



Northern Ireland
Assembly

**COMMITTEE
FOR THE OFFICE OF THE
FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER**

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)**

‘Beyond Belfast’ Report

9 March 2011

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Ms Martina Anderson
Mr Allan Bresland
Mr William Humphrey
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Danny Kinahan
Mr Barry McElduff
Mr Francie Molloy
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Mr Michael Hughes)	Rural Community Network
Mr Neil Jarman)	Institute for Conflict Research
Ms Bebhinn McKinley)	Community Relations Council
Mr Duncan Morrow)	

The Chairperson (Mr Elliott):

Good afternoon, everyone. You are all very welcome. I invite you to make a presentation, which should last no more than 10 minutes, on the ‘Beyond Belfast’ report and, hopefully, leave yourselves available for questions afterwards.

Mr Neil Jarman (Institute for Conflict Research):

Thank you. We really only have time for a couple of key bullet points. The report followed a piece of work looking at the nature of divided space interfaces in the Belfast area, which we did for CRC (Community Relations Council) a couple of years ago. Following that, we recognised that similar sorts of issues of territorial divisions and so forth occur equally in other parts of Northern Ireland in towns and villages. The aim, therefore, was to try to put the issue of contested spaces in rural areas on the agenda.

The first thing to flag up is that we started off using the term “interfaces”, but found that there was a kind of hostility to that outside the Belfast area, where the term was seen very much as meaning boundaries with barriers on them. We came up with the term “contested space” for the areas outside Belfast, which we base on issues of segregation and division and also patterns of behaviour that are based on the avoidance of each other as well as issues that rise into conflict and tensions.

One section of the report looked at the sorts of factors that feed in to the creation of the contested spaces, seeing them not as something that is just permanent, fixed and unchanging but as related to changing demographics in different areas between the majority and the minority communities, factors that are related to the age of the population and the gender balances in those ages, particularly with issues of young people, the quality of the relationships in different areas, the sorts of networks that are established between Protestant and Catholic communities and the organisations that are involved.

We focused a lot on the types of trigger events that raise tension — parades, bonfires, sporting events, when flags are put up, and elections, when posters are put up — which serve to mark out different parts of the territories. Those spaces vary across time. What appears to be a relatively shared, mixed environment during the working day can change later at night and at the weekends when the night-time economy kicks in. It can also change at certain times of the year, such as the marching season, which has an effect on the way that things are played. Therefore, we have to look at all those factors in any given location.

We also looked at the different types of spaces that are created and the ways in which they are different from what there is in Belfast, and a few of them are really specific to the more rural

environment. For example, there are single identity village areas, which are seen as belonging to one particular community, which does not necessarily take into account the fact that there are broader hinterlands around there, which are more farming-based, where people would have used the urban location as their point of reference for a lot of their buildings and infrastructures in the past.

In other spaces you have two neighbouring villages, one predominantly Protestant and the other predominantly Catholic, and they turn away from each other and do not interact, and it leaves a tension in between the two spaces. There are other spaces where villages are divided into Protestant and Catholic areas. The tensions do not necessarily play out in the residential areas. They play out in the village and town centre around some of the key symbolic locations or perhaps around things like taxi terminals or bars late at night.

We also raised the issue of the border and seeing the border as a distinctive form of contested space and the sense that the border in people's minds does not necessarily follow the border as it is on the map. The border flows a bit more. There is a broad area either side of the border which people feel belongs to one side more than the other. There has not been much recognition of some of the tensions that still exist, particularly on the southern side of the border where there is more division, avoidance behaviour and marginalisation of the minority community than perhaps people have acknowledged and recognised.

We raised a whole range of other spaces that are very similar to the types of spaces that you get in Belfast, acknowledging that there are fences and barriers in a few towns, such as Derry/Londonderry, Portadown and Lurgan, just as there are in Belfast.

The final point is that the issue has largely been ignored on the policy agenda. When we looked at a number of the local Peace III plans produced by local councils, these types of issues did not figure very prominently. Regional development plans, rural development plans, the issue of contested spaces in rural areas and the issues that flow from that have not been as prominent as perhaps they should be. Issues of violence and tension in rural areas are not as well documented and recorded as they are in Belfast. We need to put that on the agenda and start to think about some of the issues and start to try to develop appropriate strategies to raise some of those issues.

That is a whiz-bang through that piece of work.

Mr Michael Hughes (Rural Community Network):

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make a presentation to you this afternoon. From a Rural Community Network (RCN) perspective, there is an interest in contested spaces beyond Belfast. Since 1991, the RCN has been really interested. One of the pieces of our core work is around rural community development, rural development and the impact that poor relationships might have on the sustainability of rural communities. From 1996 on, with our involvement in the Peace I and Peace II programmes, we have funded 600 groups to try to develop better relationships in rural communities. As part of that, we have three joint reports with the CRC around specific minorities: the experience of the minority Protestant community along the border, particularly the Fermanagh border; the experience of the Catholic community in Antrim, particularly north Antrim, and the experience of the migrant population in Fermanagh.

