

*PROMOTING A PEACEFUL AND FAIR SOCIETY BASED ON  
RECONCILIATION AND MUTUAL TRUST*

# Community Relations Council



## **TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SECURITY**

### **INTERFACE BARRIERS AND THE LEGACY OF SEGREGATION IN BELFAST**



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## OVERVIEW

### Context

In recent years, much has changed in Northern Ireland. The achievement of shared government in 2007 symbolized a new departure in political co-operation and the culmination of years of difficult negotiation. In spite of many setbacks, there has been clear and measurable progress away from hostility and towards partnership and a new basis for living and working together.

It is clear, however, that political agreement has not magically resolved all of our remaining problems. The legacy of conflict and violence is a long one. This is especially true in those areas where conflict was most acute. Whereas people living in districts where conflict was an unusual, sporadic or distant experience have often embraced the benefits of peace with relief, trust is not easily won in the face of recent memory of bereavement, anger and fear.

One of the legacies of conflict is that many of the areas most traumatized and shaped by conflict are also among the poorest. Poverty and violence have combined to leave many areas with problems of multiple deprivation, still divided by the physical barriers which were once seen as short term protection for embattled communities but have now become part of the permanent structural landscape. This is especially true in the case of Belfast.

### The Meaning of Interface Barriers

Interface barriers are more than physical structures. They are the structures which remind us that the hostility, fear and anger of the past remain alive and continue to threaten the peace of people and communities on either side of the barrier. The barriers separate communities in which the fear remains that, without the barrier, lives will be put at risk. They freeze the geography and demography of single-identity communities and prevent all sorts of normal freedom of movement. The longevity of these barriers illustrates, however, that these were, and are, costs which people will endure in preference to the threats which were the feared alternative. Their continued existence is the greatest single piece of evidence that relationships are not yet 'normal' or equal, but continue to be characterized by insecurity, threat and anxiety.

In many cases, physical barriers were erected as a way to contain local problems, and to achieve a short-term reduction in intense violence. Over years, however, they have evolved from makeshift obstacles put in place by frightened communities in the face of riots, attacks on people and property or ongoing intimidation into permanent structures. Originally few in number, they have multiplied over the years, from 18 in the early 1990s to, according to ICR research for the Belfast area, up to 88 security and segregation barriers, 44 PSNI CCTV cameras and 6 intrusive security measures at police stations.

Perhaps even worse, interface barriers have become part of the 'normal' range of public policy interventions which can be considered to establish short term respite for people under threat of direct attack. While interfaces put a physical barrier between hostile groups and create some respite, they are also reminders that the threat remains real. By creating clear physical indicators where one community 'begins' and another community 'ends' barriers have sometimes served as magnets for exploiting or expressing community tensions for political ends, or for youths and other people wanting to indulge in what has now become known as 'recreational rioting'.

Young people acting in this way are now at risk of entering the criminal justice system and being disowned by their own communities, while at the same time destroying the lives of residents near interfaces and inter-community relations more broadly. In these circumstances, barriers have not so much ended inter-community tension as changed its form.

### **Public Policy and Interface Barriers**

What is indisputable is that a policy which leads to barriers being erected has not been accompanied by any systematic thinking about how and when such barriers might be removed. As a result, temporary or emergency interventions have become effectively permanent. While many may aspire to moving barriers, there are very few successful examples of actually doing so. Furthermore, while responsibility for erecting a barrier may lie with security policy or with public housing authorities, responsibility for removing barriers and engaging in a more broadly based strategy to ensure safety will require the involvement of social, economic and political actors from a much broader range of public agencies. The lack of any single agency charged with establishing the circumstances on the ground which could lead to the removal of interface barriers and the real difficulties and risks associated with removing objects which are seen to provide safety means that this issue has never been actively tackled. Clearly, it is much easier to put up barriers than to take them down.

### **Interface Barriers and a shared and better future**

We cannot seriously speak of a 'peace process' if people are obliged to live in fear of what might happen to them if they were not physically divided from the neighbouring community. International visitors are immediately struck by the barriers as the most compelling evidence that the project remains incomplete. The opportunity presented by political progress is considerable. However, only by addressing sectarianism, racism and inter-communal conflict in the coming years can the stability of the new arrangements be guaranteed and the peace of people living in what have been interface areas be assured. The opportunity is to move from conflict management to conflict transformation and reconciliation.

The Programme for Government recognises this, in observing that the economy cannot grow in isolation from determined efforts to transform our society and that: *'building a strong economy requires ... a tolerant, inclusive and stable society if we are to attract the investment and skills needed to promote growth.'*

This was echoed by New York's Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, while attending the recent Investment Conference. *"Northern Ireland had much to offer" he said, but "another important step is needed. Removing the barriers is in the interests of peace and prosperity and the sooner the physical barriers come down, the sooner the flood gates of private investment will open."*

Bloomberg's observations underline the reality that the removal of barriers is not merely an issue of public morality or political preference, but is intimately connected to the Executive's core priorities of sustainable prosperity, the elimination from poverty and the quality of life. It is clear that investment will not return to many of the areas most blighted by violence, unless steps are taken to improve safety, remove intimidation and change the image of communities from that of a warzone to that of welcome and security for all.

