



**BALLYMORE OPEN CENTRE**  
*Youth and Community Development*

*A Report from a Round Table Discussion*

*On*

*“A Shared Future”*

*Consultation paper on improving Relations in  
Northern Ireland*

*Tuesday 1st April 2003*

*“ Community Relations is it a joke?”*



## **Ballymore Open Centre – Round Table Discussion**

A Report of the Proceedings / Outcomes?

### **Community Relations – “Is it a Joke?”**

Tuesday 1st April 2003

7.00pm – 9.30pm

Tandragee Primary School

Portadown Road

Tandragee

#### **Aims:**

- To provide a Community Response to “A Shared Future” document.

#### **Chairperson:**

- Derrick Mathews, Ballymore Open Centre, Tandragee

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**Format:**

A panel of speakers were invited to give their views on “Community Relations”

*Karen Jardine* – Community Relations ~~Council~~ Unit

*Duncan Morrow* – Director, Community Relations Council

*Paul Berry* – MLA, DUP

*Jim Lennon* – SDLP

*Hugh Hume* – District Commander, PSNI

We decided the fastest way to get a response to the questions was to have seven tables. Each table had a designated facilitator, and hosted a question. The Key Points raised in response to each question are as follows:



**Table One:**

**Question:**

*Do you agree that the overall aim for policy must be for a more shared but pluralist society?*

- Yes
- Local Communities should be allowed to move at their pace
- The overall policy must include all agencies i.e. policing, churches, schools, local government, community, and all organisations
- Education must address citizenship, human rights, and politics
- Policing issues to involve local communities
- An overall policy for Community Restorative Justice that all communities can buy into.

**Table Two:**

**Question:**

*What do you think should be the main policy aims and outcomes, which should drive the new approach to promoting good relations in society?*

- To support the development of self respect and self esteem
- To promote respect, encouragement and celebration of different faiths and cultures, to encourage communication, tolerance and trust in communities
- To reduce tension and conflict in areas including social barriers in local and rural communities
- To eliminate sectarianism / racism – allowing individuals to live and work without fear of intimidation
- To shape policies and practices which people can support allowing good relations to grow

**Table Three:**

**Question:**

*What do you think ought to be the principles upon which a new approach to promoting good relations in Northern Ireland should be based?*

- To devise a language which says civic responsibility is a positive outlook
- To encourage civic pride, mutual understanding and respect for all cultures
- To create equality of opportunity



**Table Four:**

**Question:**

*What action needs to be taken at local Government and Community level to underpin the development of good relations between and within communities?*

- To support local communities in promoting community pride
- To encourage local partnerships as a model of good practice, leading to a strategic plan for each local area
- To encourage “Twinning Towns” in local areas, with inter town events
- District Councils should not have any funding for Community Relations
- All community development and capacity building programmes should have a community relation’s strategy
- Local government to engage with local communities, and begin to build trust, within the community

**Table Five:**

**Question:**

*What functions do you think should be carried out at a regional level? Should these functions be delivered within Government or by an independent body, such as the Community Relations Council or a new statutory authority?*

- Current bodies should be dissolved and replaced by a new Community Relations Board
- Organisation should be more visible in areas of conflict
- Have reputation in each Council area
- Modelled on local Strategic Partnerships – with no automatic places for Councillors etc.
- Community Relations Officers in agencies should be moved to an independent body
- The body must look at representation, planning and development issues, be visible in areas of conflict
- The body should have a charter and a research department
- The body should have a focus on policies such as education, primary, higher and lifelong
- The body should reclaim a funding capacity with a local input but controlled and administered by regional body
- The body should work in co-operation with agencies statutory, voluntary and private.



**Table Six:**

**Question:**

*What action do you think central Government should take to improve relations?*

- Who should Central Government take on to improve relations; it should be a partnership approach
- Community Relations Officers are not supported on Council's
- Have a separate body for relationships not DECAL
- Departments should all share the same combined agendas
- Housing should be integrated
- Civil Servants Educated on Community Relations issues and deal with their prejudices
- Central Government should not take the lead, too big, intimidates communities
- Central Government should not drive the funding – what works in one area doesn't work in another
- Central Government should look at an integrated economy
- Councillors should be made to deal with their prejudices and go through intensive training
- All Government Literature should be written in layman's terms
- Be prepared to consult local people and make changes when necessary, local ownership is crucial
- Clarification of who is leading Community Relations in Ministerial terms? Is each party involved?
- Sort out Stormont
- Get responses from this document from schools etc, spend money on it, it's vital for our future
- Don't allow this document to become a political football or irrelevant, all the feedback should be considered
- Provide funding for integration ad support organisations engaged in these activities, this is sustainability

**Table Seven:**

**Question:**

*How do you think that a new strategy for improving relations ought to be monitored?*

- Monitoring should be independent of Government
- Monitoring should be by local people and European
- Regular surveying and monitoring of young people
- An increase in church related issues
- An increase in integrated education
- An increase in mixed housing
- Monitoring from a wide area and used to change policy when necessary
- Monitoring should be on going, simplified and user friendly



## **Seminar Summation:**

### **From the Chair:**

Chair Ballymore Open Centre

This evening has provided an opportunity for our Community to have a say, in the consultation paper on improving relations in Northern Ireland.

I would like to thank the panel for agreeing to share their views, and for everyone for their attendance and participation.

I will now hand over to Duncan Morrow for his closing remarks.

### **Closing Remarks:**

As part of the closing remarks Duncan Morrow, Director of the Community Relations Council, said,

*“Community Relations is not about “instant harmony” if we want real progress then we should be prepared to take risks in dialogue, keeping democracy is key to community relations, to get stronger but not getting strong, in order to use that strength on each other. We need local solutions to local problems, to make community relations work.”*



**Attending Organisations and Representatives:**

**Facilitator – Rodney Magowan [Ballymore Open Centre]**

Julie Murphy	Tara Centre, Omagh
Alison Martin	Ballymore Open Centre
Sally Kelly	Ballymore Open Centre
Betty McKeown	Community Liaison Community
Maureen McCann	Independent

**Facilitator – Norman Boyd [Ballymore Open Centre]**

John Sinton	Tandragee Rovers Football Club
Gary Lakely	Tandragee Rovers Football Club
Mr Gillespie	Tandragee Junior High, Tandragee
G McWilliams	Independent
Mr Bow Banks	Independent
Gareth Lamb	Tandragee Rovers Football Club
Mr Cardwell	Tandragee Primary School

**Facilitator – Ciaran McClean**

Marie Anne Craig	Open Door Club
Mike Bambrick	SAVER NAVER
Reatha Hefron	SAVER NAVER
Gillian Gowdy	Community Relations Council

**Facilitator – Iris Mathews [Ballymore Open Centre]**

John Redpath	Independent
June White	Brownlow Integrated College
Trevor Craig	Community Liaison Committee
Eddie Vennard	Woodview Residents Association

**Facilitator – Derrick Mathews [Ballymore Open Centre]**

Nuala Nixon	Independent
Connor McCardle	Banbridge and Craigavon Trust
Cathy Donnelly	District Police Partnership
Debbie Owen	Independent

**Facilitator – Jude Commisky [Community Dialogue]**

Jim Dennison	EU Programme
Dorothy Meenagh	WAVE
Felix Cunningham	

**Facilitator – Andy Coon [Ballymore Open Centre]**

Margaret McCullough	Independent
Patricia McCulloville	Independent
Jenny Shaw	Community Relations Council
Martin Fahy	Ballymore Open Centre