It is just to get a sense of what it is like to be a minority in a community where space is contested and people have to live their lives differently to get by, rather than having a good quality of life. From that work, we also developed, with the CRC, the publication ‘Sharing over Separation’, which was based on another CRC publication that very much had an urban focus. What are the rural specifics to the seven key themes listed in ‘Sharing over Separation’?

From that, we developed a rural-specific Peace III regional programme covering the six counties in the North and the six border counties of the South. That is the only Peace III programme to have a Government Department from here and one from the South as joint partners. It is across a range of themes, looking at how communities can be assisted in tackling issues of good community relations.

In our work, we are also interested in how other policy developments may impact on community good relations in rural areas — for instance, our work under PPS 14 and particularly under PPS 21, which highlighted a potential dispensation in rural areas to build a cluster, or claggan, of houses around a focal point. Our contention is: whose focal point will win out? The focal point of the majority community will probably win out, particularly in areas of 80:20 or 90:10. Therefore, although the minority community will not be forced to leave, their potential to build houses will be reduced and they may have to leave. That will then increase our rural communities into single-identity communities. The people who leave will have to go into towns, and they will go into the places where they feel safe, which will lead to segregated towns and

more division. For us, that is an unacceptable impact of a policy. It also means that we have a double whammy of segregation and the major issue of the sustainability of rural communities.

What are the contested spaces in rural areas that we need to identify and take care of now? If we take care of them now and give communities the capacity to deal with that, we will save ourselves a lot of hard work and expense going forward.

Mr Duncan Morrow (Community Relations Council):

Essentially, this work grew out of work that we did in Belfast. We were able to map something like interfaces and to ask how they worked out once we left the urban areas. The point has been made that the word “interfaces” does not travel. However, what Neil did for us and we subsequently did together on the contested space issue led us to say, first, that contested space is not a single thing. It has many manifestations. Secondly, they have real and serious impacts. They impact on decisions of where to place agricultural services or mainstream community services to be located when you have a centre and a hinterland.

Is it always venturing in? Does it have cultural consequences for people if you have neighbouring villages? We have done mapping and tracking work, the result of which shows that people use totally different service centres to get all their various facilities. One group goes to Newry and another to Portadown, and you get a very bad allocation of resources. Divided villages and the maximisation of public resources: if you have a swimming pool or a single library in the wrong place, do they not get used? The thoroughfare question is also a cultural question.

All of that impacts directly on things like social economy projects. Where are they located? Who goes to them? Who uses them? Do we get maximum benefit out of these things? This is step one. We may now have managed to create an intellectual framework, around which we can start to talk about contested space in a more serious way. We would like it to be put into the way that we think about planning and resource allocation, because it reads across directly into economic costs.

Thirdly, it is not just a question of reading across from the Belfast scenario, where you have the emergency scenario. You do have to think through issues of service delivery, service access and resources. The question of how cultural questions will be resolved in towns will be different

in different places. It will also help us to identify where there are potential issues.

Finally, the minority report indicated that this is serious from a personal point of view. The stories that stand out are always the extreme ones, but there are stories of Protestants in parts of the Fermanagh border area sitting in their houses and never accessing the nearby village. Instead, they get into their cars and drive to the nearest town, and they have had no connection with their neighbours for 20 years. There are stories of Catholics in North Antrim saying that they cannot hang out their GAA tops on their washing lines because the result will be that their windows will be put in and they will not live in the village any longer. Those are significant questions with quality-of-life impacts for people. `

Our purpose in bringing forward the report is to expand the debate and to make more sense of it in real terms. This could now be used usefully as a mapping tool, as a way to think about the challenges that face different communities in different places and how we should best deal with those. That goes right up to things like policing and so on.

The Chairperson:

OK. Thank you very much for that. I suppose that my first question is what your answer to it all is? *[Laughter.]*

Mr D Morrow:

I will give you a little bit of background on the report from our point of view. The answer is that we need to apply the learning from the report to practical policy working and supply. In a way, the report has turned into a background document. When we went to Belfast, we mapped 88 interfaces. In this case, we included the border area and we were forced to get a handle on what we were talking about, because it had not been dug up. The answer for us is that it will at least appear on the map for planners, and that it becomes a significant issue that planners take into account. The way in which people access resources, town centres and places and travel through them, the long-run capacity to generate social enterprise and attract people to work and live there and so on are affected by those things. They are real.

