Belfast Interface Project

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Strategic Plan
2015-2020

Northumberland Street

Listing of Identified Structures and Spaces on Front Cover

Cluster 1:   Suffolk - Lenadoon

Cluster 2:   Upper Springfield Road

Cluster 3:   Falls - Shankill

Cluster 4;   The Village - Westlink

Cluster 5:   Inner Ring

Cluster 6:   Duncairn Gardens

Cluster 7:   Limestone Road - Alexandra Park

Cluster 8:   Lower Oldpark - Manor Street

Cluster 9:   Crumlin Road - Ardoyne - Glenbryn

Cluster 10:   Ligoniel

Cluster 11   Whitewell Road - Longlands

Cluster 12:   Short Strand - Inner East

Cluster 13:   Ormeau Road and the Markets

Belfast Interface Project
Strategic Plan 2015-2020

Foreword

The announcement in 2013 from OFMdFM[1] of its intent to see interface barriers coming down by 2023 was a public demonstration of political will to see the end of one of the most obvious manifestation of divisions within our society. The immediate backlash and concerns expressed most notably by interface communities, highlights the complexity, challenge and reality of the issues for those living and working within interface communities.

The discussions which ensued, at a political and community level and in the media, illustrates the context and the challenge facing the Belfast Interface Project over the next 5 years. Seeking the removal of barriers is in some ways an easy call to make, examining what this might mean, supporting and preparing communities to consider this option is a much harder challenge requiring a considered and sensitive response.

It is against this background that BIP has developed its new strategic framework which provides a public statement of our intent and offers a guide to action.

Chair Maria Morgan

Introduction

BIP was established in 1995 as an informal initiative to examine and communicate the issue of interfaces in Belfast. Over a period of almost 20 years the organisation has undergone many changes moving from organic, loose association to a registered company with charitable status with a small dedicated team supporting a core membership reflecting the diverse communities across interface areas. Our work, which was pioneering and ground breaking, has encompassed research, policy development, on the ground delivery, advocacy and mediation. Throughout we have held to a number of core values particularly integrity, mutual respect and trust which has allowed us to work within and between communities across the City. Our desire has always been to be a positive force, a catalyst for change.

As with many organisations in the sector, we are faced with the challenge of ensuring that we remain relevant and responsive to the changing environment. This challenge is made more difficult in a time of austerity and increased competition and regulation. The policy and strategic context set by the new OFMDFM 'Together Building a United Community' strategy, on going political and community tensions and a down playing of community and good relations, provides both challenges and opportunities. Within this context we have developed a revised strategic framework through a process of reflection, research and discussion involving the Staff, Directors and Members.

Strategic Director Joe O'Donnell

[1] Together Building a United Community May 2013
http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community

The Strategy Development Process

The development of a new Belfast Interface Project strategic plan was an interactive process, involving the Board and Staff Team. This entailed a review of the policy context and the implications for BIP, a review of current / last plan highlighting areas of success and challenges, a series of individual interviews with Board and staff members and two discussion workshops with the Board and Staff .The intention and approach throughout was to ensure that BIP is working to an agreed course of action which will provide the direction of travel for the organisation in the future but is flexible enough to allow BIP to respond to changing needs and circumstances within communities and to opportunities and challenges which will arise .

Building upon Success

During the workshops one of the long time directors and founders was asked to offer some personal reflections on BIP's development, as a basis for building a new strategy. This input sketched out the history and growth of BIP from its genesis as a hybrid organisation to an independent membership body, underpinned by a commitment to community engagement, appropriate intervention and core principles and values supporting interface communities over the years. This history highlighted the energy and the challenge that was evident in those early days, during some of the darkest times in Belfast. It also paid tribute to the work carried out by the Directors and Staff, who acted as pioneers and trailblazers in a quiet but highly effective manner. It also highlighted some of the innovative work carried out, including the telephone networks, the research and policy pieces and significantly how Belfast City Council adopted some of BIP's work on interfaces. Embracing methods of grassroots engagement and delivery, supported by best practice the hope was expressed that BIP would continue to develop, mindful of it's past and core ethos while adapting to new circumstances and offering innovative solutions.

This view of BIP 's track record and contribution to the City was reinforced and reflected in the comments of Staff and Directors offered during individual interviews and workshop indicating the strength of the foundations going forward.

- BIP's excellent reputation, built up over 20 years of successful delivery

- The BIP Team is welcomed in any and all communities with its ability to develop and maintain relationships and partnerships.

