



Department of

**Culture, Arts
and Leisure**

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AN ROINN

**Cultúir, Ealaíon
agus Fóillíochta**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Fowkgates, Airts
an Aisedom**

Our ref: COR/214/2014

26 September 2014

Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
Chairperson
Committee for the Office of the
First Minister & deputy First Minister
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Dear Mr Nesbitt,

Re: OFMDFM COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO BUILDING A UNITED COMMUNITY

In response to your letter of July 2014 regarding the OFMDFM Committee Inquiry into Building a United Community, please see attached the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure (DCAL's) response which provides an overview of current and planned projects which demonstrate how the promotion of good relations is an important priority for DCAL, and provides important linkage with the Department's work on promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion.

Yours sincerely

P. **Pat Wilson**
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Enc



Written Evidence to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)

Introduction

1. The promotion of good relations is an important priority for DCAL, and links with the Department's work on promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion. DCAL continues to be involved in a wide range of projects which aim to produce positive good relations outcomes. This paper sets out some examples of good practice; current projects the Department is taking forward to address division and feedback it has received on engaging with communities on good relations work.

Bringing Divided Communities Together

2. DCAL has taken forward a diverse array of projects which have contributed to the good relations agenda, for example:
3. Midnight Street Soccer (MSS) is a community football project for young people aged 12 – 17, which was originally developed by the North Belfast Play Forum in 2004. The programme was initially established to prevent sectarian youth led violence in flashpoint areas of North Belfast. The success of MSS has seen it expanded into a regional programme funded by Sport NI, with locations throughout the north of Ireland. In 2012-13 the target of 500 participants was greatly exceeded with 771 young people engaging with the project. These young people participated in seven sessions per venue, totalling 70 sessions. This was followed by a session with 44 teams, made up of 372 people from across the north of Ireland taking part in a Midnight Street Soccer finals event in Magherafelt. MSS was warmly received by its participants, 98 per cent of whom said that they enjoyed taking part in the programme. Feedback from the organisers and facilitators was also very positive.

4. Beyond Skin is an organisation which uses music, arts and media to assist in the building and development of cultural relations in the north, within the overall aim of addressing issues of racism and sectarianism. The Arts Council funds 'World Music Interactive Education Programme', a project delivering high energy World Music & Dance participative events across the north and aiming to promote inter-cultural dialogue & global arts. Facilitated by musicians representing various cultures, the programme uses music and dances as a tool to encourage engagement of new audiences especially those in disadvantaged and rural areas.

5. The Droichead Project, which was part of the City of Culture events programme, was a cross community project which brought together communities to ensure the Fleadh, Tattoo and Pan Celtic Festival showcased both traditional Irish and Ulster-Scots marching bands culture. It was a key part of the efforts to ensure the City of Culture was truly inclusive. Careful, professionally structured consultation with Fleadh participants, organisers and the Londonderry Bands Forum, individual bands and band members resulted in agreement to participate in the Fleadh and for the first time in its history, the event included marching band performances. The project arranged for a PSNI band to perform for the first time in uniform in public during the Fleadh. Participants recorded that their perceptions changed radically as a result of the collaboration. As a result of partnerships established, marching bands performed as part of the Pan Celtic Festival in April 2014 in Waterloo Place for the first time in 50 years (Pan Celtic was supported by DCAL as part of the City of Culture legacy actions). A short film is in development to promote the good relations outcomes to marching bands and traditional Irish music communities across the north of Ireland.

6. The ArtsEkta 'Belfast Suitcases' project brought together a group of the City's younger and older citizens to explore and celebrate the social diversity of the new multi-cultural Belfast. The main groups involved in the project were older people from the settled Indian Community in Belfast and women from the Islamic community. The project helped to address concerns around isolation

and increasing perceptions and fear of racist attitudes. The project further developed to include groups working with cross-community groups and the LGBT community.

7. The 3 year Cultural Awareness Strategy seeks to address historical tensions between the two main communities in the north of Ireland in the context of a shared and better future and to develop greater tolerance, understanding and respect for different cultural traditions. The Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and the Ulster Council of the Gaelic Athletic Association have been implementing projects which attempt to reduce distrust and misunderstanding under the Cultural Awareness Strategy since July 2012. In 2013/14 they have each exceeded their targets of delivering four events to organisations/groups within the community they are linked to and eight events to organisations/groups within the community linked to the other cultural tradition, which were open to persons from all Section 75 categories.
8. These examples illustrate the power of art, sport and culture to promote and bring about positive changes in relationships between divided groups and communities. A further recent example is that of boxer Carl Frampton who has attracted huge support across the communities of the north of Ireland and highlights clearly the power of sport to positively transform attitudes and behaviours.

Addressing Division

9. DCAL is currently taking forward the development of further projects to promote good relations, most notably through the delivery of a cross community youth sports programme under the Together: Building a United Community Strategy.
10. The pilot project for this programme will be delivered in 2014/15 and will seek to proactively and innovatively tackle good relations issues through the medium of sport. This project will focus on 11-16 years olds from all sections of the community but will specifically seek to attract female, ethnic minority

and disabled participants to the programme. Sport can provide our young people with the values, discipline, resilience and confidence to succeed on and off the pitch and indeed to become ambassadors in their age groups and in their communities. The pilot project and subsequent wider cross community youth sports programme will seek to use sport to deliver a meaningful and sustained impact on good relations.

11. The power of sport to promote good relations will be explored further in a piece of research Sport NI has recently commissioned from University of Ulster to identify good practice in the area of 'Sport and Good Relations'. It is anticipated that this research will improve knowledge, understanding and leadership in relation to the promotion of good relations within sport by providing governing bodies and sports organisations with the necessary training, support and resources required to actively promote equality and good relations and address barriers to these within their organisations.
12. The Wheelworks ArtCart will be upgraded to a unique, fully accessible mobile arts vehicle which has the latest software and digital technology. ArtCart brings innovative programmes to isolated and rural groups who would otherwise never encounter such inspiring and stimulating digital arts technologies, skilled tutors and interesting programmes. Its mission is to bring arts opportunities to Section 75 groups so almost all the young people it targets experience some element of disadvantage whether it be poverty, discrimination, homophobic bullying or life traumas. The ArtCart develops young people's skills through the delivery of diverse activity while addressing important issues such as diversity, acceptance, inclusion, civic responsibility and respect. Its programmes evolve to meet the needs and demands of all potential participants, such as the homeless, the travelling community and asylum seekers. ArtCart will continue to not only deliver services to single identity communities, but delivers cross-community/inter-community work in rural, urban and interface areas.
13. Tapestry of Colours Online Educational resource was designed to highlight the complexity of inter-culturalism issues and the fusion of cultures emerging

in the North of Ireland. Funded by DCAL through NI Screen, its aim is to increase cultural understanding and insights at a personal level as well as having the potential to change attitudes in a significant number of young people and adults.

Community Engagement

14. DCAL's experience is that the involvement of the communities themselves in policy development is critical where integration and good relations are concerned. Community groups and community leaders are best placed to understand the particular challenges and opportunities facing their area. Collaborative partnership working on policy planning and development is a key factor in obtaining community buy in and ownership of a good relations project.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

September 2014