That was part of the work of the interface working group that we co-ordinate, which needed to go beyond the Belfast remit. That is an inter-agency group with implications for how we deal with the emergence of issues. I can talk through the specifics in a second if you want.

Mr Hughes:

One of the things that we are doing is taking the report back to the communities and the people that we engaged with, to develop it and to get their reactions. We always say that rural people are experts in their own living space, and they may be able to come up with some solutions. We want to take some things from the people who live in those areas that resonate with them and that might actually work in a programme of work. Even though we are a rural agency, it would be very dangerous for us to say what things should be done in a community. It is much better if the communities come up with some of the suggestions themselves.

The jointly funded programme of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and Atlantic Philanthropies came to our attention yesterday. It looked really exciting until we came to what I would call the terms and conditions, which were the top 20% of disadvantaged areas. We have done the calculations, and that top 20% equates to 116 wards. Of those, only 12 are rural, which represents 10.35% of that 20% of wards. There are contested spaces in some of those areas, but we know from our own research that there are a range of other communities in rural areas that have much more contested space. We want to highlight that there are rural inequalities in the way that the 20% is calculated.

A lot of this is about access to services. If you enter the access to services domain on its own and then look at the top 20% of the most disadvantaged wards in Northern Ireland, you will find that, apart from one, they are all rural. Can we get some assurance in this programme? We have identified that contested space is relevant in rural areas. Will rural communities get an equitable share, not of the pot but of the support resources that come with the programme?

Mr Jarman:

It needs to be on the policy agenda at a number of different levels. The issue was not raised in 'A Shared Future' or, to any extent, in the cohesion, sharing and integration (CSI) document, so that is a gap at governmental level. The knowledge is often there, but it can be very localised; it does not even figure at council level. People in villages and towns know about the contested spaces there, but no one seems to have an overview of any location, so there needs to be some work at council level to pull that information together and develop a strategy, but there also needs to be support from government to say that it is an issue on the agenda and that it needs to feed into key government policy documents.

Mr D Morrow:

The thing that you get from that is that there is no single answer. At the CSI level, it needs to be in at the core. Hopefully it is more than just a policy; it is a planning and policymaking tool that helps people to say how it will actually work, and that is tied into all the quality-of-life questions that we are all interested in dealing with.

The Chairperson:

I do not think that anyone would expect there to be a single answer. When you were carrying out your work, was there any research into the willingness of the majority community in an area to face down those who are making things difficult for the minority? For example, you mentioned two areas, including one in Fermanagh where Protestants have no association with their local village because they do not feel safe or part of the community. On the other hand, maybe in north Antrim, some people are afraid to hang out their GAA top in case they get their windows put in. Did you do any research around that to establish whether there is a willingness in majority communities to face down those who make it difficult for people to associate with their local village or who might have their windows put in?

Mr D Morrow:

The first thing to say about those specific pieces of research where we drew that from is that, in the first instance, the focus was on trying to surface the voices of the minority. We would have to be honest and say not in that. From other research, we know that part of the difficulty in bringing up those kinds of experiences is that the experience of the majority local community is much more variegated. In other words, people who would be identified as being part of the majority community in a given area would say that they do not participate in this. For the person who is sitting in their room, who does not know anybody, it is much more difficult to assess which neighbour they should be frightened of, so they tend to take a more general approach.

So, part of the problem is that, in majority communities, the issue is simply not known, and, where it is known, there may be issues about raising it. For example, we did research in Enniskillen that, for political reasons, never quite surfaced. We asked local communities about the permanent painting of kerbstones and various murals and flags that went on all year round in particular areas, and it became very clear that, although people identified with specific festivals at certain times of the year, they did not want this permanent sense of ownership of territory.

However, they did not know how to articulate that in their own community without putting themselves or their family at risk from the people who, in their minds, were responsible for doing it. They did not wish to be seen to be attacking vested interests at a local level. It is hard to drive down, but, broadly, that is what we were told. They did not want the permanent stuff, but did not know how to deal with it.

Mr Jarman:

I did some work, completely separate from this, on parades disputes a couple of years ago. One thing that came through was that it depends very much on the quality of relationships that exist, not necessarily between large numbers of people, but between key people in local areas. This institution has been important in helping to foster relationships across the divides, which are then translated into people taking action on some issues. Sometimes, that relates to parades, but it can also relate to dealing with flags or bonfires. That sets off a chain of events. It can be down to not necessarily the majority of the population, but a few key individuals who take some action at local level and make those connections with people from the other side. There has been some progress in some areas around those issues.

Mr Hughes:

The point is well made, Chairperson. In our feedback and reporting back to people so far, that is one of the key challenges that we have highlighted. If we are to move the thing around contested space on, there is a responsibility on the majority community to see how they can take care of the minority community. That is a basic community development principle. On the flip side, there is a responsibility on the minority community, wherever they are, to acknowledge the genuineness of the contact and to try to help in that process. It is a two-way process of responsibility.