While these questions are most urgently important for people living close to the barriers themselves, they have a real impact on life across the whole region. The image of Northern Ireland as a whole remains clouded in images of violence. Investment is concentrated in areas without the physical legacy of violence and the 'peace dividend' has been much easier to identify than in areas which still suffer from strife and physical division. As people living in interface areas are more likely to feel safer staying in their locality and are less likely to feel safe when they travel to work, communities are hit by a 'double whammy' where work does not locate nearby and people do not or cannot take up available work because of conflict-related considerations.

At the same time, the current climate has never been so good in relation to exploring the future of interface barriers. This research is directed at setting the context in which it would be possible to begin to remove some of the interface barriers and in identifying practical steps. It acknowledges people's concerns and also highlights possible ways to take actions which might offer pointers to a shared and better future.

Naturally, the key factors include ensuring residents' sense of safety, sustained positive efforts from local politicians and leaders, more diverse and effective regeneration of interface areas and more cross-community engagement and dialogue. However, change is not merely a matter of community activity or security policy alone.

Relations at interfaces can also be improved by actions undertaken by people with responsibility for apparently unconnected economic or social issues. Change at interfaces requires intervention at social and community level, but also in transport policy, economic development and city planning.

Quality of life in Belfast is intimately linked to improvement in life chances in the most deprived areas. Attracting investment to the city will remain difficult, if whole districts are blighted by barriers to capital and labour and violence is held back only by massive physical barriers. Work in a modern economy depends on people being able to travel safely across the city. The days when whole districts could rely on a single employer, such as Harland and Wolff to employ large proportions of local communities are gone. People now work in different places, requiring safe and easy transport and access to all areas. Furthermore, any employer will only locate in an area if they can be assured that the best people can travel to work safely and easily. Interfaces which are built to keep outsiders at bay, also keep employers and employment in other places.

Community safety strategies are not merely about securing local people against each other, but the far greater challenge of ensuring that the safety of all citizens and visitors throughout the city is guaranteed. Talented people will continue to leave interface areas, continuing the history of multiple deprivation. Public transport will continue to be restricted by demographic boundaries, impacting on movement around the city especially for the most economically dependent. As fascination with conflict since 1969 wanes, so the tourist trail will increasingly avoid blighted urban areas. Agreements over cultural matters, particularly in disputed areas like language and parades, would have a real impact in many interface areas.

In recent years, private developers have bought up much of the land at interface areas at a very competitive price due to the historic lack of demand for land blighted by conflict and territorial markings. Changes in the property market represent a real opportunity for developers to work with local communities and relevant authorities to assist in the regeneration of these areas. When land is vested it could be sold with the stipulation that it will be time bound to assist with regeneration plans and not left lying dormant until the

market improves. Developers might also negotiate at local and statutory level to agree land use plans.

### **This Research**

The Institute of Conflict Research was commissioned by the Community Relations Council to gather together all existing information on interfaces in Belfast in a single document. The research forms a core document to assist the work of the Interface Working Group, an inter-agency group of public organizations each of which can make a contribution to making practical progress, although none of which can act alone. The purpose of this document is

- To bring together all existing material on the nature, location and impact of interface barriers,
- To identify locally specific ways to begin to make progress towards a peaceful, shared and better future and
- To provide a common platform for engagement on how, when and whether such barriers can be removed or altered.

Alongside mapping each of the interfaces currently operating in the Belfast area, the research reaches a number of important conclusions:

- The monthly breakdown in the figures for incidents recorded by PSNI in interface areas in A District, January 2004 – December 2006 illustrate a very diverse pattern of peaks and troughs with no consistency and no overall pattern suggesting that the ebbs and flows are more likely to be due to very localised factors, and tit for tat responses, than they are to be influenced by events occurring on a city-wide basis. Policy will have to be targeted, local and inter-community in reach.
- Whilst only a limited number of interfaces have been removed, there are a variety of circumstances and contexts in which barriers can be taken down: either because the barrier no longer serves any useful purpose due to the changing political context, because an area is being regenerated or in response to requests from the local community. These various reasons for removing barriers offer one line of approach to the remaining barriers. Not all communities regard all the barriers as necessary, and may in fact regard them as an impediment to aspects of progress in the local area.
- More than one third of barriers could be removed or replaced relatively easily as part of a process of regeneration or normalisation given local support, political will and financial resourcing and this suggests that proposed or possible regeneration in a number interface areas including Girdwood/Crumlin Road Gaol, Titanic Quarter, North Foreshore and the Northwest Quarter should be undertaken with a view to increasing scope for sharing and integration rather than further entrenching segregation.
- The development of a vision and strategy for regeneration of interface areas across and between government departments is crucial; a strategic response to interfaces should be developed at city level through the work of Belfast City Council, Belfast Community Safety Partnership and the Belfast Area Partnerships; the provision of

capacity building training and sustained resourcing for community based organisations and initiatives; and an assessment of the range of current policy, practice and other initiatives in interface areas.

