cc   Mr Morrow
      Mr Carson

FROM: SAM CORBETT

         8 MARCH 1996

TO: J A CANAVAN

BELFAST INTERFACE PROJECT

1.   Chris O'Halloran, Project Worker, Belfast Interface
      Project wrote to you on 20 February asking a number of
      questions about community needs in Interface areas. He
      has issued similar leters to a "range of agencies in
      order to gain an appreciation of statutory
      perspectives".

2.   The Belfast Interface Project is part funded by the
      International Fund for Ireland, ie £78,000 which
      represents 50% of the total cost; the 50% balance is
      being provided by Making Belfast Work.

3.   There are 15 locations in Belfast where a wall or fence
      separates the two religious communities. In Belfast,
      peacelines are essentially a response to security fears
      at local community level. In many parts of the city,
      people are afraid to live together, while others choose
      to live apart.

4.   The "Sectarian Interface Project" funded by CCRU and
      carried out by Dr Brendan Murtagh at the University of
      Ulster concluded that although segregated living might
      not be desirable, it is a fact of life in many areas and
      is the preferred way of living for many people. He
      reported that segregation fulfils the functions of

making people feel safe, of providing physical and community support, and of contributing to group identity processes. If policy is to respond to this expressed preference, he argued that it should focus less on encouraging mixed areas and more on fostering cross-community initiatives, while allowing the population to live where it wants, ie segregated areas.

5. He further argued that cross-community groups should be encouraged to come together to discuss on-going planning issues (this is based on his belief that CR work is most effective when groups have a common cause which has a long-term focus). He concluded by saying that a specific planning framework including a community relations agenda needed to be evolved for interface areas.

6. CCRU's approach to interface problems has been to respond to need, taking into account the particular local circumstances. While segregation of the two communities is clearly undesirable, we, nevertheless, accept that it is a reality of life, especially in Belfast. Physical segregation does not, however, preclude the possibility of inter-community contact on social and economic issues. Where possible, the CRC and the Action Teams have taken steps to help encourage confidence in communities on either side of the peaceline as a means of reducing fears.

7. In reply to Mr O'Halloran's three questions you may wish to make the following points:-

Question 1

"What do you feel are the community needs in interface areas that relate to policy areas within the remit of CCRU?"?

While stressing the importance of accepting the wishes of the communities, you might refer to the continuing need for work which builds confidence and trust between both sides. In the present fragile climate of peace there is an opportunity for positive cross-community contact, within safe boundaries, on issues of mutual concern. There is, of course, a role for CRC and the Action Teams to encourage communities who live beside peacelines to work more closely together

8.   Question 2

"What do you see as the strengths of CCRU's approach in addressing those needs"?

We have two strengths. Firstly, we have the resources available to respond to requests for financial assistance towards soundly based proposals which seek to improve community relations in interface areas. Secondly, we have the ability and commitment to fund suitable research projects in this area - to date we have funded two. Through the findings of these research studies we can interpret and analyse the needs of peaceline communities and facilitate and influence the consideration of such issues within the Government system.

9.   Question 3

"What do you see as the challenges for CCRU in addressing community needs in interface areas"?

Through our challenge role, we can get the message across to other statutory providers and ensure that the community relations implications of new services and

policy are fully considered at an early stage. There may also be opportunities for CCRU to act as a conduit between community groups and Government Departments on those issues of specific importance to interface communities.

S. C.

SAM CORBETT

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Our Ref:COH/GMCI.Agency.com

20 February 1996

Mr Tony Canavan
Assistant Secretary
Central Community Relations Unit
20-24 Donegall Street
Belfast
BT1 2GP

Dear Mr Canavan

Please find enclosed some background information regarding the Belfast Interface Project.

Briefly, the project aims to:

a)   identify key issues through meetings with significant community groups in interface areas;

b)   gain an understanding of statutory agency perspectives on community needs in interface areas;

c)   assist in the task of developing policy in relation to interface areas;

Some of the issues which have emerged so far from meetings with community groups include the following: community development; employment; policing; marches and parades; community resources; access to information; victims and survivors of violence; housing and redevelopment; cross-community work and, finally, the physical interface environment.
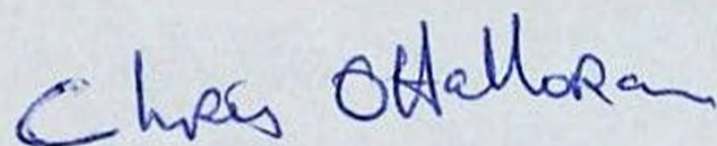
I am presently contacting a range of agencies in order to gain an appreciation of statutory perspectives on community needs in interface areas.