It is going to be difficult. It is about whether we can highlight the main drivers for change in those areas for both communities, so that people can take their communities with them. A key output of the new programme that we got word of yesterday is how, in all this work, we get the majority community to acknowledge their duty of care to the minority community and the minority community to acknowledge that that duty of care is sincere and genuine.

Mr McElduff:

Typically, what are “acts of avoidance”? I would not mind hearing a couple of examples. They might not be something proactive, but something that might instinctively happen.

I had thought that the report might contain positive examples of initiatives that communities have undertaken to address these issues. I have one or two examples in my head of positive initiatives that communities have taken. I am wondering why those are missing from the report; maybe that was not its remit.

Mr Jarman:

You are right. The report focused on the nature of some of the problems and the scale of the divisions, rather than on what had been done. It was not a huge piece of work. It targeted a few key informants around some of the issues.

Acts of avoidance would be things like making the decision to shop in a certain town or location rather than perhaps in a nearer location, using resources that are further away, taking a certain road to somewhere rather than the more direct route or just staying away from certain events. It is keeping your head down rather than raising an issue. Those are the sort of things that enable people to get by in a location. *[Interruption.]*

The Chairperson:

Sorry to stop you, Neil. Paul, if you want to pass messages, perhaps you can ask George to go out.

Mr Jarman:

It is the sort of issues that people adopt to survive in a location or community rather than thriving and being an active part of it. They are physically there, but not necessarily integrated.

Mr Hughes:

I can give one very practical example about quality of life. I was one of the researchers on the minority research. A family told me that one thing they dreaded was somebody dropping in at night-time and them not having enough milk or biscuits for a cup of tea. They live half a mile from the nearest village, but they do not feel safe, and they drive five miles to get milk and biscuits in case someone calls in unexpectedly. That is avoidance, because they do not feel safe. There are other issues to do with the sustainability of that small village and of the village shop because it cannot get customers and custom from the wider catchment area. That is one of the things that I always remember: the real quality-of-life stories that impact on people.

Mr D Morrow:

There are so many examples. One is the night-time economy. In a lot of towns and villages across the whole of the North, there are serious issues with young people not going to certain parts of the town at night. Neil did a piece of work for us in a previous piece of research asking people to map where they went. Young people said that they would go into the town during the day but not at night, because it turns into a contested zone, with serious impacts for the night-time economy of the villages and towns.

I did work in Lurgan, where young people — I am only reporting — told me that a park was considered to be an essentially Protestant zone even though it was one of the best parks in Northern Ireland. It is a huge park. At the other end, McDonalds was in the Catholic area so Protestants never went there. That was an example given to me. There are serious, important, significant resources which are not being accessed.

There is a lot of work to show that, in parts of County Armagh, some people go to Portadown and some to Newry, and there are implications. Some school buses go around different areas rather than through them because they have disturbances and difficulties when they go through. Important social economy projects such as childcare programmes are available in villages on a one-off basis, but lots of people do not access them because they are the wrong sort — basic things like childcare. That is what I mean by acts of avoidance. A lot of these things look like self-selection, and there is no one standing in the road telling them not to come.

The Chairperson:

Barry wants to come back in. You told us about all of the negative stuff, but you did not answer Barry's question about the positive aspects.

Mr D Morrow:

Yes, I was coming to the good stuff.

Mr McElduff:

Public bodies can sometimes send out the wrong messages. For example, Sixmilecross has the larger postal sorting office, and Carrickmore's address is lost. Someone who lives in Main Street, Carrickmore has the official address of Main Street, Sixmilecross. Royal Mail may be

contributing to some of the problems. I would like to see that in the report: public bodies actively creating problems as opposed to anything else.

Mr D Morrow:

There is a huge amount of good practice out there. In all of the things that I have talked about, there are counter-examples of youth projects that have done extremely good work in local areas to ensure that there is a youth culture. Social economy projects have generated a totally different group of clients than had been expected. You can talk about investments in the economy — economic drivers. For example, there are a couple of projects under the Peace programme. I do not know where “rural” starts and ends, but in small market towns there are possibilities for using shared space as a mechanism to create, for example, the people’s park in the Tunnel in Portadown to try and generate something for everyone.

The Chairperson:

We need to move on. Francie Molloy is next.

Mr Jarman:

Sorry, can I just come in on that?

The Chairperson:

You can come back in on the next one.

