

Belfast Interface Project (BIP)

July 2009

Operational Plan 2009-2014

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1 Introduction

Belfast Interface Project (BIP) completed a new strategic plan 2009-2014 in 2008. The three themes identified in the strategic plan (policy, service advocacy and conflict transformation) indicate that BIP can make a significant contribution in promoting the development of an integrated strategy for interface areas, while also working alongside interface communities and providing practical support functions and services.

The Operational Plan was developed through consultations with key constituencies on the three themes outlined in the strategic plan. It includes a risk assessment. The actions identified in the strategic plan are reviewed and proposed actions together with targets, timescales and projected outputs and outcomes are identified.

Resource implications for BIP are considered in terms of key skills available to the organisation, organisational structure and staffing levels. The inclusion of projects to implement key aspects of the plan will be considered. Partnership working with statutory and voluntary agencies, member and non-member groups are reviewed as part of the discussion of the implementation of the plan. The potential for BIP to generate income to sustain and develop its work will also be reviewed.

2 Executive Summary

Introduction

Throughout 2008 BIP's Management Committee developed its strategic plan - based on the political, social and economic changes in Belfast and Northern Ireland. Belfast Interface Project's Strategic Plan 2008-2013¹ and a comparison of the findings of the 2008 and 2004 Membership Surveys² were launched and approved by its membership at the 29th November 2008 Annual General Meeting as a living document. In developing the Operational Plan there was consultation with a sample of member groups and stakeholders and involved consideration of the need for BIP and the role it should play. In addition the BIP's organisational and staff structure is considered. A risk analysis was undertaken. The actions necessary to implement the strategic plan and the resources required are identified.

Context

BIP is operating in a context in which interfaces are increasingly viewed as important impediments to the development of the Northern Ireland economy. There is also realisation that "fear" and concerns about safety continue to play in interface communities. Throughout Northern Ireland a focus is emerging on interfaces, shared space and demographic change. As Northern Ireland becomes more culturally diverse the need to address intolerance and the impact of racism in Belfast has increased in importance. A number of strategies and initiatives have come together to create a momentum for change in relation to interface communities. These include Ministerial support in OFMDFM, the CRC/BCC Interface Working Group of which BIP is a founder member; increases in local accountability, the emerging Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy and Housing Executive's the Shared Neighbourhood Programme.

¹ Belfast Interface Project Strategic Plan 2008-2013. BIP November 2008

² CENI. Belfast Interface Project Membership Surveys 2004 (over previous 10 years) and 2008 (over previous 4 years). November 2008

BIP acknowledges major change has occurred in the physical environment and violence at interface areas is much reduced and continues to be actively managed. Member groups report positive trends in relation to community dialogue and relationship building although much remains to be done in terms of the regeneration of interface communities and access to facilities and services.

Member and Stakeholder Consultation

Member groups and statutory stakeholders confirmed the need for BIP and the three roles identified. Generally interface networks consulted recognised the validity of the roles. They were however, concerned that the work of BIP and their interface networks are complementary. There is considerable overlap between the membership of BIP and the latter. Preliminary discussions indicate there is considerable interest in exploring the knowledge and expertise developed by BIP and member groups and its applicability regionally and beyond.

Member Groups

Members identified BIP's role in relation to supporting relationship building between communities and involvement in multi-agency and cross sectoral partnerships. Policy work needs to be rooted and develop skills in local communities. Neighbourhood policing and the criminal justice agencies were specifically highlighted in the context of creating the conditions for change and lessening fears about security around interface communities. There is considerable interest in sharing learning and good practice locally and drawing on secular and civic traditions (Indian Community) in addressing complex issues. Members' skills to facilitate in complex environments could be developed.

Members directly consulted included, Bridge Community Association, Lower Old Park Community Association, Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group, Whitecity Community Association, 174 Trust, the Indian Community Centre and through the Board of Directors - Short Strand Community Forum, Ligoniel Community Association, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, Star Community Centre (New Lodge), Suffolk Community Forum, the Crown Project, and Ulster Peoples College.

Stakeholders

Consultations were undertaken with OFMDFM, CRC (and Interface Working Group), NIHE, Belfast City Council, North Belfast Community Action Unit and Community Bridges (IFI/CRC). Some of the key points made in these consultations include interface communities are beginning to attract Ministerial support. There are opportunities to develop programme, in relation to the nature and use of services utilising Shared Space (2.1) initiatives in the Peace III programme.

BIP is viewed as strategic asset with capacity and expertise; BIP's strength - it is not aligned and accepted as such across the board; and it has a strong track record developed. It makes a valuable contribution to high level policy through the Interface Working Group. However, it needs to be mindful that newer networks have emerged.

Some of the policy linkages and roles identified are:

Policy Agenda and Linkages

- Growing Ministerial Support
- Identified clear linkages in relation to the Shared Neighbourhood Programme and Community Cohesion (NIHE) and Shared Space (BCC Peace III); and
- High level policy through the Interface Working Group.
- Policy thrust could be developed locally engaging on key public services.
- CRC see useful roles include - challenge and advocacy.

Locally Based Roles

- Fairly difficult and more explicit conversations need to take place locally in interface communities about control issues, rules of engagement and developing the future that engage interface networks, ex-combatants, gate-keepers and local residents.
- New models of practice and change; and
- Issue of whether there are sufficient numbers of facilitators skilled in working in interfaces and complex environments available.
- Challenge is to develop a common ownership between the community and the agencies of the issues in a local area.
- The NIHE would welcome BIP working more comprehensively across Belfast and

Supporting linkages with agencies and communities

- Supporting the development of maturity at community level in terms of communication and effective work with statutory agencies.
- Potentially could support delivery of the interface Working Group through a programme of practical support for the engagement of residents, local interests and networks and lead statutory to explore issues in relation to specific interfaces.
- Scale is needed to deal with the size of the problem and this should be reflected in how BIP responds to the challenge and opportunities.
- Play a role in terms of linking communities and communities with local service delivery agencies, notwithstanding the development of more locally driven networks.
- BIP can play a useful challenge function in terms of conveying the city agenda to the interface areas, such as neighbourhood policing, arterial routes, connectivity and mobility and local area working.

Developing the role regionally

- Work in relation to interfaces is more developed and rooted in Belfast and outside Belfast support is limited.
- “Formulate a learning experience” - in other urban and rural areas of Northern Ireland and further afield where there are community tensions such as Limerick.
- In Lurgan, Portadown and Craigavon where it would be useful if BIP were to engage with local groups with whom the Housing Executive has existing relationships.

Future Work could be supported through

- Opportunities to support initiatives through Peace III 1.2 and possible submission to IFI with an entirely reformulated approach.
- BIP could usefully explore building a coalition of partners including those engaged with interface issues and those with particular expertise and capacity.

A brief discussion also took place with Community Dialogue and the Practice and Participation of Rights Project with a view to developing on-going partnership that would increase the resources to support interface communities.

Developing a Regional Role

In order to consider further the relevance of the expertise and knowledge BIP and its member groups have developed over the last 10 years, preliminary consultations were undertaken with SEUPB, with the Peace and Reconciliation Group and the Junction in Derry. In addition through Children Service Planning and the Housing Executive the need to work with adults in relation to interfaces in the Lurgan/ Craigavon areas is identified. SEUPB made the connection between the Peace III priorities and BIP's work and identified the Peace III local councils in the North West, South West and Can as obvious linkages to be explored by BIP. In terms of partnership working, the development of these linkages should be further explored by the Strategic Director and appropriate local processes designed with the Practice Co-ordinator.

Interface Networks

Consultations were undertaken with Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium, North Belfast Interface Network, LINC and Intercomm. The networks individually suggested relationships should be made between the Management Committees of BIP and the interface networks. In general terms BIP is perceived as a tried and tested organisation. However, some tension exist over who access resources and how independent of statutory agencies is BIP. There is no objection a complementary and collaborative role with BIP. It is acknowledged that this will include the provision of facilitation when BIP is invited to do so by any group

operating in an interface area. They are, however, concerned that in a competitive environment that BIP is seen as “safe”.

BCRC in particular brings together the perspectives of the three main combatant groupings in the conflict. The network promotes a community development approach to conflict resolution and seeks to develop its work through an inclusive process. However, BCRC does not need to be facilitated or a “conduit” provided from outside – an “intermediary” role in this sense is not required. BCRC would not want to see their members disadvantaged (in their dealings with BIP) by virtue of their over-lapping membership with BIP.

BIP Board of Directors

In order to respond to the issues and underpin BIP’s work in interface areas the following principles were developed by the Board of Directors.

Objective Principles to navigate difficult territory and complex relationships, work at grassroots is governed by:

- Overriding principle of the safety of residents;
- The views of people living in the interface areas are the most important;
- Promote benefit for both communities;
- Respect both communities (the minimum is to at least listen);
- Aim for an inclusive process involving local groups, residents and promotes good relations;
- Stakeholders and local interests are identified by BIP at an early stage;
- Set high standards of accountability to and transparency for local residents;
- Safe-guard against claiming the work of others or of “running rough-shod over others”;
- Claim the work that BIP does such as where it acts as a catalyst or in facilitating problem-solving, in proactively driving forward a problem-solving process.

