive as possible and tried to include the milestone events that were crucial to each community's narrative of the conflict as well as events that may not be as well known but are milestones in the lives of the individual families that suffered them. At the same time, no resource can be totally inclusive and this is why it's a workshop programme. The testimonies on the DVD always engage with the stories of the participants in the room. The material on the DVD is always the same but every programme delivery is different because there are different experiences of the conflict engaging with that material."

What's the value of what seems on the surface quite a hard hitting approach to peace building?

"I think what we are all interested in is building a sustainable peace. That requires active citizenship which requires informed as opposed to prejudiced citizenship. Violent conflict of the scale that erupted here doesn't happen without causes. But once death enters the equation the underlying structural causes can be obscured as one tragic event is superseded by the next tragic event. As one participant in Belfast put it, 'The human rights of the "other" you perceive to be attacking you go out the window and as we dehumanise the "other" we dehumanise ourselves.' The strength of the programme is that it confronts people with the realities and consequences of the conflict and what we inflicted on each other from all perspectives. At the same time it gets at the underlying causes. It is an extremely challenging programme, but the consensus from the people who've done it to date is that the challenge is worth it. You emerge with a more rounded view of the conflict and a deeper understanding of peace and the importance of justice and human rights if this society is to move forward."

Where and to whom have you delivered the programme to date?

"To date, with the exception of the youth sector, we've hit all of our target groups: victims groups, ex-prisoner groups, former security forces, community development groups, teachers/adult education providers and students of peace and conflict studies."

Where to next for *epilogues*?

“We are now into Year 2 of our three year funded delivery phase and from a strategic perspective, given the positive feedback, feel pretty much on target. The youth service is a key sector and to this end we’ve have had very positive engagement with the statutory youth service and meetings are pending with a number of non-statutory organisations. This is our immediate priority.”

For further information or to book workshops, please contact:

Gaslight Productions
1 Westend Park
Bogside
Derry BT48 9JF
Tel: (028) 7130 8980
www.epilogues.net

*it confronts people
with the realities
and consequences
of the conflict*

epilogues is a workshop based education programme that explores the underlying causes of conflict in and about ‘Northern Ireland’. It is innovative in its use of new media, using a DVD and website to engage people in the everyday work of peace-building. It does this by exploring six themes that are central to an understanding of violent political conflict - Violence, Loss, Revenge, Forgiveness, Justice, and Human Rights.

The *epilogues* DVD is the core educational resource for the workshop modules. It contains interviews with victims of the conflict as well as people who directly participated in it. Each of the programme’s six themes is introduced by selected extracts from TV dramas that explore the conflict. These extracts function as dramatic illustrations of the respective themes that the interviews go on to explore in greater depth. In revealing the depth of the experience of loss on all sides, *epilogues* highlights the importance of a culture of justice and human rights to the building of a sustainable peace.

Integral to the programme is the project website (www.epilogues.net). This provides supporting information, primarily of a factual nature, on the interviewees’ stories and the incidents they refer to. This gives programme participants a reference to key incidents that form the respective narratives of the conflict for each side.

The programme consists of 8 workshop modules and 6 hours of personal study. Each module consists of a facilitated 3-hour exploration of the respective theme. While participants find voices on the DVD that echo their own perspective, they equally encounter voices that challenge it. The facilitation and the personal study exercises deepen this experience by inviting participants to reflect not only on their own experience but from the perspective of ‘the other’. The programme adopts an approach that understands history as always contested and with that, the need for critical reflection. It is Open College Network Northern Ireland accredited (Level 2, 6 Credits).

New Opportunities for Professional Development

By Mabel Doole

Community Dialogue is delighted to offer a new and extensive range of courses which will appeal to a variety of community groups, statutory agencies and individuals who want to engage on the contentious issues dividing our society.

Some courses are externally accredited by Open College Network and some are internally accredited by Community Dialogue.