Mr Molloy:

I am sorry that I missed the start of the presentation. I have not read the report fully, but what I have read makes me stand up with my ears pricked. I wonder what its purpose is. Is it to store up the problems of the past? It does not give any solutions. Also, it is very selective in the cases that it has picked, for example the Fermanagh situation. The one area in a rural community that everyone knows about is the murder triangle from Pomeroy to Loughgall and Armagh and taking in The Moy. That does not feature in it at all. If you were to talk to people who actually know what division is like — and I live in the middle of it — you would know what it feels like to be isolated in an area like that.

The other issue that it talks about is people driving for five miles through a village. There is another name for that: boycotting. That is where people refuse to support a local business

because of who is running it. I could give one good example of a situation where a Catholic man took over a post office, but everybody immediately withdrew their books from it, so there was no business for the post office. That man was murdered about six months later.

We need to look at the purpose of these types of reports. If you want to write a full report, there is a lot more. I invite you to come in. Michael, and people like him, know the local area and would have no problem finding local people to talk to. The report is very selective, and that type of selective reporting does more damage than good.

Mr Hughes:

The main purpose of the report was to highlight the fact that there are interfaces and contested spaces beyond Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. I started with the word “interface” as part of our Peace III programme, and we changed it. When we look at the resources that are going into areas to tackle interfaces and contested space issues, we see that most of them are going towards urban areas. There are a huge amount of issues around contested space in rural areas as well. We have to highlight that. It was just to get on the radar the fact that there are things called contested spaces beyond Belfast, and we need to take care of that.

I fully accept the issue around the areas. If we were to do that, we would probably have 10 volumes and counting. I know the area. I was born there, live there now and married someone from the area. There are a huge amount of contested issues that we need to deal with. The purpose of the report was to get it on the radar that these things exist beyond Belfast and that we should not just be pouring resources into Belfast and other areas. Rural areas deserve equity of resources and fair treatment.

Mr D Morrow:

That is entirely right. The next step for us would be to map this in more detail. These are examples of some of the issues that lots of communities face. We came up with a set of examples of some of the challenges that are there in planning terms. I acknowledge what you are saying about boycotts. These are not one-way tickets; these are complicated, and the exact processes need to be done in a specific way.

The other side of that is what we hope to do. I think that we were mapping. We were trying to ask where contest happens and what it looks like. That was really the question that was being

asked. We were trying to surface these as the types of models that pose real-life challenges to the economy and society of certain villages and towns. Our purpose in doing it was not in any way to limit it. We brought in as many different examples as we could. I am sure that you will find lots of examples that are missing, because it is not meant to be comprehensive in that regard. I take the point, but I am happy to try to make it comprehensive.

Mr Jarman:

It was not an attempt to map everything; it was to try to draw out key examples. There may be an issue about which locations we gave as examples, but we picked one. It was not a deliberate or conscious attempt to try to exclude others. It was to try to say that we are trying to draw some generalisations from the principles that are underpinning some of this. I appreciate that you say that there are some missing.

Good practice was mentioned. I did a piece of work a couple of years ago on parades. It was focused only on dealing with parades outside the Belfast area. It aimed to highlight a lot of the good work that had been done in trying to resolve the parades issue. In some senses that could be cross-linked with this piece of work to say that a lot of good work has been done to reduce tensions in a variety of areas.

In the compilation of both reports, people were often very cautious about having their location named, whether because of a problem or because of the work that they had been doing involving cross-community work and dialogue with other people. In the parading report, we completely anonymised the whole thing. We did not mention the location; we just highlighted models of practice, not particularly because of security concerns but because of the risk of spoilers coming in and damaging the work that was being done quietly and slowly behind closed doors.

The Chairperson:

I will let you back in again, Francie. Some members were not here at the start of the meeting. I remind you that, because we have three presentations today and there is a plenary session in the Chamber, we are under quite a bit of pressure, and I am not allowing speeches. I cut you a bit of slack, Francie, but I want to restrict it to questions as far as possible.

Mr Molloy:

You picked one particular issue and did not qualify it. For instance, the Fermanagh one sets out

people's fears but does not come to conclusions. However, the concern I have is that everybody seems to be doing the same work. The victims' families and various different people are doing the same type of work in different areas. A lot of this has already been written by various groups and is then repeated. It is an overlapping situation.

Mrs D Kelly:

I am sorry that I was not in for the start of the session. If I understand it, the purpose of the report is to put the spotlight on rural segregation as an issue that is every bit as important as the interface issue. It has succeeded in that. I have been concerned about that for a long time. I come from a village that is predominantly Catholic, and we have a neighbouring village that is predominantly Protestant. I hope that, as a consequence of your presentation, we will raise the issue of the funding mechanism that is being devised by OFMDFM to ensure that there are no rural inequalities. Rural dwellers have to contend not only with the issue of segregation but also with rural isolation, geographical location etc. That impacts on health, education and youth services, for example. What exactly are the next steps to follow up the report?