Partnership Working

The impetus for change in interface communities has been referenced through the external consultations reported above. Arguably the political, social and economic contexts are building towards a policy commitment to address the issues and underlying difficulties facing interface communities. In order to convert this willingness into action the scale of efforts needs to increase. BIP has a significant role to play in supporting these efforts at the policy, service and grass roots.

In order effect a change in scale, BIP envisages working closely with its members, associate members and other partners to support policy development, pilot new models of

service advocacy with interface communities and public bodies and work creatively at the grass roots in addressing the more difficult issues of sharing and the implicitly more controversial issues.

Supporting an understanding of sharing, the issues, difficulties and problem solving is therefore a corner stone of BIP's strategic focus for the period 2009-2014. Since its formation in 1995 BIP has directly supported interface communities to develop strategies and models or to highlight good practice and models they have developed. BIP's has worked at ground level and commissioned research and reports to support policy development.

In order to implement the strategic plan (2009-2014) BIP may need to develop delivery partnerships to support the broader development of interface communities and areas where there are community tensions. This may include supporting dialogue and developing a "learning experience", exploring developments outside Belfast and elsewhere And developing pilot projects and partnerships with agencies and communities to adapt services to meet the needs of communities. This exploration needs to be taken forward by the Strategic Director, involve the Practice Co-ordinator in identifying needs and designing processes. The management of such partnerships would be the Director's responsibility.

In delivering the strategic roles of Policy, Service Advocacy; and Supporting Change and Transformation BIP should:

- Deliver all three roles in an integrated fashion by working closely with its membership and statutory agencies.
- Demonstrate it is focused, dynamic and proactive;
- Develop collaborative partnerships to ensure there are sufficient resources for facilitation, mentoring and reflection.
- Assess the preparedness of its membership to engage in difficult conversations about the future of specific interfaces.
- Support member groups to address the issues of community cohesion and counter racism and intolerance within communities.

The desired outcome of developing the supporting change and transformation locally and regionally is to:

- Develop local capacity to address the complexity and issues associated with segregation, interfaces and community tensions; and
- Promote agency ownership of these issues in their localities.

Strategic Services

The Operational Action Plan details the aims, objectives, actions targets, outcomes and resources. A summary of objectives, outcomes and actions is set out below for aims one to three.

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Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 1.1: BIP will work in partnership to influence policy	1. Develop a policy network from BIP membership and the interface community sector.	1. Policy work is rooted in the local experience.
Objective 1.2: Promote over a three to five year period the importance of an integrated strategy to transform interface communities into cohesive communities.	2. Annual review of opportunities to influence policy areas by working in partnership with agencies and departments over a 3-5 year period.	2. Policy Framework has been strengthened so that government policies and practice explicitly reflect interface and related issues.
Aims and Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 1.3: Develop capacity to influence and reflection in the Interface Policy Network	3. Design and implement a programme with the policy network of facilitated sessions sharing experience, briefings to develop capacity for reflection and influence.	3. Increased reflection and sharing of learning – members/practioners forum to exchange ideas and share learning.
Objective 1.4: Develop knowledge base, aid reflection and influence action.	4. Commission and disseminate research or surveys as agreed.	4. Research/survey contributes to the development of policy and practice.
Objective 1.5 Build on linkages with Interface Networks	5. Relationships develop between the management committees of BIP and the interface networks.	5. Distinct roles utilised to benefit interface communities in the interest of community cohesion.
Objective 1.6 Development of BIP and relevance of learning beyond Belfast	6. Formally explore the issues and needs being identified at specific locations, enter into exploratory discussions about the relevance of expertise and information could be shared.	6. Develop local capacity to address the complexity and issues associated with segregation, interfaces and community tensions; Promote agency ownership

		of these issues in their localities.
Aims and Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 2.1: Advocate the advantages of sharing taking into account the realities and difficulties which may apply.	2.1. Promote through large and small group discussions and the dissemination of successful models including SLIG.	1. Greater understanding of different kinds of sharing.
Objective 2.2 Promote accessibility of local services and facilities	2.2. On a pilot basis, proactively identify a number of clearly defined statutory services or facilities which are associated with access difficulties and, work inclusively with the relevant agencies, community and youth groups and residents promote greater access to these.	2. Improved service delivery to meet the needs interface and cohesive communities.
Objective 2.3 Support member groups with practical support and involve in each others learning.	2.3. a. Provide information and assistance on obtaining youth resources and crisis intervention. b. Build on labour mobility training project education. c. Roll out youth mediation project - strategic planning for adults and young people in interface areas.	3. People living in interface communities with opportunities and resources for training and development in order to support social and economic mobility and conflict management Labour Mobility programme providing opportunities on a cross-community basis for employment-related and inter-cultural training receives statutory recognition.
Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 3.1 Support conflict transformation, reconciliation and conflict management, in communities	3.1 Advocate the development of a city-wide dialogue initiative complementary to the Interface Working Group/Community Partners group.	Greater cooperation and co-ordination throughout the city. Six communities become involved in reducing tensions, sharing facilities and activities and the taking up of opportunities at interfaces which meet local needs.
	3.2 Respond to requests and provide independent facilitation, mediation and mentoring support at local interfaces and develop a mentoring programme	Scale of facilitation, mediation and mentoring activity in local areas is significant increased.

	3.3 Actively develop strategic partnerships with facilitation/mediation/dialogue and training organisations to support activist and residents to encourage dialogue and grow facilitation skills.	Capacity to support processes locally is increased.
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Efficiently and Effectively Manage Belfast Interface Project

A new organisational structure was developed in discussion with the board of directors and staff. This was developed in the light of the stakeholder and member consultation. The changes reflect the importance and complexity of the work involved in implementing the new strategic roles. It is designed to strengthen the policy focus, develop strategic partnership and management of BIP and to utilise the creativity and innovation of BIP in developing new models particularly in relation to sharing at this opportune time for interface communities.

In brief the key roles in each post are:

Strategic Director – Policy, organisational management and development of BIP including strategic partnerships;

Practice Co-ordinator – Creative and innovative development of models and processes around sharing, research;

Development Workers – Facilitate local processes;

Project Development Worker – Member engagement and Youth; Project related work;

Finance and Publications – Finance, publications, communications, staff support

Support Worker – Administration, website, IT, database and Newsletter and e communications, staff support;

Admin Support – Finance, staff support and Grant aid administration.

Job descriptions and person specifications are included.

As a Board, the collective skills and expertise of the Board could be further developed by focusing on areas a significant proportion of the membership could become more proficient in the following areas. These are organisational, development, marketing and policy, financial management, lobbying/advocacy and strategy development.

A summary of objectives, outcomes and actions is detailed for aim four.

Aims and Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 4.1 Ensure that membership remains reflective of interface communities.	Consult, support and continually develop BIP membership to reflect the changing interface communities.	Membership developed and appropriate support services provided.
Objective 4.2: Communication Policy: Increase the visibility of interface communities in promoting positive	4.2 a) Produce and distribute the Interface news-sheet. 4.2. b) Develop the website as an interactive tool.	Communication amongst groups and agencies about good practice across the city is increased.

change and cohesion; increase visibility of BIP.		
Objective 4.3 Organisational effectiveness: Accountability and Strategy	4.3. a) Independent monitoring and evaluation; 4.3 b) Commission an annual audit; 4.3. c) Hold an annual AGM; and 4.3. d) Hold an annual team building and forward planning residential.	BIP is managed efficiently and effectively. BIP is in a position to acquire financial and human resources with which to implement the strategic plan.
Objective 4.4 Human Resources and Finance	4.4 a) Update policies and procedures as required. 4.4 b) Maintain an effective staff team. 4.4.c) Produce and review 5 year rolling budget annual budget and projected cash flows.	
Objective 4.5 : Board Development	4.5 Develop an annual board development programme.	Directors are developed to fulfil their responsibilities to manage BP effectively and efficiently managed

Risk Assessment

Actions are outlined that address strategic, organisational, operating, financial and information risks.

Financial Information

The assumptions and the five year budget are included in the Operational Plan.

3 Economic and Social Context

These, identified during the consultations on the Operational plan are set out below.

The Programme for Government sets out the Executive's strategic priorities and key plans for 2008-2011. The Programme for Government has been used in determining the Budget and Investment Strategy within which growing the economy is the primary focus.