I would be very grateful if, in order to help with this research, you would take the time to supply a written response to the following questions:

a)   What do you feel are the community needs in interface areas that relate to policy areas within the remit of CCRU?

b)   What do you see as the strengths of CCRU's approach in addressing those needs?

c)   What do you see as the challenges for CCRU in addressing community needs in interface areas?

Once again your assistance in this piece of research would be greatly valued, please feel free to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Chris O'Halloran

Chris O'Halloran
Belfast Interface Project

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February 1996

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BELFAST INTERFACE PROJECT

BACKGROUND

In May 1994 the Centre for Policy Research published a report entitled: "Ethnic Space and the Challenge to Land Use Planning: A Study of Belfast's Peace Lines".

The report contained details of new research that had been carried out in a number of interface areas in Belfast.

Briefly, the research showed that many communities living in interface areas experienced:

i)   particularly severe levels of multiple disadvantage;
ii)   high levels of ongoing violence and intimidation;
iii)   restricted access to facilities and services which are, often, located within the "other" community.

Some statistics taken from the research:

Interface Areas (averages)		NI average
69%	of the community earned less than £5,000 pa	45%
31%	were unemployed	14%
41%	received Income Support	21%
5%	received Family Credit	2%
2%	had "A" level as highest qualification	12%
1%	had a university degree	12%
25%	wanted to leave the area within the next 3 years	
55%	experienced stonethrowing as a problem	
41%	experienced shootings and bombings as a problem	
34%	experienced rioting as a problem	
15.5%	experienced petrol bombing	

NOTE: These figures represent averages taken across the areas surveyed and therefore mask pockets of, for example, higher ratios of unemployment etc.

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Soon after the publication of this report, a number of people and agencies with an involvement or interest in working with communities in interface areas began a series of meetings to discuss a practical way forward in terms of addressing the pressing issues facing interface communities in Belfast.

The group formed into the Belfast Interface Group (see Appendix) and fundraised in order to set up the Belfast Interface Project.

BELFAST INTERFACE PROJECT

The Project is funded for 3 years from 1st August 1995 (partly by IFI and partly by MBW), employs a full-time Interface Project Worker and a part-time Administrative Assistant, and will have a budget of £10,000 per year to cover programme costs.

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The Project aims to assist interface communities in tackling issues related to:

    i)   their area;
    ii)   their interface;
and iii)   their relationship with the "other" community.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The Project has 3 objectives.

a)   to identify, through consultation with community groups in interface areas, their perceived issues of concern in relation to the 3 main categories above (under "Aims").

b)   to identify, through consultation with community groups and with the statutory and voluntary sector, how best to address the issues identified in a) above.

c)   to facilitate the process of addressing the issues identified.

The Project aims to promote a community development approach in addressing issues of concern to communities in interface areas. This will involve, initially, meeting with significant community groups in interface areas and carrying out a series of structured interviews in order to build up a clear picture regarding:

    i)   local issues;
    ii)   issues related to the interface;
    iii)   issues related to the other community;
    iv)   issues common to both communities;
    v)   the resources needed to address items i) to iv).

Contacts: **Chris O'Halloran** - Belfast Interface Project Worker
                  Gillian McIntyre - Administrative Assistant

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BELFAST INTERFACE GROUP

Rev Sam Burch
Cornerstone Community

Ms Noreen Christian
Currach Community

Rev Gary Mason
Belfast Central Mission

Mr Jim Auld
Challenge for Youth

Rev Lesley Carroll
Maccrory Presbyterian Church

Dr Maurna Crozier
Community Relations Council

Mr Brendan McAllister
Mediation Network NI

Ms Deirdre McBride
North Belfast Community
Development Centre

Mr Billy Hutchinson
Springfield Inter-Community
Development Project

Mr Paul Sweeney
Department of the Environment

Ms Roisin McGlone
North Belfast Community
Development Centre

Mr Will Glendinning
Community Relations Council

Ms Elaine Rowan
Community Relations Council

Mr Brendan Murtagh
Centre for Policy Research

Ms Katie Hanlon
Ballynafeigh Community House

Mr David Boyd
Riverside MAP