- The diversity and credibility of the team

- The trust enjoyed by BIP built up carefully over many years based upon its values of reliance , trustworthiness and integrity, embodied in the work and behaviour of the staff

- BIP successfully acting as a catalyst for change

- The Board and membership are still together and have remained united in a difficult environment over many years.

- Successfully developing collaboration from the bottom up with a commitment to a two way process of working together

- Acting and being respected as an "honest broker"

- BIP are a fixed point and a reliable touchstone

Springmartin Road

The Changing Environment and Implications for BIP

During the strategy development process BIP took cognisance of the environmental context, how this is changing and the implication for the organisation and its members. This is summarised below

Summary of Internal and External Influences

Political

- The current relationships stalemate
- Community Tension
- Elections 2014--2016
- Community Violence
- The Decade of Remembrance

Policy and Strategy

T: BUC

- Good Relations Plans
- Threat to bodies such as CRC
- Peace IV Priorities

Structural Changes

- RPA and the implications for Council
- Priorities and relationships with statutory and Third sector partnerships

Funding and Financial pressures

- Economic austerity
- Government budget cuts
- Reduction on third sector funding.
- CRC/G.R. budget squeezed
- IFI/CRC/AP traditional supporters, no longer as readily available.

Competition and Collaboration

- Other groups/agencies now in the field, some claiming credit and ownership of work which may have been considered BIP's
- The need to collaborate with willing partners from coalitions to deliver.

Organisational Pressures

- Increased regulation and accountability as a charity
- The need to secure and support staff

The Implications for BIP and its Members

The fundamental need for BIP as an organisation is still there but the need is changing significantly. The focus needs to be on "preparing the ground" for life after the physical barriers may be removed and in parallel, refocus on the membership who should be at the heart of what the organisation is doing. BIP should be about empowering interface communities with the knowledge, ability and resources to decide what should happen within their communities and the support to effect that change in a positive way.

Policy Context and Political Climate

The political fluidity which is likely to continue for the foreseeable future provides the context and backdrop for BIP's upcoming programme of work. Linked to this the long term uncertainty of organisations, such as the Community Relations Council and the dangers of down playing or down grading the work of Good Relations within Councils under R.P.A. sets a challenging context. The T:BUC strategy provides a focus on physical barriers and while this creates an opportunity, how does BIP benefit from this while supporting members who may have mixed views on such initiatives? It is important to recognise that barriers also exist outside Belfast and need to be tackled, often described in rural areas as "invisible" barriers but equally important and divisive.

T:BUC has in some ways borrowed some of BIP's language and thinking and this should offer an opportunity for BIP to influence policy and the prospect for BIP to show what it can do to assist with the delivery of T:BUC. Additionally many organisations are being placed in competition which creates a tendency to seek and receive political support. This provides a further challenge for BIP having built its reputation on independence and non alignment.

Internal Implications

Funding opportunities within the Community sector are shrinking at an enormous rate and the market is becoming increasingly competitive and crowded .The sustainability of the organisation has to be seen as a priority as BIP has and is facing very challenging times and like many others is having difficulty attracting the necessary resources to implement its plan for change.

Part of the challenge is to proactively pursue funding opportunities while generating unrestricted funding. This might include; promoting social economy projects, pursuing training and consultancy opportunities, securing EU funding, tendering, pursuing service level agreements, entering into joint research and publication ventures with the universities and selling resources and publications on line. Building the profile of the organisation is considered critical through; collaboration, active involvement on a range of Boards and Partnerships, while utilising Social Media to promote its work and the underlying interface issues and debates.

Building a vision and restating our Purpose

Informed by the review of the environment and experience gained over the past 5 years it was agreed that it would be useful to reflect on BIPS vision, mission and values. While the current vision is considered to be valuable reflecting the thinking of the time and the need to develop a statement that was all encompassing, it was agreed that changes may be useful to reflect, firstly the ethnic mix and diversity evident within Belfast currently, secondly to create a stronger and more explicit need for social and economic investment to address deprivation and inequality at interfaces and the need to be sensitive in terms of the use of language recognising the diverse nature of the membership. Moving beyond tolerance to a more generous spirit of interdependence may be also a more positive direction.

With respect to the current mission statement this was considered to be possibly a little dated, written at a time when regeneration strategies were in vogue, secondly the term "create strategies" suggests a top down approach, while empowering and supporting perhaps describe BIP's role and added value .It was agreed that the values statements needed some attention, some are principles rather than values and perhaps the core values of BIP need to be made more explicit. Within this consent and agreement are very important principles.