Mr D Morrow:

First, we are disseminating it across the whole of the North. We will go everywhere, and there will be a number of those. Secondly, we have asked to make a presentation to the junior Ministers as part of what was called the north Belfast group but is essentially the place where those issues are raised. We were asked by them to take it outside Belfast. Thirdly, we will lobby for the issues from this to be taken seriously in policymaking. Finally, we have a role in the Peace III programme, which creates resources at a local level. We hope that it might be a tool for people to start to look at their task through the Peace III programme and look at residual issues to try to create local solutions to local problems, to identify those and to invest in them. Hopefully, this tool can help with conceptualising what the issues might be and getting practical results.

Ms M Anderson:

I am really sorry for coming in at the end. As the Chairperson has said, we have been running in and out of the Chamber today. I had a copy with me, but I had worked off this copy. I have not read it as intensively as I should have and as I need to.

I want to ask about models that you operate or that you observe in, for instance, Derry, Belfast and elsewhere. You have, without doubt, identified a problem. The whole issue of rural proofing

has been moved up the agenda over the past couple of years, particularly through what the Minister has been doing, but that needs to be cascaded across the other Departments and into their work.

Yesterday, one of the groups — there were a number of groups up here yesterday — came up from the greater Waterside area, from the Top of the Hill and Irish Street. There were 40 children, Chairperson; you might have seen them up in the Gallery. They were wearing very bright yellow and blue tops. Those children said that they have never engaged or had any sort of conversation with each other but have been involved in the programme that Geraldine O'Donnell and Michelle Hayden are running. All those children said that they do not want the programme to stop. They are out doing sport together, they are training together and they have been off to see some fields. Some of them do GAA, and some of them do soccer. All the boys were in blue, and all the girls were in yellow; you did not know who came from what community. They were all collectively talking about how they did not want that kind. It is about them being involved in a programme that delivers on their needs and is challenging to their perceptions of each other.

The Chairperson:

Do you have a question, Martina?

Ms M Anderson:

What I am trying to get to is that that is a model of a group that is struggling for every penny that it can get to do the kind of work that I have just outlined. There are other groups out there. Duncan and I have had many a discussion, and there has sometimes been a little bit of tension between us. Many a group out there has been involved in programmes and projects that do not really deliver in that way, in my opinion. They may be involved in round-table discussions —

The Chairperson:

Sorry, Martina, I am going to cut you off if —

Ms M Anderson:

If you are going to develop a rural model, there is a model that needs to be looked at and what is happening in the urban setting. You need to look at what is working and what is not. An awful lot of public money is being wasted on conferences, taking people up a mountain in Wicklow and all of that. That does diddly-squat for how we think and feel about each other.

Mr Hughes:

I share your frustration, because we have been in there and witnessed the damage that is left behind. It is left to other people to pick up the pieces. Going forward, there has to be more adherence to good guidance around what it is and what it is not. If this is what it is not, do not come to us looking for funding or investment in projects. People who have the money to invest have to be brave enough to say no. We need the support of everybody. When it is a no for good reasons, funders will not have people on their backs asking why they did not fund something when they know instinctively that it is not worth funding.

Mr Molloy:

I would not fund this.

Ms M Anderson:

Do you do an assessment of programmes? There is a good relations industry out there in which the great and the good work in great jobs and whatever. Fair play to them; I am glad to have them, and all that. However, they have absolutely zero impact on communities compared to the example that I gave of the project that involves 40 children. I do not know whether that industry will be dismantled.

Mr Bresland:

You have mentioned different villages around Strabane. Is any work being done in Strabane itself?

Mr D Morrow:

Strabane is engaged in a number of cross-border projects. It is part of the north-west Peace cluster, where there is quite a lot of activity. Strabane is one of the areas on Michael's list and one of the areas that will potentially feature in the action plan. There are also issues about people accessing the town from the hinterland and vice versa.

Mr Bresland:

And the bypass, as well.

Mr D Morrow:

To take Martina's point, I am certainly aware that there are huge amounts of good work and very good practice out there.

Ms M Anderson:

It is getting very little support.

Mr D Morrow:

All our stuff is criteria-based, so the key is to get the criteria for who gets what correct. If you look in detail at a lot of stuff that has been funded, you will find that a lot of good projects are now at risk because of where we are. Obviously, that concerns us. Beyond that, we need to talk in detail about the issues.

Mr Kinahan:

I apologise if you have answered this question. When I was going out the door, you were talking about talking to the majority groups. What is your comment on gatekeepers? From my brief experience, they seem to be a key element. Some people help and some block. Secondly, taking on board what you have said about planning, have you had a chance to brief the Department of the Environment or the planning committee?

Mr D Morrow:

The answer to the second question is no, we have not had a chance to do that. This is the first Committee that we have had a chance to talk to, and we are very grateful for that chance.