The Northern Ireland Programme for Government acknowledges that 'Building a strong economy requires...an inclusive and stable society' through two priorities to grow a dynamic, innovative economy and promote tolerance, inclusion and health and well-being. Factors relevant to this context include:

- Deterrents to investment and impediments to competitiveness as workers mobility is limited - New York Mayor Bloomberg and CRC conference;
- The impact of duplication on limited resources especially in the economic downturn;
- Intolerance and the impact of racism in Belfast - Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy will be action to tackle racism, sectarianism and intolerance - will be published in 2009;
- Belfast City Council – Good relations agenda, Peace III;
- The significance of the Interface Working Group;
- The potential of the Housing Executive's the Shared Neighbourhood Programme;
- The focus emerging through out Northern Ireland on interfaces, shared space and demographic change;
- The potential with RPA and the health and well being power linked to community planning (and the question of adequate resources);
- Indeed Trina Vargo of the US-Ireland Alliance asked the question "why people don't think it is safe to bring down walls now?" - and safety, political leadership and confidence in the police were identified as critical issues; and
- The huge role "fear" and concerns about safety continue to play in interface communities.

4 Consultation with key stakeholders - The views and needs of BIP Members

This section is based on the work of members in debating and crafting the new strategy (2008), the 2008 Membership Survey, further consultations in the context of developing the Operational Plan (2009), the broad principles developed by the Board (April 2009) while working on the Operational Plan. This is presented together with a summary of the key services identified as important by BIP's members.

The *Membership Surveys* indicate positive movement in both nationalist and unionist communities between 2004 and 2008. The membership survey informs the development of BIP's plans for the period 2008-2013 through members' assessment of the usefulness of current services and their future needs.

The services members value from BIP include:

- information - particularly on best practice - and research;
- networking opportunities to enable members to exchange practice and develop relationships; and
- 'relationship building' between communities and across specific interfaces.

Significant progress is being made towards greater community dialogue, increased social and community activity, coming to terms with the legacies of the past and a reduction in inter-community violence and tension.

However, both nationalist and unionist communities identify remaining legacy issues in terms of regeneration where insufficient change has occurred in their own interface area between 2004 and 2008 in relation to:

- Freedom of movement in accessing facilities and services in interface areas (60% suggest no change);
- Level of economic activity (57% suggest no change); and
- Level of attractiveness of the physical environment (50% suggest no change).

4.1 Representatives of Member Groups

Through the Board of Directors and in one to one meetings with the representatives of member groups, how BIP should develop services to members and how work with members is intensified was discussed.

4.1.1 Bridge Community Association

Politically the different communities are not being (sufficiently) encouraged to come together to solve problems. There are particular issues in Unionist communities where there is a lack of political support to address difficult (and pressing issues - such as what is the role of ex-combatants in interface communities?) In both communities there would appear to be confusion about the implications of the peace and political process.

There seems to be an emerging consensus in the community sector and among statutory sector practitioners for greater communication between and across communities, work with other areas and with statutory agencies and politicians. Reasonably good relationships have been developed in Inner East and Short Strand forums with statutory agencies particularly the NIHE and BCC although the youth justice and education authorities are now participating.

Indeed in an east Belfast context there is a strategic development process involving a multi-sectoral, multi-agency attempt to develop a more 'joined up' strategy in tackling anti-social behaviour at the interface. This is against a backdrop of a reduction in detached youth workers from ten to two. This steering group seeks to develop more cohesive links across government bodies, between criminal justice agencies and others who focus on interface issue to establish better co-ordination of strategies aimed at tackling interface issues. It is anticipated that this group could also consider recommending resource allocation to decision-makers.

BIP could support mutual learning in how community organisations and statutory sector organisations relate to one another.

Suggests there is an appetite for facilitated discussion (not a top table approach) to promote debate, look at some of the more challenging issues and groups (Finaghy Cross Roads, North Belfast Parades forum etc) possibly scheduled for tea- time slots.

Policing remains a major issue in terms of getting action on matters such as anti-social behaviour.

Bridge Association would be interested in participating in an Inner East Neighbourhood Policing Pilot in conjunction with all the relevant groups and stakeholders.

In terms of service advocacy is concerned the debate is taking place primarily around walls and barriers and insufficiently around "mindsets".

4.1.1 Whitecity Community Association

BIP less involved in Whitecity than hitherto.

Concerns that established groups can easily be ignored when there is a change of politics and this undermines the participation of local people.

BIP has a role in building up the skills of member groups as facilitators in these complex environments.

The type of role BIP can play is about strengthening the work between the two communities.

4.1.2 174 Trust

BIP continues to have a role to play. Director especially is held in high regard. The environment in which BIP operates has become very competitive. In North Belfast there remains some unease about where BIP sits but confident BIP can counter-balance this by concentrating on what it is good at, defining its role carefully - in the context of other evolving partnerships.

4.1.3 Lower Oldpark Community Association

Support provided by Director and Development Worker in the past was appreciated and information is useful. Crisis intervention work was particularly useful. When there were

specific difficulties BIP takes the time to find out people are coping. Interface violence is reducing, however, there is an increase in criminal activity in adjacent area.

Residents' fears about safety still dominate their thinking. There is little confidence in effective policing in the area – frustration but still support for police. Lower Oldpark remains a vulnerable community. This affects its rejection of housing provision on the Girdwood site. The development of young people, housing and space remain key issues in the area.

4.1.4 Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group (Suffolk and Lenadoon Community Forums)

BIP mentors SLIG on an on-going basis as it develops and implements its peace building plan. The three roles outlined are appropriate and suggests BIP has a strategic role to play in co-ordinating efforts with its members and others in order to deliver in partnership sustainable change particularly in the context of CRC and BCC's initiative o the Interface Working Group and the publication of "Towards Sustainable Change".

In relation to policy it envisages BIP could further support SLIG's advocacy and policy work by developing a greater voice of interface communities more widely and supporting SLIG and other interface communities by translating the implications of the initiatives and policies of government departments and agencies so that people see the point of becoming involved and becoming more effective negotiators. SLIG suggests BIP could contribute to supporting communities with a positive approach to sharing in handling the difficult conversations that ensue.

4.1.5 Indian Community Centre

ICC has established itself as a neutral venue with relationships through out both communities. Over and above the cultural elements that ICC brings to the wider community, there is potential to share ideas and opinions rooted in Indian civil society. These are:

- Living with diversity;
- The practice of secularism; and
- Separation of politics and religion.

ICC is very open to participating in dialogue and providing facilities.

4.2 Board of Directors

A session was facilitated with the Board of Directors, BIP Director and staff to consider and develop the main findings of the consultation. They also considered what an appropriate organisational structure would look like and how BIP can be managed effectively and efficiently. They also met to consider the action plan. These questions are reported separately in the Operational Plan.

In order to respond to current issues and underpin BIP's work in interface areas the following principles were developed and considered by the Board of Directors.

Objective Principles to navigate difficult territory and complex relationships, work at grassroots is governed by:

- Overriding principle of the safety of residents;

- The views of people living in the interface areas are the most important;
- Promote benefit for both communities;
- Respect both communities (the minimum is to at least listen);
- Aim for an inclusive process involving local groups, residents and promotes good relations;
- Stakeholders and local interests are identified by BIP at an early stage;
- Set high standards of accountability to and transparency for local residents;
- Safe-guard against claiming the work of others or of “running rough-shod over others”;
- Claim the work that BIP does such as where it acts as a catalyst or in facilitating problem-solving, in proactively driving forward a problem-solving process.

5 Stakeholder Consultation

External stakeholders identified include OFMDFM, Community Relations Council (CRC), Northern Ireland Housing Executive, North Belfast Community Action Unit, and the International Fund for Ireland, Belfast City Council and representatives of interface networks. The relevance of BIP's learning and expertise in tackling interface issues outside the Belfast area was also explored and these led to informal conversations primarily in Derry. A series of consultations primarily in meetings and through telephone interviews were undertaken with these stakeholders.

The format and purpose of the consultation meetings was to:

- Present the rationale and three roles identified in Belfast Interface project's strategy were presented.
- Provide an opportunity a response to the strategy; and
- Identification of issues and concerns.
- Are the three roles relevant?
- How can they be delivered in partnership?
- How can BIP assist your organisation or member groups?

5.1 Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) Community Relations Unit

The department is receptive to the focus on interfaces, particularly as it is developing through the Interface Working Group. There is Ministerial support which may translate into an Executive Sub-Committee, underpinned by action groups focusing on interface and youth. The importance of bringing physical regeneration and community (particularly community relations aspects) regeneration closer together in both policy terms and geographically is identified. It is important to maximise synergies.

- There may be opportunities to support Shared Space (2.1) initiatives in the Peace III programme, in relation to the nature and use of services that may be shared.

5.2 Community Relations Council

Views BIP as a strategic asset with capacity and expertise, underpinned by its membership and making a valuable contribution to high level policy through the Interface Working Group. It is important that BIP is a focused and strategic organisation with a clear goal. Core funds BIP and anticipates this continuing. BIP's strength that it is not aligned and accepted as such across the board. Notes interface areas are both highly politicised and places where fear controls people's lives.

5.2.1 Interface Working Group

The Community Relations Council in collaboration with Belfast City Council and key Interface agencies and government departments established the Interface Working Group initially to review the Hazelwood interface barrier but increasing to begin a process to explore the future of existing interfaces and avoid potential new interfaces in Belfast. This led to the publication of “Towards Sustainable Security – Interface barriers and the legacy of segregation in Belfast” and an exploratory consultation with interface community groups.