A limited number of places have been reserved for community groups. Community Dialogue will assist you to access funding to avail of these training opportunities.

Our flexible learning opportunities provide something for everyone, from a short, two hour session to an 80 hour academic study with both residential and non-residential components. Some of our course titles include:

- Diversity in Society
- Human Rights and Responsibilities
- Identity and Conflict
- The Dynamics of Peace Processes
- The Equality Agenda

Community Dialogue was set up in 1997 by people from across the political divide to encourage dialogue about contentious issues arising from the 1998 Agreement.

You can find out more about Community Dialogue from the hundreds of people – mostly from the community sector – who have attended our residential or other seminars and events over the last ten years.

You can get the full lists of courses from our website or from our office. If you see a course that you like then give us a call and talk to Theresa Cullen, Mabel Doole or Brian Lennon.

Mabel Doole is Training Manager with Community Dialogue.

For further information please contact:
Tel: (028) 9032 9995
Email: admin@communitydialogue.org
Web: www.communitydialogue.org



Mabel Doole. Photo: Community Dialogue

Promoting social and economic regeneration in Belfast's interface areas

IS THERE A PARTICULAR ISSUE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIGHLIGHTED IN *INTERFACE*?

Send us an article about an issue that you feel needs to be highlighted, or about the work you're doing. Alternatively, BIP can write an article in consultation with you. Or maybe you have some photos of a project you're working on that you'd like published. While *Interface* particularly welcomes input from within our membership, we are happy to consider articles and submissions from others involved in good practice in addressing interface community issues – community workers, women's groups, youth, elderly, ethnic groups, statutory bodies, local businesses and everyone else!

Contact Gary Mc Clean at
gary@belfastinterfaceproject.org
or 9024 3579/9024 2828.

INTERESTED IN JOINING?

Belfast Interface Project has three categories of membership:

- Community group
- Associate
- Individual

If you support our mission statement, meet our criteria (see our website for details) and wish to join BIP, please get in touch. We will send you an information pack or our Development Worker, Gary Mc Clean, can come out to meet with you.

INTERFACE FEEDBACK

As part of our ongoing evaluation of *Interface*, we invite readers to submit comments on each issue. Email or post to the address below, or text 'BIP' followed by your feedback to **07742 039 127**.

NEW MEMBERS

(since 2006 AGM)
Shankill Stress and Trauma Group (Community Group Member)
Voice Reconciliation Project (Community Group Member)
North Belfast Community Action Unit (Associate Member)
William Boyd (Individual Member)
Bill Meulemans (Individual Member)
Gerry Skelton (Individual Member)

BACK ISSUES

Previous issues of *Interface* can be downloaded from our website.

WEBSITE UPDATE!

Available for download:
Interface Issues: an annotated bibliography - 2007 update available
Operational Procedures for Displaced Families 2007
BIP 2006 conference report
Conflict Transformation Project training update

CFNI SUMMER INTERFACE PEACEBUILDING FUND

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) has been asked by the Dept for Social Development to make available Small Grants under the 2007 Summer Interface Peacebuilding Fund. The maximum award will be £1,500. The period to be covered will be July and August 2007.

The grants will be available to cover: interface dialogue; diversionary activities (but not as a top-up for regular community festivals); emergencies caused by conflict/violence; specific actions/activities undertaken by local groups to alleviate potential conflict.

For an application form and guidelines:

Sharon Killen
CFNI
Citylink Business Park
6a Albert Street
Belfast BT12 4HQ
Tel: (028) 9024 5927
Email: skillen@communityfoundationni.org
Application forms are also available for download at
www.communityfoundationni.org

Interface is the news-sheet of Belfast Interface Project and reflects the views and diversity of our membership groups. *Interface* seeks to promote good practice around interface community issues and increased communication between groups across the city. The editor reserves the right to amend articles where appropriate with the consent of the author. The views expressed in *Interface* do not necessarily represent those of the management committee.



**Belfast
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Project**

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