

**A SHARED FUTURE**

**CONSULTATION ON IMPROVING**

**IMPROVING COMMUNITY**  
**RELATIONS**

**IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

**NEWTOWNARDS**

**17<sup>TH</sup> June 2003.**

*Facilitated by*

***Will Glendinning***

## **Introduction:**

Paul Killen Community Relations Officer Ards Borough Council engaged Will Glendinning to:

- 1. Facilitate a discussion on the consultation paper ‘A Shared Future Improving Community Relations in Northern Ireland ‘**
- 2. Record the views of the participants**
- 3. Write up the responses in a form that can be sent to the Government and Community Relations Council as a response.**

Two consultation days were run with representatives from the churches in the Ards area one in Newtownards on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> and the other in Comber on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June. This report covers the Newtownards consultation a separate report has been carried out for Comber.

The format was informal; the role of the facilitator was outlined.

- Explain process of the shared Future Consultation
- Ask questions of the participants
- Stimulate debate
- Take notes
- Not to impose own views
- Write up response
- Produce draft response for circulation to participants.

## **Background:**

The Governments key priorities as outlined in the Foreword to the Shared Future document were presented to the participants along with some of the key facts including:

### **Key Priorities**

- Building Trust & Confidence between and within communities
- Tackling Sectarianism

### **Key Facts**

- NI is a deeply divided society those divisions affecting decisions we make about basic needs of life
  - Where we live
  - Where we work
  - Where we go for services, for example education, training, retail, leisure, or to access to government agencies

## **Questions:**

Participants were asked to consider three Questions:

1. **Vision**            What is their vision of Northern Ireland in 25 years time?
2. **Action**            What do we need to do to reach that vision?
3. **Structures**        Who should take these actions? The following examples were given

### **LOCAL**

**Churches?**

**Community/Voluntary?**

**Work place?**

**District Council?**

**Local Strategic Partnership?**

### **CENTRAL**

**Government ?**

**Departments/ DRD etc?**

**Agencies/ NIHE,  
SEELB, EHSSB?**

**Community Relations  
Council?**

## ***Vision:***

The following were seen as key components of a vision of a Northern Ireland with improved community relations:

It would be a place where there was:

- Trust
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- Respect for difference, a difference that will be become increasingly wider with growing inward migration and resulting ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. Respect for differing political, social, cultural sexual, behaviours.
- Learning from one another
- Freedom to hear and to express differing views
- Mutual cooperation
- Dialogue at grass roots not just at leadership level
- Reconciled people
- Protection of freedom to worship reflecting the differing religious beliefs
- Respect for faith based communities in human rights

## **Actions:**

To reach the vision the following actions will be necessary:

- Encouraging alternative models of living beyond current segregated ones.
- Education leading to community ownership/responsibility
- Developing understanding and awareness of cultural diversity.
- Promoting local regeneration
- Strategies for the removal of symbols of division
- Community development and community relations developed as a common strategy
- Recognition that there are choices
- Developing community relations within communities and not just between.
- Recognition/listening process for the hurts of the past thirty years
  
- Healing the hurts of the past thirty years plus of conflict including
  - Assisting those hurt to be able to tell their storey
  - 
  - 
  - Coming to terms with our recent history
  - Recognition that the hurts are still continuing that the conflict is present and not just in the past.
  - Assisting people to a preferred future

## **Structures**

- - Interagency working
  - Churches particular as part of their social witness working with others
  - Churches involved and aware
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- - There is a need for some central monitoring / coordinating/ campaigning body. Whether this is the Community Relations Council or not is open to debate. There is concern about the mixture of being a funding body and a delivery mechanism