The IWG strategy is based on three key elements –

- It must inclusive and prioritise the needs of residents;
- Strategies must be developed to meet the specific local context; and
- It will build upon existing good practice and address any gaps in provision.

Following the consultation in late spring 2009, the principles adopted by the IWG are:

1. In responding to the legacy of physical segregation the safety and security of the people living near to interfaces and interface barriers must be the priority.
2. With this in mind, we should create the conditions for the removal of all interface barriers across the city of Belfast.
3. The process of removing interface barriers should be part of an inclusive, community approach towards building a shared city.
4. No more segregation barriers should be built; rather priority must be given to other forms of investment in people and place that will provide appropriate levels of safety and security.

5.3 BIP Contribution

CRC identified the contribution BIP can make in terms of policy linkages, roles and challenges:

Policy Linkages

- Identified clear linkages in relation to the Shared Neighbourhood Programme and Community Cohesion (NIHE) and Shared Space (BCC Peace III); and
- High level policy through the Interface Working Group.

Roles

- Useful roles include - challenge and advocacy; and
- Fairly difficult and more explicit conversations need to take place locally in interface communities about control issues, rules of engagement and developing the future that engage interface networks, ex-combatants, gate-keepers and local residents.

- New models of practice and change; and
- Issue of whether there are sufficient numbers of facilitators skilled in working in interfaces and complex environments available.
- Challenge is to develop a common ownership between the community and the agencies of the issues in a local area.
- Work in relation to interfaces is more developed and rooted in Belfast and outside Belfast support is limited;
- Supporting the development of maturity at community level in terms of communication and effective work with statutory agencies.

Future Work could be supported through

- Opportunities to support initiatives through Peace III 1.2 and possible submission to IFI with an entirely reformulated approach.
- BIP could usefully explore building a coalition of partners including those engaged with interface issues and those with particular expertise and capacity.

5.4 Northern Ireland Housing Executive

BIP is held in high regard. Each interface is different and fragile. The processes, initiatives, plans that will work in one place will not do so in another. Complex and fundamental housing policy issues emerge particularly in North Belfast Experience suggests intra-community tensions are currently of concern in interface areas and are perhaps more fragile than inter-community tensions.

. Funders need to co-ordinate their efforts in supporting local groups.

BIP Role

- Potentially could support delivery of the interface Working Group through a programme of practical support for the engagement of residents, local interests and networks and lead statutory to explore issues in relation to specific interfaces.
- The NIHE would welcome BIP working more comprehensively across Belfast.
- Identified interface issues in Lurgan, Portadown and Craigavon where it would be useful if BIP were to engage with local groups with whom the Housing Executive has existing relationships.
- Other areas where community tensions were identified are Newry (Belfast Road, Shandon Park), Rathfriland (demographic change) and Derry (Irish Street/ Top of the Hill).

5.5 North Belfast Community Action Unit

An integrated cross department strategy for interface areas is required if there is to be transformation at local level. The absence of such strategy helps to account for insufficient change. The Interface Working Group presents opportunities for interface communities and statutory agencies to co-operate and develop shared ownership of the problems.

- Scale is needed to deal with the size of the problem and this should be reflected in how BIP responds to the challenge and opportunities.

5.6 International Fund for Ireland / Community Relations Council - Community Bridges

BIP's paper "A Policy Agenda for Change" is highly regarded and is indicative of mature communication and influential in attracting statutory and departmental attention to interface issues. The challenge remains to make the policy context "real" in the perspectives and goals of each agency.

The focus on shared space and interfaces in the Peace III clusters challenge councils throughout Northern Ireland to develop pilots and groups that can begin to engage and address these kinds of community tensions.

BIP

- Community Bridges would welcome a discussion about how BIP can share the learning – "formulate a learning experience" - in other urban and rural areas of Northern Ireland and further afield where there are community tensions such as Limerick.
- Policy thrust could be developed locally engaging on key public services.

Future Work could be supported through

- Potential resources may be available from Peace III and charitable funders.

5.7 Belfast City Council

BIP has a strong track record developed when it was less fashionable to work on interface issues. In terms of BIP strategy it is important to acknowledge the enormous positive change that has taken place. However, it needs to be mindful that newer networks have emerged. BCC is interested in the connectivity of the city and the development of shared spaces where there are specific development opportunities and at smaller locations. This requires reflection and the dissemination of learning from pilot projects that would inform policy. In terms of peace III one of the key performance targets is a reduction in the numbers of interface barriers.

Future developments in Belfast City Council will focus on Local Area Working, Community Safety Pilots and the Arterial Routes programme [developed in Peace II] also affects

interface communities and will continue to be rolled out and is likely to create spaces that can be shared by design. The challenges for BCC in terms of good relations will be to create critical pathways from community projects to community transformation and neighbourhood regeneration. Over emphasis on victim hood and deprivation will not be an attractive funding proposition – more maturity is required by those seeking grant aid. Increased maturity will be necessary for areas and communities to gain support, for example - agents will be interested in funding transformation rather than community infrastructure.

A key task in seeking transformation is the continuously create the opportunities. Over time as Interface working Group and Peace III work emerges BIP could support local and statutory interests coming to the table. There was a discussion about how BIP could possibly help formulate how neighbourhood policing would look like in an interface area, how arterial routes could be a focus for greater connectivity and mobility through an engagement with neighbouring interface (and other communities). The need to address racism as well as sectarianism is underlined.

While community planning and the power of health and well-being is relevant it is important not to over emphasize when the exact powers are unclear at this point and progress can be developed in other ways. The twenty-one SNAP neighbourhoods are described using the Sustainable Communities Wheel and this may be a more productive way of thinking about interface areas in the longer term. The SNAP areas are analysed in terms of how “well-serviced and well-connected” is the neighbourhood, “local leadership and levels of public participation”, “economy thriving” “environmentally sensitive” “active, inclusive and safe” (well-designed and built”.

BIP

- BIP has a key role to play in terms of linking communities and communities with local service delivery agencies, notwithstanding the development of more locally driven networks.
- BIP can play a useful challenge function in terms of conveying the city agenda to the interface areas.

5.8 Representatives of Interface Networks

In recent years as work in interface areas has become largely effective in reducing the level of violent incidents that occur on a regular basis and in managing interface conflict a number of networks some of which grew from mobile phone networks have emerged. As part of the consultation contact was made with the main networks operating in North, East and West Belfast and met with representatives of those networks almost all of whom are also involved in groups that are members of BIP.

Meetings took place Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium, with the Coordinator of the (mainly Nationalist) North Belfast Interface Network, with Intercomm and LINC and BCRC.

5.9 Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium (BCRC)

In the course of the consultation, two meetings took place with the Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium (BCRC) which uniquely brings together the perspectives of the three main combatant groupings in the conflict. BCRC is about a community development approach to conflict resolution. BCRC members include FCC, EBCDA, Intercomm, BURC, GSCC, ICTU and GVRT some of whom are also members of BIP. The current managing partners in BCRC are: Falls Community Council, Epic, Charter and Intercomm. It is composed of ex-combatants and community development leaders and activists. The formation of BCRC represents success in bringing into a positive relationship those who were previously adversaries and who can now make their work visible locally and internationally where hitherto direct contact was more difficult. BCRC's approach is to build alliances around shared social problems to develop joint strategies to tackle social and economic issues. BCRC would not want to see their members disadvantaged (in their dealings with BIP) by virtue of their over-lapping membership with BIP.

The key point made in the two meetings is that BCRC does not need to be facilitated or a "conduit" provided from outside – an "intermediary" role in this sense is not required. BCRC indicated that as BIP re-positions it thinks that it is important that the BIP and BCRC do not "cut across one another". In terms of service advocacy BCRC members have brought services together particularly in Inner East. BCRC seeks to develop its work through an inclusive process.

There is no objection to BIP have a complementary and collaborative role. It is acknowledged that this will include the provision of facilitation when BIP is invited to do so by any group operating in an interface area. They are, however, concerned that in a competitive environment that BIP is seen as "safe" but at the same time BCRC will seek to work constructively with who ever gets resources. BCRC has a particular interest in sharing information about the successful approaches they have developed - with one another and across the city. They have particular expertise in relation to youth and management of interface violence, conflict resolution and anti-sectarianism and have a particular interest in engaging with PSNI for the efficient policing of working class communities.

BCRC also provided information "Issues and Strategies for Conflict transformation at Belfast's Interfaces: Results from Belfast-Area Workshops" and "Communities in Transition". BIP is regarded as a tried and tested successful mechanism. While BCRC see the linkages to the wider social and economic regeneration, the strategies suggested through the area based workshops put the focus on efficient policing through engaging with PSNI and community safety in a multi-agency method and on outreach and conflict resolution work with young people in the context of managing interfaces. Several other issues were raised as well: education, employment, health, housing & development. The workshops also focussed on political representation, gender representation, integration of migrant workers and minority ethnic communities.