Priorities Going Forward

Building upon the above research, review and discussions the following priority areas of work or strands were identified.

- Working with young people both as a preventative strategy and in preparation for medium to long term stability and change

- There is a need to focus on membership with a need to re-engage and re-energise

- Having the right staff is a key resource to deliver what can be very difficult and sensitive work

- An advocacy role will be increasingly important as communities seek to move forward. Giving a voice to interface areas.

- Linked to this is the concept of conflict transformation, what is BIP's role in supporting its members and communities to prepare for a time when barriers and interfaces areas may change?

- Possibly new opportunities to influence policy informed by BIP's past and present work developing submissions, reports and recommendations. The early publications and research were seminal and groundbreaking. The challenge is how to continue this role which is critical at a time when funding is scarce.

- Human Rights – Deprivation, Equality and Section 75

- Interface Planning – Mobility, Accessibility and Sharing

- Linking into educational institutions may provide an opportunity (OCN / training), similarly the international dimension may provide as an opportunity, looking at the broader external environment and a social economy project, marketing BIP's expertise.

- Partnership working will be increasingly important and there is a need to develop this area with organisations who share a similar ethos

- There is a need to take into account increasing numbers from ethnic communities on interfaces

- Government policy suggests an honest broker within interface communities is still required and this policy may create space for important and significant conversations

- Empowerment informed by education / learning / building capacity

- Sustainability, seeking resourcing opportunities, promoting social economy and European opportunities.

Strategic Framework

Vision
Our vision is of interface communities being transformed; becoming prosperous, confident and cohesive

Purpose
Our purpose is to act as a catalyst for change, empowering and supporting interface communities

Values and Principles
Our core values are integrity, trust and mutual respect, which allow us to work in partnership with a shared ownership of issues and solutions.

Core Themes

Policy	Advocacy	Transformation	Empowerment

Building a Resilient Organisation

PEDESTRIAN EXIT

Operational Plan
2015-2016

Strategic Aim 1 : Policy : To work with local communities to inform, develop and challenge interface policy development that is of practical benefit to interface communities.

Objectives		Outputs	Targets	Achievement against targets 2015/2016
1.1 To promote and develop BIP's research and best practice toolkits	1.1.1	Audit of current resources published and online resources	Audit undertaken	
	1.1.2	To seek a home for "historic" products	Resource curated within University research facility	
	1.1.3	Partnership with commercial developer of on line and workshop products	Commercial partnership established and implemented	
1.2 Develop evidence base for influencing policy	1.2.1	An update to 2011/12 research mapping Belfast interfaces	An update to 2011/12 research mapping Belfast interfaces	
		Produce updated BIP publication	A listing of interfaces and changes since last publication (2012)	
		Update website	An interactive map of interfaces	
1.3. To initiate and facilitate conversations on interface issues	1.3.1	Annual conference /workshop on interface issues established in partnership with CRC	BIP annual event /conversation undertaken	
1.4. To respond to policy initiatives	1.4.1	Policy responses developed in response to key initiatives and policy announcements	3 policy responses per annum	
1.5. To support interface communities to respond	1.5.1	Facilitate regular and ad hoc discussions as required e.g. Representation on Interface Community Partners (ICP) group Representation on the interface Interagency Group (IAG) Coordination of Interface Practice Collective (IPC) Continue to raise public awareness of interface issues and promote our member groups through website, social media, TV and broadcast media, publications	As required	
1.6. To lead and support research partnerships	1.6.1	To develop a research initiatives with external partners e.g. Institute for Conflict Research (ICR), Integrated Education Fund (IEF) the Universities ,Belfast Metropolitan College (BelMet) and CRC and NIHE	3 policy responses per annum	

Strategic Aim 2: Advocacy: To act as an independent voice for interface communities