In relation to the second question, gatekeeping is a word that can be used, but it undoubtedly has an effect, which is that, if certain people are not squared in certain parts of the world, then nothing happens. Critical to that is the question of how you engage all of the relevant elements of a community. It is very important, in terms of funding and the initiatives that we take, and hopefully in relation to supporting councils, for example, to do that kind of work, that the reach is to all people who live in an area, otherwise it becomes a kind of controlled exercise between certain key people, and that is a concern that all of us in this work have.

Mr Humphrey:

I apologise to you all for missing your presentation, but I have read the document and have been

involved in issues that are touched on in the document in my constituency over the last number of years. I want to follow on from the point that Ms Anderson and Mr Kinahan have made in relation to contested space. I think we should be talking about shared space in the context of a shared future, rather than contested space, because that is negative, in my view.

Given that I represent North Belfast in this place and the greater Shankill on Belfast City Council — and I declare an interest — I too have concerns, because I hear all the time from people that I represent and work with that there is no delivery of change on the ground; there is no Stormont dividend, as they see it. That is something in North Belfast that straddles the divides within the constituency. I share the view that there is a whole industry around this, and I hope that people who are involved in that industry are involved in working themselves out of a job, not in perpetuating funding and ensuring that those jobs continue, because that is a serious negative. That would mean that we do not ever get to the point where our society is improved and bettered.

My question — before you scold me, Chairperson — is how can you ensure that the ordinary person on the ground, and those of us who work with those communities and have to reassure them, can feel that there is a benefit to this type of work, and that that benefit is going to be long-reaching and have a dividend for them in the future in building a stable, normal, peaceful society?

Mr D Morrow:

The challenge is real; it has got to be real for people. What we are looking for are tangible outcomes. For us, they are people's sense of safety, people's sense of being able to access all facilities, an improved quality of life so that people are not concerned about those issues any more, and all services being available equally to all people at all times. Those are very obvious outcome areas. That is why we are very concerned that the funding goes to the right places. It is a legitimate point, and if there are specific questions about that we always need to talk about that. We are also concerned that that should be matched with a policy framework that is delivering that at a high level.

To be honest with you, I think that our problem is that it should not be being done by pilots just at local level, it should be being done as normal — a new type of normal way of doing business. On the question of whether we are all working to put ourselves out of a job, the answer must be yes, but putting ourselves out of a job means that the activities that happen — that people can move around our cities and towns in a normal way, that they can access services without fear

or hindrance, that the issues of threat are no longer real for people, that cultural issues have been resolved to the point that, while we have differences, we are able to deal with them peacefully, and all those kinds of things — are normal.

I like to say that we have more pilots than Ryanair. I have loads of good examples. I can give you hundreds of good examples in every area of work. I could take you to them and demonstrate very good stuff in youth work, the social economy, projects dealing with culture, projects dealing with access to local communities, education or whatever— the lot. Housing, even. The question is how that stops being the story of a bad thing and start being the story about how we are delivering change in all of those areas. Our focus would then be on the policy agenda, which should be interdepartmental, have clear goals and not be reliant on funding but on mainstream activity which is done in a normal way.

Mr Humphrey:

How can we make sure that the man and woman in the street who live in those areas actually understand and appreciate what you have just said?

Mr Hughes:

One practical example is our current Peace III programme that is deliberately titled the rural enabler. It is in operation in rural areas. Members of our staff, one in each county, work with communities to build their capacity to do this with a very clear understanding that in two years' time, the programme will be gone and that we will, hopefully, have worked ourselves out of a job. It is very clear that that is a community development approach. People tell us what the issues are, and our role is to help them through those issues so that we when we leave, they have seen the benefits and have the skills to work through them further. That is difficult, and we are under no illusions about it. Bebhinn used to work for the Rural Community Network. One of my mantras is that we are here to go away, not to perpetuate.

Mr D Morrow:

Just to give you the measures, these issues impact on real lives. There are lots of impacts on the economy at a very real level. However, you asked me where this interfaces with people more specifically. What can I say? Where can I go? What can I wear? Where can I live? What services can I access? Who can I speak to about what? We must start giving answers to those kinds of questions, because that is what we are meant to be addressing. People are telling us that

those questions are the real issues.

Mr Spratt:

Apologies for not being here earlier; I had to be elsewhere. You might have already covered this, but perhaps you could just give me a quick answer. The report says that:

“The PSNI should systemically record all attacks on an agreed list of symbolic properties and structures across Northern Ireland”.

Have you had any discussions with the PSNI about that? What sort of a response did you get? What exactly were you looking for? I would have thought that some sort of statistical information was already available, but I am not sure whether it is in the format that you were looking for. Will you just give us some idea?