- BCRC indicated it would like to engage officially in exploratory talks with BIP between the two Management Committees in terms of how to best use the skill sets and to address these issues of regeneration.

At the initial meeting BIP meeting BIP suggested the following areas of co-operation for further discussion in August 2009. These are:

- a) BIP support to BCRC in breaking into the 'golden circle'; ensuring BCRC invites to IWGCP meetings, involving BCRC in BIP's BCC Peace 3 project (if funded), etc;
- b) Co-operation / collaboration in forming a policy network;
- c) Work together outside of Belfast, in supporting others to learn from the Belfast experience of conflict management / transformation in interface areas; and
- d) work together on service advocacy such as a neighbourhood policing pilot.

5.10 North Belfast Interface Network (NBIN)

NBIN's role is to work in North Belfast. Perceive BIP as a tried and tested organisation. However, some tension exist over who access resources and how independent of statutory agencies, particularly CRC is BIP. Work with BIP has to be of benefit to North Belfast. In this vein felt BIP policy work particularly in relation to matters such as the Programme for Government could be strengthened. Work carried out in terms Crisis Interventions was particularly helpful. Some concerns about facilitation being provided if this compounds difficulties in access to Protestant /Unionist communities.

- Relationships should be made between the Management Committees of BIP and the NBIN and not rely overly on relationships formed at staff level.

5.11 LINC

LINC is engaged in building the capacity of community organisations at interfaces, particularly in Loyalist areas. Overall there is not enough reflection and sharing of learning. Policy work has to be rooted in the local work. Programmes to build engagement with ordinary residents such as through the Community Empowerment Programmes have to support activities that local residents will do otherwise they are not going to engage.

- Current challenges for interface communities – increase participation and move the process to “WE”;
- Increase reflection and sharing of learning – members/practioners forum to exchange ideas and share learning;
- In general relationships should be made between the Management Committees of similar organisations and not rely overly on relationships formed at staff level.
- Policy work needs to be rooted in the local;
- The interface with statutory agencies needs to be developed.

5.12 Intercomm

Intercomm was a “signatory” to the recommendations of the North Belfast Interface Working Group which was supported through the Community Action Unit. In the current context recognises North Belfast needs to be re-integrated into the economy of the wider city and region and this will require an economic investment strategy. Difficulties with young people at interfaces are a legacy of the conflict and could benefit from a 10 year investment strategy. More over the focus in North Belfast needs to be developmental. Resourcing relationship building may bring more sustained benefit than focusing on the removal of barriers. The key issue for interface communities is regeneration. Politically politicians are beginning to coalesce around a set of values.

Future developments will need to encompass the following:

- New dialogue (with up to 50,000 residents in North Belfast) in relation to shared space, anti-sectarianism and shared responsibilities;
- Identify/develop delivery mechanisms (with key agencies and communities) to shape policy and develop synergies;
- Gain political legitimacy in terms of acknowledgement of the issues and the perspective of the Protestant community;
- Need for problem-solving approaches;
- New methods of participation are required (for example that reach young people and householders directly);
- System and structural change.

Values BIP’s role in research and documentation. The development of a policy role as envisaged by BIP will require an investment in the people who are working on the ground. Internal memorandum of understanding may be a useful device in setting out complementary roles of BIP and interface networks in which Intercomm is involved.

5.13 Sharing the Learning Beyond Belfast

In the course of consultations with statutory and funding agencies some consideration was given to how the insights gained in Belfast may be relevant to other areas of Northern Ireland where demographic change has led to increased tensions. The initial response to these conversations suggests BIP should formally explore the issues and needs being identified at specific locations, enter into some exploratory discussion about how its expertise and information could be shared with a range of interests in the North West, Lurgan and through the Peace III clusters.

5.14 Community Foundation Northern Ireland

An initial conversation with CFNI draws attention to enormity of the challenge of working outside Belfast with localities that share similar characteristics with interface areas in Belfast. In this context developing inclusive approaches is critical.

The broadly similar characteristics include:

- sectarian / interface violence;
- the use of mobile phones to manage conflict;
- ex-prisoner groupings feel excluded by agencies and from wider statutory initiatives when it comes to making a contribution to the regeneration of their communities;
- Intra as well as inter community tensions; and
- older community groups can feel ignored in place of ex-prisoner networks.

CFNI have created an Observatory Post in relation to the impending changes under the Review of Public Administration with particular reference to the community and voluntary sector. In time the post holder is likely to meet with all the councils and transitions teams.

5.1.5 Peace III

The Peace III cluster partnerships (Peace III 1.1 Building relations at local level) strategies include contextual analysis of inter and intra community tensions in their district council areas. This has identified particular locations such as estates where there are legacies of paramilitarism and other issues. The action plans (2008-2010) outline how they propose to address racism, sectarianism, interfaces, creation of shared space and demographic tensions. It is anticipated the partnerships will in these first two years explore and test how they can begin to tackle these issues. New or revised action plans will then be developed for 2011-2013 with implementation through to 2015.

5.16 North West

Initial conversations in the North West with The Junction and the Peace and Reconciliation Group indicates an interest in sharing information on the practice developed around interfaces in Belfast and opening conversations about supporting positive change with interface communities in Derry and the North West. The Junction would anticipate that the Peace and Reconciliation Group would take the lead as it is working on the ground on these issues. They are both open to exploring through a partnership approach exploratory discussions about how to make the experience of BIP and its member groups real in the context of Derry both in terms of information sharing and opening dialogue.

5.17 Lurgan

In the Health and Social Care Board (legacy Southern Health and Social Services Board) one of the Children's Service Planning Working Groups has identified the need for work to be pursued with the adults in the area as a parallel strand to the work to be undertaken with

the young people, without which the work with young people could be nullified by continuing negative influences.

The Children's Services Planner thinks if BIP is able to offer its expertise to those working in interface areas outside Belfast - this could be of value to agencies working in Lurgan. This will be raised at the next meeting of the Working Group - as a piece of information sharing at least. A first step, if BIP were to be invited to help in the Lurgan interface issues, would be to map what is currently going on in the area, in relation to the adult interface issues, and then to consider whether BIP could offer anything to support this.

5.18 Outer North Belfast

Belfast City Council /Newtownabbey council areas is an important interface with which has been involved in the past. Greater progress is anticipated through the work of local community organisations, the Peace III plan and Newtownabbey Borough Council's efforts.

5.19 SEUPB

SEUPB indicate that Peace III cluster partnership will develop their current action plan through contracted delivery agents who are either involved in the partnership or have been procured via a tendering process. Border Action and Community Relations Council have been tasked to support the Peace III partnerships and BIP should discuss with them. BIP are advised to contact and include the Manager of the Peace III partnership in the areas listed above in exploratory discussions.

5.20 Community Cohesion

Northern Ireland has become more culturally diverse. Black, minority ethnic people and migrant workers and their families seeking housing often find accommodation in interface communities. There is the potential during an economic recession of hate crime incidents increasing. Throughout 2009 intimidation and hate crime against members of the new communities has not abated. Board members, Community Bridges and Belfast city council have highlighted the importance of BIP promoting respect for diversity and community cohesion in the context of supporting change and transformation of interface areas. BIP may have a future role in finding creative ways to engage with support groups, organisations representing particular ethnic minority groups and local indigenous community with the view of facilitating integration.

5.21 Community Dialogue

Community Dialogue has finalised their plans for 2009 - 2013. Community Dialogue approached BIP because it identified the possibility of sharing resources - office base, running costs and perhaps an organisational director/coordinator. Community Dialogue's Board felt that this initial working arrangement would lead to the possibility of more joint working and eventually a more strategic alliance of some kind. Community Dialogue has just received substantial Peace III funding to roll out their process. The process is focussed on exploration, unpacking of critical issues for society so that understanding can be transformed through sensitive exposure to another's point of view, personal story telling to create empathy and in the end capacity building which would assist people in making much

more informed choices about their future. It is considered a valuable holistic thought process which adds value to any decision making process.

Part of Community Dialogue's strategic plan is focussed on interface areas throughout Northern Ireland. Their plans include organising dialogue sessions giving people who live with the reality of division the opportunity to share their experiences, hopes and fears with those on the "other side" in a way that helps shape a different understanding. Their short term need is to sort out larger premises and a part time Co-ordinator.

5.22 Rights Based Approaches

Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) is being funded by Atlantic Philanthropies to develop replicable models in relation to economic and social rights. This is based on specific work by PPR in North Belfast, Dublin and Derry. The North Belfast focus includes work in relation to the development of Girdwood, mental health and housing issues. Any question of developing work with BIP would need to be discussed with the Management Committee. The approach PPR's utilises includes working at the pace of communities, working to skill- up local advocates, the identification of unmet needs and a recognition that in the relationship between vulnerable groups and agencies there is a distinct power imbalance. The latter could have implications for how PPR could work with BIP and agencies. The "show me" model of working alongside agencies to identify issues and problem solve with them and local communities suggest a different approach. It was agreed to flag up these differences as a basis for continued conversation on how BIP and PPR could co-operate.