Objectives		Outputs		Targets	Achievement against targets 2015/2016
2.1	To build and maintain a proactive credible membership base	2.1.1	Annual review of Membership	Review undertaken	
2.2	To respond to and progress members' issues	2.2.1	Annual survey of BIP membership needs	Annual survey of Membership	
		2.2.2	Informal themed meetings /events for membership	3 informal themed meetings per year	
		2.2.3	Increased in the public and media profile specifically a social media network including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.	Baseline established and measured	
2.3	To participate proactively in key local, city wide and regional organisations and partnerships	2.3.1	Continued support and leadership of key partnerships e.g. Interagency Working Group (IAG), Interface Community Partners Group (ICP), Interface Cluster Partnerships, Youth Engagement Programme advisory groups and cross-city Steering Group.	Participation in key organisations and networks	
2.4	Development of the role of BIP in a regional context	2.4.1	Development of partnership approaches with key agencies including RCN and Tides, in order to develop new initiatives which support peace building work and the development of shared spaces in rural areas Participation in the Beyond Belfast steering group.	Participation in key organisations and networks	

Strategic Aim 3: Transformation: Being a Catalyst for Change

Objectives	Outputs		Targets	Achievement against targets 2015/2016
3.1 To promote safe access to work and services and increased labour mobility	3.1.1	Improved relationships between communities, and the development of shared services.	Delivery of an intercommunity dialogue project, addressing issues relating to recent 'union flag' related protest, disaffection and civil disturbance	
	3.1.2	Development of a labour mobility programme	Programme developed an implemented	
3.2 To support conflict transformation, reconciliation and conflict management.	3.2.1	Reduced levels of violence and tension associated with parades/protests and Flags-related disputes / issues	Participation in key groups through work with key groups and networks existing cross-interface dialogue processes e.g. in Inner East Belfast As required	
	3.2.2	Delivery of the MNI 'Fostering Dialogues Across Divides' project and the BCC Mediation (Tension Monitoring) project	Projects delivered	
	3.2.3	The development of coordinated programmes of diversionary and cross-community work with young people including 18+ age group otherwise at risk of involvement in youth-led interface violence,	Delivery of the Youth Intervention Project which will operate in a total of 8 interface clusters within the city. Delivery of the Youth Engagement Project (YEP) programme elements including mentoring, employability training, and family support	
	3.2.4	Developing existing processes including the Inner East / Outer West model of cross-city relationship building processes	Participation as required	

Strategic Aim 4: Empowerment: Building Capacity and Confidence

Objectives		Outputs	Targets	Achievement against targets 2015/2016
4.1. To support the development and sharing of skills and knowledge within interface communities	4.1.1	Continued support though board membership of Cromac Regeneration Initiative (CRI), Skainos, Templemore Avenue School Trust (TAST) BIP membership of BRIC advisory group.	Continued active participation within networks.	
4.2 To build the capacity of individuals, groups and organisations	4.2.1	Further delivery of the UUJ module – 'Community Youth Work in an Interface Context'	Programme delivered annually	
	4.2.2	Work with Bel Met on the development of a Level 1 Youth and Community programme (pre university) to complement our existing programme	Programme developed	
	4.2.3	A research project which will record the experiences of ethnic minority groups living in interface areas	Research undertaken and published	
	4.2.4	Implementation of Dept of Foreign Affairs cross community facilitation project	Project delivered	

Strategic Aim 5: Building a Resilient Organisation

Objectives		Outputs	Targets	Achievement against targets 2015/2016
5.1 To provide and ensure effective management & governance standards are in place and delivered	5.1.1	To develop and review an annual operational plan & review quarterly	Annual operational plan with quarterly review and update	
	5.1.2	To develop and implement an independent monitoring and evaluation framework established	Framework established and implemented	
	5.1.3	Produce and review 5 year rolling budget annual budget and projected cash flows related to operational plan.	Annual update with Quarterly review of cash flows	
	5.1.4	Update policies and procedures as required	Annual review of policies and procedures including annual risk assessment	
	5.1.5	Commission an annual financial audit	Audit undertaken and reported on to the Board	
	5.1.6	Hold an annual AGM	AGM held within specified time	
	5.1.7	Hold an annual team building and forward planning residential	Team building event held	
	5.1.8	Maintain an effective Board & Staff team	Staff resources and competencies reviewed as a part of the annual appraisal and staff development planning process	
	5.1.9	Establish an Annual Board and Staff development programme.	Development schedule agreed and implemented	
5.2 To actively pursue funding opportunities to build the sustainability of the organisation with adequate resources	5.2.1	To develop an annual target of external funding required and opportunities.	Annual target established related to annual budget	
	5.2.2	Development of commercial and third sector partnerships to generate income e.g. Tides Training	Partnerships and tendering opportunities actively pursued	

Madrid Street

Community Relations Council

Diversity Equity Interdependence

Funded by the Community Relations Council

Lanark Way