Mr Jarman:

We were asking for some updated data on attacks on Orange Halls, GAA clubs and the like. We did collect that data a while ago. After we approached the PSNI about doing that, it seems that the rural division of the PSNI largely did collect that, but the urban division did not. It was not comprehensive across Northern Ireland; we did not get a full Northern Ireland-wide picture. The urban division includes large numbers of rural areas in the east of Northern Ireland. There was not a systematic set of data on some of those incidents, simply because they had stopped collecting that in a systematic format on a Northern Ireland-wide basis.

Mr Spratt:

I am asking that question because I think that that sort of information is collated. If it is an attack on a property, it is always going to be criminal damage. I think that isolating that sort of information can be more dangerous and actually counterproductive in many cases. It is almost a target of honour whereby one community or group may say to themselves: “Look at how many attacks there have been on our side of the house. Look at how many there have been on this side of the house. We need to even things up”. When there is tension, that can actually increase those problems. That information is definitely there, but maybe it is not in the format that you were looking for. I am just keen to hear why you want that sort of information. What benefit is it going to give you?

Mr Jarman:

It gives us a sense of what is happening where. Yes, some of that data will be gathered as

criminal damage. However, criminal damage involving the destruction of a church or a community hall is different from somebody throwing a brick through a window or something similar, because it has a wider impact. Those acts may both be registered as an act of criminal damage, but one will have a wider scale and impact. Some acts of violence are more significant. For me, it is similar to the church burnings in the Deep South. You know that it is a problem, and you have to find a way of addressing it. We have to see it as a Northern Ireland-wide problem. It does occur, and we have been able to record it, to some extent, over a number of years. However, it has now become more problematic to do so.

It is a matter of saying that there are still some serious problems in certain areas, and it is not enough to just record them. They need to be recorded for a purpose: to say that there is still a problem that we need to focus on. It comes back to the issue that was raised about the division between majority and minority communities and recognising that, very often, attacks are carried out by members of the majority community on a minority community.

If we are moving towards a sense of a shared future and a shared environment, it needs to be recognised that people have to respect the minority community and its differences. The majority community has to stand up and say, "That is wrong and not acceptable, and we have to do something to protect it." If you downgrade it, you tend to devalue the hurt and the pain that it causes to the minority community. I am not saying all of those issues, but certain things across Northern Ireland are important and are symptomatic of the problems that remain.

Picking up on the point that William Humphrey made, a lot of work is still required on the ground to make sure that nothing happens. People do not notice when nothing happens, except that you can stay in Belfast for the first week of July instead of feeling that you need to go to Donegal or take your holidays earlier. Ten years ago, Belfast was empty at the beginning of July because of the fear around Drumcree. Now that is not the case. That has not happened by accident; people have worked to make things not happen. It is like good news; newspapers do not carry good news and people do not flag up the fact that there is no tension. People no longer notice that there is a parade on that they are going to have to take a detour to avoid.

Mr Humphrey:

I absolutely accept what you are saying. Given the area that I represent and my involvement in

much of that work, I understand that lots of people do that. I absolutely condemn any attack on any community facility, whatever facility it is and whoever it belongs to. I was alarmed recently to hear from the Minister that attacks on Orange Halls are not being recorded as hate crimes. Surely they should be.

Mr D Morrow:

The whole issue of what is recorded as a hate crime is extremely problematic. We agree with you. There are problems, because they tend to be categorised just as incidents and may or may not be categorised. It is not systematic. There are a lot of issues around the collection of those kinds of statistics.

To answer Mr Spratt's question about why we do this, one of the things that is has really clarified is that, very often, people in rural areas get a sense that these issues are in one place, and it is only when these things start happening in other places that we get a geographical sense that it is not just north Belfast that has the problems. Funnily enough, the problems exist between Coleraine and Rasharkin. Sometimes, it is in the spread of these kinds of things that these things become visible.

I take the point that has been made. We were trying to do a baseline study to simply say how we understand a complicated issue. It would not be right to come back with another project that simply does that again. We want to come back with a project that asks what we are going to do about it, what the appropriate interventions are and where it does or does not apply. That is definitely the next step, and the outcomes of that project need to address the tensions and difficulties that people face, which seem to be really basic, such as whether they can shop somewhere, whether they can go to a nightclub and whether their bus can go through a town without being stoned, which has been a recent major issue.

Those are serious issues, because they have human costs, they determine whether people live in an area and they create economic costs for rural communities in the long run, because, in this climate, services may ultimately be withdrawn because there are not enough people using them.

All of those kinds of things have a knock-on effect. We are doing this simply to say that this is not just a Belfast issue, it has serious impacts and we need to read it across into the way that we think about planning services so that everybody gets an equal share.

The Chairperson:

I am going to have to cut it there. Thank you very much for the presentation and for answering the questions.