6 BIP Strategic Plan - A Partnership Approach

BIP's strategic planning process focused on the need to promote a better and shared future for interface communities. A challenging discussion about what sharing means led to the agreement of three key areas of work where BIP will work in partnership with member groups, interface networks, statutory and other partners. Supporting an understanding of sharing, the issues, difficulties and problem solving is therefore a corner stone of BIP's strategic focus for the period 2009-2014.

Key partners in developing the three roles are BIP's member groups. There is a particular linkage where BIP has supported groups to develop models in the past. This includes the Suffolk and Lenadoon interface and work on shared neighbourhood in Finaghy Crossroads. BIP is currently addressing the legacy of interface barriers and the quality of life of citizens - Active membership of the Interface Working Group (IWG) and the Interface Working Group Community Partners (IWGCP).

6.1 Strategic Partnerships

Since its formation in 1995 BIP has directly supported interface communities to develop strategies and models or to highlight good practice and models they have developed. BIP's has worked at ground level and commissioned research and reports to support policy development. This work which BIP has shared with interface communities has included:

- Facilitation with Suffolk and Lenadoon Interface Group (SLIG) – Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project;
- Facilitation with Finaghy Community Centre Management Committee and Finaghy Community Development Association – Finaghy Cross Roads Shared Neighbourhood;
- Mentoring SLIG through the Peace Building Plan;
- Published “Inner East – Outer West – Addressing conflict in two interface areas”;
- Commissioned ICR and Belfast Exposed to research/ document interface barriers;
- Co-authoring “A Policy Agenda for Change”;
- Published “Young people on the Interface” – the experiences of young people on the Interface; and
- Co-facilitated and published “Whitwell Youth Mediation Project; engaging with disaffected youth in an interface context”.

The membership base of BIP includes three types of members, individual, associate and full members, Groups drawn from interface communities are full members. Associate members include organisations such as ICR with which BIP has commissioned research in

the past or Ulster People's College and Workers Educational Association to which BIP has sign-posted members towards subsidised training opportunities.

As outlined in the above examples BIP has provided tailored mentoring support and facilitation which has supported the development of models of engagement between the two main communities. In this way local interface communities and BIP work in partnership in creating new models. This work continues such as having a formal mentoring role with Suffolk Lenadon Interface Group (SLIG) and facilitating internal community dialogue with Tiger's Bay. This work is value based, skilled and resource intensive.

The policy, service advocacy and conflict transformation roles need to be developed in an integrated fashion involving members, statutory agencies, interface communities and politicians. Some examples include:

- "Show me" helping statutory agencies how to work effectively with interface communities through supporting constructive change;
- Add value and be proactive in developing relationships between communities, with agencies etc.; and
- Work in partnership with other groups to support change and transformation on the ground through community groups, statutory agencies and engaging with and holding to account politicians and agencies.

The responses of members and agencies indicate BIP could be doing more as an independent membership organisation in order to support communities and effect how society thinks about interface areas.

Agency Partners in delivering on these roles in an integrated approach include:

- Belfast City Council (at political and corporate level) in terms of its four strategic priorities, Good Relations, Peace III strategy, community safety and local policing plans, local area working and the development of local government leading up to and after 2011;
- Community Relations Council and the Interface Working Group;
- Key agencies such as NIHE, PSNI, Education and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in terms of the access to services; neighbourhood policing and where appropriate shared services and action to influence regional policy and targets; and
- The Executive and Assembly and government departments.

6.2 Policy, Service Advocacy and Supporting Conflict Transformation

The consultation meetings indicate the roles are considered relevant and timely particularly in terms of the context of an emerging consensus at government, statutory and community level that the time is right, the opportunities to support interface communities and where possible reduce the number of barriers should not be missed. This is despite caveats about the fragility and complexity of relationships in and between interface communities and concerns about safety and fear.

Some of those interviewed alluded to the importance of BIP building on its trusted reputation and take its own authority in acknowledging the contribution it has made. The current economic climate is expected to restrain resources in the medium term.

BIP should:

- Deliver all three roles in an integrated fashion by working closely with its membership and statutory agencies.
- Demonstrate it is focused, dynamic and proactive;
- Develop collaborative partnerships to ensure there are sufficient resources for facilitation, mentoring and reflection.
- Assess the preparedness of its membership to engage in difficult conversations about the future of specific interfaces.
- Support member groups to address the issues of community cohesion and counter racism and intolerance within communities.

6.3 Developing Implementation Partnerships

In order to implement the strategic plan (2009-2014) BIP may need to develop delivery partnerships to support the broader development of interface communities and areas where there are community tensions. This may include supporting dialogue and developing a “learning experience”.

The impetus for change in interface communities has been referenced through the external consultations reported above. Arguably the political, social and economic contexts are building towards a policy commitment to address the issues and underlying difficulties facing interface communities. In order to convert this willingness into action the scale of efforts needs to increase. BIP has a significant role to play in supporting these efforts at the policy, service and grass roots. In order effect a change in scale, BIP envisages working closely with its members, associate members and other partners to support policy development, pilot new models of service advocacy with interface communities and public bodies and work creatively at the grass roots in addressing the more difficult issues of sharing and the implicitly more controversial issues.

This exploration needs to be taken forward by the Strategic Director and in response to the needs identified by the Practice Co-ordinator.

6.4 Developing the role of BIP outside Belfast

The discussion suggests BIP's expertise and experience may be relevant outside the Belfast area. A number of areas have been identified in which exploratory conversations could begin at particular locations. In this BIP may also be assisted by agencies such as the Housing Executive in the context of the Shared Space Programme.

Over time this may give rise to helping to design and support local processes so that capacity is increased throughout Northern Ireland to address the issue of separation – interfaces and community tensions in particular localities. The range of issues to be confronted is likely to include those that have arisen in Belfast and therefore it would be relevant to share information and learning about some of the problem-solving approaches developed by member groups and BIP.

The Peace III cluster partnerships have articulated the community tensions that result from violence, segregation and demographic change in their strategies and action plans - no doubt building on good relations strategies. However, as the context of Peace III is more sharply defined in terms of interfaces and shared space, the articulation names some of the critical issues of "Interface" type situations outside of Belfast for the first time. The work of Belfast City Council in taking on these difficult issues is unrivalled. In partnership with the Community Relations Councils and other agencies this has led to the formation of the Interface Working Group.

In order to develop a statutory focus outside Belfast on interfaces, shared space and localities with broadly similar characteristics, the work of the Peace III cluster partnerships and the emerging work in establishing new councils (with good relations and community planning responsibilities) needs to be linked. Work underway by CFNI and the Peace III Cluster Partnerships could help to inform, articulate how this is linked. CRC and Border Action could be invited to consider how this could be developed strategically in the context of their roles in advising and supporting Peace III partnerships.

Three key conversations emerge:

1. Constructing processes that would begin to explore, initially with partners and then with a widening group of people and groups from interface communities and sensitive localities.
2. How does increased inclusivity on the ground get a response at agency level?
3. How do agencies and councils engage in addressing these issues locally?

The desired outcome of developing the role of BIP outside Belfast is:

- Develop local capacity to address the complexity and issues associated with segregation, interfaces and community tensions; and
- Promote agency ownership of these issues in their localities.

7 Policy, Service Advocacy and Supporting Change and Transformation

The key services were identified through the strategic planning process and were informed by the membership survey. When delivered on a sufficient scale, they will make a significant contribution to supporting BIP members, interface communities and promoting sustainable change at the interfaces.

The Operational Action Plan details the aims, objectives, actions targets, outcomes and resources. A summary of objectives, outcomes and actions is set out below for aims one to three.

7.1 Policy – Developing policy with agencies and members

AIM 1: BIP aims to be proactive in linking and involving local communities in changing policy and in advocating for change of practical benefit to interface communities.

In terms of the need for services in the future, members are realistic that local and city-wide policy initiatives largely influenced by, and dependent on city-wide policy developments. This requires BIP to be involved in “bigger partnerships” and to use its influence help interface communities to be actively involved in such developments.

Indeed with the development of the Interface Working Group led by CRC and BCC arguably there has never been a better time to focus attention on the policy gap that adversely affects the regeneration of interface communities.

Members also indicate BIP should be more proactive to enable progress to be made and achieve the outcomes set out below. This includes:

- Influencing with member groups the policy and practice of regional and local service delivery agencies taking a three to five year approach.

Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 1.1: BIP will work in partnership to influence policy	1. Develop a policy network from BIP membership and the interface community sector.	1. Policy work is rooted in the local experience.
Objective 1.2: Promote over a three to five year period the importance of an integrated strategy to transform interface communities into cohesive communities.	2. Annual review of opportunities to influence policy areas by working in partnership with agencies and departments over a 3-5 year period.	2. Policy Framework has been strengthened so that government policies and practice explicitly reflect interface and related issues.

Aims and Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 1.3: Develop capacity to influence and reflection in the Interface Policy Network	3. Design and implement a programme with the policy network of facilitated sessions sharing experience, briefings to develop capacity for reflection and influence.	3. Increased reflection and sharing of learning – members/practioners forum to exchange ideas and share learning.
Objective 1.4: Develop knowledge base, aid reflection and influence action.	4. Commission and disseminate research or surveys as agreed.	4. Research/survey contributes to the development of policy and practice.
Objective 1.5 Build on linkages with Interface Networks	5. Relationships develop between the management committees of BIP and the interface networks.	5. Distinct roles utilised to benefit interface communities in the interest of community cohesion.
Objective 1.6 Development of BIP and relevance of learning beyond Belfast	6. Formally explore the issues and needs being identified at specific locations, enter into exploratory discussions about the relevance of expertise and information could be shared.	6. Develop local capacity to address the complexity and issues associated with segregation, interfaces and community tensions; Promote agency ownership of these issues in their localities.

7.2 Service Advocacy Role

AIM 2: BIP aims to work in partnership with interface communities, agencies and others to address issues of sharing and safety in interface communities and safe access to work and services. This will be promoted through improving relationships between communities, increasing labour mobility and the development of shared (or hinged) services.

Therefore, BIP will build on its early work and current mentoring role with Suffolk Lenadon Interface Group (SLIG) in relation to different types of sharing and SLIG's Peace Building Plan. As the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) strategy unfolds and builds on the work and thinking of A Shared Future (The Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland) will create renewed opportunities for BIP to support the development of community cohesion and sharing with interface communities.

Increasing freedom of movement in interface areas remains a huge challenge and members indicate that BIP should:

- Support efforts to demonstrate how it is safe to use facilities in “other” areas;
- Address the complexities that arise from no one government agency being responsible for interfaces; and

- Address how fear continues to exert a significant influence and impedes relationship building and regeneration efforts.

This will involve BIP working alongside agencies to support the delivery of services that are utilised on an equitable basis by residents from interface communities and also reinforce community cohesion. In the course of the consultation, member groups identified their interest in becoming involved in tailored programmes in relation to matters such as neighbourhood policing. Arising from this BIP will proactively identify a number of interface areas and communities - on a pilot basis – that are interested in working over a period of time to address clearly defined statutory services and facilities which are associated with access difficulties and, through working with the relevant agencies, community and youth groups and individuals, promote greater access to these. Therefore BIP will:

- Develop tailored programmes targeted on individual communities that demonstrate how local service delivery agencies can improve service delivery, address the issue of relationships, safety and barriers and contribute to further regeneration of interface communities.
- Develop and support (using a phased approach) in three interface contexts the establishment of intercommunity forums with interagency and political co-operation in order to establish interface structure/barriers development/reduction plans with resident support.

Aims and Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 2.1: Advocate the advantages of sharing taking into account the realities and difficulties which may apply.	2.1. Promote through large and small group discussions and the dissemination of successful models including SLIG.	1. Greater understanding of different kinds of sharing.
Objective 2.2 Promote accessibility of local services and facilities	2.2. On a pilot basis, proactively identify a number of clearly defined statutory services or facilities which are associated with access difficulties and, work inclusively with the relevant agencies, community and youth groups and residents promote greater access to these.	2. Improved service delivery to meet the needs interface and cohesive communities.
Objective 2.3 Support member	2.3. a. Provide information and assistance on	3. People living in interface communities with opportunities

groups with practical support and involve in each others learning.	obtaining youth resources and crisis intervention. b. Build on labour mobility training project education. c. Roll out youth mediation project - strategic planning for adults and young people in interface areas.	and resources for training and development in order to support social and economic mobility and conflict management Labour Mobility programme providing opportunities on a cross-community basis for employment-related and inter-cultural training receives statutory recognition.
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7.3 Supporting Change and Transformation

AIM3: BIP aims to support interface communities to develop positive relationships by encouraging and enabling co-operation, promoting articulation and understanding of key issues involved in sharing and division and providing support through change.

The further development of leadership at local level that is positive and capable of delivering change is seen as a critical task for interface communities. The capacity and willingness to engage is not uniform and there is often a price to be paid for each 'breakthrough' in local interface community relations, as each has the potential to create a local backlash of resistance to change. Nationalist areas have often been marked by local co-ordination of efforts whereas Unionist areas have often been marked by a history of factions and fragmentation. This paradigm is constantly shifting, however, and this work is resource intensive. BIP, as an independent organisation, has worked successfully in these diverse situations in supporting residents to develop effective strategies.

Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 3.1 Support conflict transformation, reconciliation and conflict management, in communities	3.1 Advocate the development of a city-wide dialogue initiative complementary to the Interface Working Group/Community Partners group.	Greater cooperation and co-ordination throughout the city. Six communities become involved in reducing tensions, sharing facilities and activities and the taking up of opportunities at interfaces which meet local needs.
	3.2 Respond to requests and provide independent facilitation, mediation and mentoring support at local interfaces and develop a mentoring programme	Scale of facilitation, mediation and mentoring activity in local areas is significantly increased.
	3.3 Actively develop strategic partnerships with facilitation/mediation/dialogue and training organisations to support activist and residents to encourage dialogue and grow facilitation skills.	Capacity to support processes locally is increased.

8 Efficiently and Effectively Manage Belfast Interface Project

Aim 4: BIP aims to ensure that membership remains reflective of interface communities as changes occur and that the organisation is managed efficiently and effectively.

A new organisational structure, operational and staffing details has been developed in conjunction with the board and staff. The Operational Action Plan details the aims, objectives, actions targets, outcomes and resources. A summary of objectives, outcomes and actions is set out below for aim four

A Board members skills survey was undertaken in January 2009. A summary of the results of the Skill Survey completed by 11 Directors are set out below.

Belfast Interface Project Board Member Knowledge and Skills Questionnaire

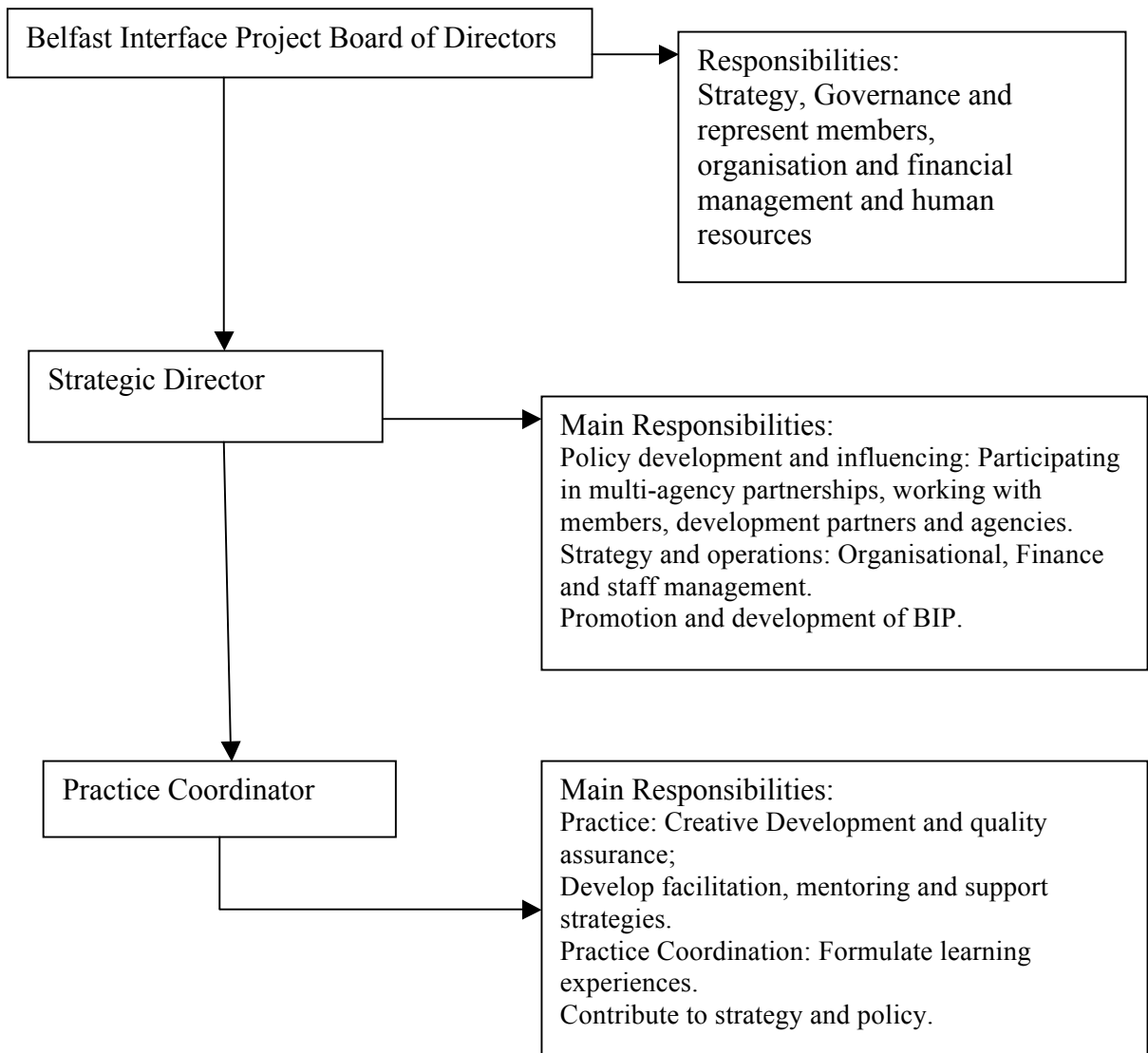
Key Area	Depth of Knowledge and Skill			Would like Training or Refresher as ticked ✓ below	
	How would you rate your expertise in this area [insert tick ✓ in box below]			Introductory for responsibilities of Board Members	Refresher or Advanced
	Low	Medium	Strong		
Interfaces					
Issues		1	7		
Mediation/ facilitation	2	6	3		2
Local communities	1	2	7		
Training	4	5	2	1	
Research	3	5	3	1	
Consultation	2	8	1	1	
Governance					
Roles/ responsibility of Board members		5	5		3
Committee Skills		4	6		1
Human Resource Planning	2	8	1		
Organisational Management					
Financial Management	3	7	1	1	2
Fundraising	1	7	3		2
Personnel issues	3	5	3	1	1
Marketing					
PR/ Promotion	3	5	3	1	
Publications/ reports etc	2	5	4	1	
Policy					
Lobbying / Advocacy	3	5	3	1	2
Strategy Development	2	6	3		2

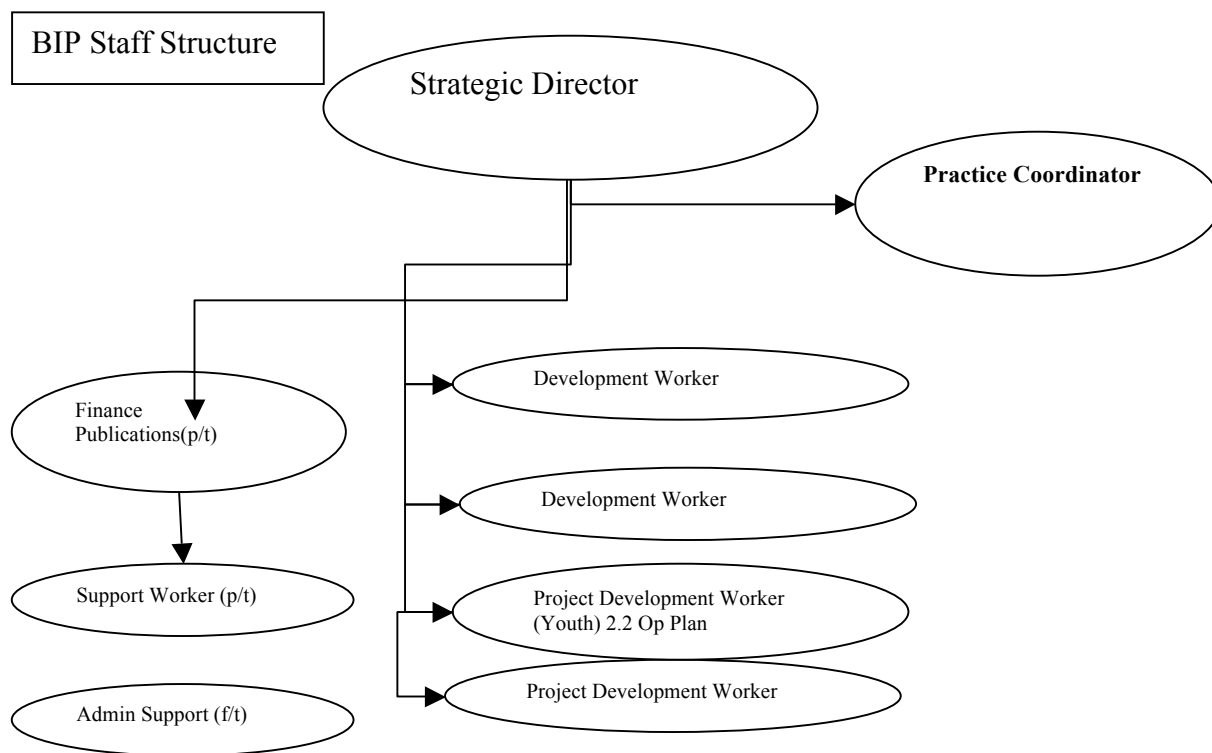
Directors identified their strengths through the range of skills and knowledge. Over half (5 plus) identified interface issues, local communities, committee skills and roles and

responsibilities of Board members as being strong. Over half (6 or over) identified consultation, human resource planning, financial management, mediation/facilitation and strategy development as being of medium level. Where members identified particular areas for introducer or refresher training these could be taken forward with individual members through sign-posting to existing opportunities.

Half of the respondents indicated they would invite refresher of advanced development in mediation, facilitation, lobbying and strategy development, governance and organisational management.

As a Board, the collective skills and expertise of the Board could be further developed by focusing on areas a significant proportion of the membership could become more proficient in the following areas. These are organisational, development, marketing and policy, financial management, lobbying/advocacy and strategy development.





Note: Up to two full time equivalents in both the Development and Project Development posts will be required. Appendix Two includes the Job descriptions and person specifications. In brief the key roles in each post are:

- Strategic Director – Policy, organisational management and development of BIP;
- Practice Co-ordinator – Creative and innovative development of models and processes around sharing, research;
- Development Workers – Facilitate local processes;
- Project Development Worker – Member engagement and Youth; Project related work;
- Finance and Publications – Finance, publications, communications, staff support
- Support Worker – Administration, website, IT, database and Newsletter and e communications, staff support;
- Admin Support – Finance, staff support and Grant aid administration.

Aims and Objectives	Actions	Outcomes
Objective 4.1 Ensure that membership remains reflective of interface communities.	Consult, support and continually develop BIP membership to reflect the changing interface communities.	Membership developed and appropriate support services provided.
Objective 4.2: Communication Policy: Increase the visibility of interface communities in promoting positive change and cohesion;	4.2 a) Produce and distribute the Interface news-sheet. 4.2. b) Develop the website as an interactive tool.	Communication amongst groups and agencies about good practice across the city is increased.

increase visibility of BIP.		
Objective 4.3 Organisational effectiveness: Accountability and Strategy	4.3. a) Independent monitoring and evaluation; 4.3 b) Commission an annual audit; 4.3. c) Hold an annual AGM; and 4.3. d) Hold an annual team building and forward planning residential.	BIP is managed efficiently and effectively. BIP is in a position to acquire financial and human resources with which to implement the strategic plan.
Objective 4.4 Human Resources and Finance	4.4 a) Update policies and procedures as required. 4.4 b) Maintain an effective staff team. 4.4.c) Produce and review 5 year rolling budget annual budget and projected cash flows.	
Objective 4.5 : Board Development	4.5 Develop an annual board development programme.	Directors are developed to fulfil their responsibilities to manage BP effectively and efficiently managed
Objective 4.6 BIP reorganisation	4.6 Secure resources and Board and staff support	BIP is able to meet challenge of change

9 Risk Assessment

Risks were identified under the following headings. Only those risks which were assessed as being likely to have a significant impact on the organisation are included. Actions are outlined that address each risk.

Strategic Risks

A. Emergence of other players makes role of BIP more complicated.

Action – principles developed by the Board of Directors will help BIP and others in clarifying interventions and promote an inclusive process.

Action - address this through ongoing exploration with interface networks.

B. Strategic plan does not reflect current needs and priorities –

Action – the process of developing the operational plan by meeting member groups, statutory partners and interface networks supported the three key roles identified in the strategy.

Organisational Risks

C. Uncertainty over funding leads to loss of staff and or loss of morale.

Action – keep staff informed, involve in the design (and where appropriate in the completion of funding applications).

D. Strategic partnerships are difficult to implement effectively

Action – work through processes based on best practice in ensuring a “fit” in terms of aims and objectives and clarity about roles and responsibilities.

E. Managing the organisation – working with member groups, staff and funding efficiently and effectively.

Action – Operational Plan sets out a series of actions.

Operating Risks

F. Inability to develop sufficient scale to deliver on the three key roles.

Action - complete implementation of fundraising strategy in 2009.

Financial Risks

G. Short term and insufficient funding and Income generation dependant on groups having access to resources to support mentoring and facilitation

Action – actively manage and be realistic about the implications of this through the Board of Directors and review Operational Plan on a periodic basis.

Action – prepare and review financial management reports and cash flows with the Finance Sub Committee on a quarterly basis and as necessary.

Information Risks

H. Strategy insufficiently promoted and explained to a range of audiences

Action – Appointment of strategic director and communication included as a formal job role.