We intend that this document should become a base for planning and thinking about change in interface barriers and for engaging local communities, policy makers and statutory agencies in consideration of practical steps forward.

### **Conclusion**

This research is intended as a practical tool to enable real progress in exploring the scope for the change and removal of interface barriers. The current climate provides a unique opportunity to tackle the problems of interface communities. It is our view that the peace lines which emerged during a time of serious and ongoing conflict and the policies which enabled them can and should be now reviewed.

## BACKGROUND

In April 2007 the Community Relations Council (CRC) raised with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) its concerns about its decision to build a fence in the grounds of Hazelwood Integrated Primary School following sustained and serious attacks in the area.

Following those discussions the Council decided to set in motion a process to assist in the development of:

- an overall strategy for potential new peace walls and existing peace walls
- a joint approach to building good relations in and around the Hazelwood area and to use this work as a reference point for the annual review of the fence at Hazelwood Integrated Primary School.

CRC worked with the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) and Belfast Interface Project (BIP) to produce a discussion paper on a way forward that was discussed at a meeting in September 2007 with a number of voluntary and statutory organizations with an interest in, and responsibility for, interfaces. This group has become the Interface Working Group (IWG) and includes; CRC, BIP, ICR, NIO and

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)
- Belfast City Council (BCC)
- North Belfast Community Action Unit (NBCAU)
- Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)
- Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- Committee for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)
- Department for Social Development (DSD)
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
- Community Safety Partnership (CSP)
- Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group (SLIG)
- Department of Education (DE)

The make up of the IWG remains open as the work develops.

The group has been working on sharing information about existing and prospective new interfaces, relevant policies and the development of a strategic approach for the transformation of interface areas and physical barriers. The Community Relations Council commissioned Neill Jarman, Institute for Conflict Research to produce this interface strategy which is open for wider consultation.

CRC will act on behalf of the IWG to complete this process.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an overview of some of the key issues associated with the interface areas of Belfast. It was commissioned by the Community Relation Council on behalf of the Interface Working Group to draw together material from a variety of sources as a single baseline resource for developing policy and practice by the IWG.

The report is a secondary, desk-based study, which includes a variety of data on interfaces in Belfast and highlights some key findings from recent surveys, research and policy documents. It is not a detailed comprehensive review, rather it highlights some key issues that must serve as the focus of any effective long-term strategy for the regeneration of parts of the city that are currently fragmented through community and territorial divisions and physical structures, this is based on four key principles:

1. In responding to the legacy of physical segregation the perceptions of **safety and security** of the people living near to interfaces and interface barriers must be the priority.
2. Notwithstanding this point, we should aspire to the **removal of all interface barriers** across the city of Belfast over time.
3. The process of removing interface barriers should be undertaken on the basis of **sustainable regeneration** as part of a process towards building a shared city for all the people of Belfast.
4. Fourth, **no more security barriers or structures that effectively serve to segregate communities should be built**, rather priority must be given to other forms of investment in people and place that will provide appropriate levels of safety and security.

Interface barriers are one of the enduring legacies of several decades of armed conflict in Belfast and elsewhere across Northern Ireland, but while many of the other physical remnants of the Troubles, such as the border barriers, military installations, and the ring of steel around Belfast city centre, have been systematically removed, this has not been the case with interface barriers.

Although the barriers continue to provide some degree of security for people living in interface areas, they also serve to reinforce a sense of territorialism, of exclusion, limit people's movements and access to resources, and reduce opportunities for contact between people from neighbouring areas.

Many interface areas have also remained depressed and deprived due to the perception of such areas as dangerous and violent and concerns for safety and security. Among the consequences of this has been a lack of desire to live in interface areas, thus facilitating an air of dereliction, and a limited willingness to invest in interface areas, which has impacted on opportunities for employment and wider economic regeneration.

But there are signs of change and development in some areas. There is a growing diversity throughout Belfast and people from many minority ethnic and new migrant populations are moving into interface areas, while a number of minority ethnic communities, including the Chinese, Indian, Jewish and Sikh communities, have their community centres or their religious base in such areas. This growing diversity provides an opportunity to re-imagine the future of interface areas beyond a simple orange-green divide.

At the same time both the private sector and some community-based groups have begun to take the initiative to re-develop and regenerate some interface areas by purchasing land and building residential accommodation, office space and shop units. While this is to be welcomed, some initiatives may also serve to reinforce levels of segregation by working around, and thus sustaining barriers, rather than using regeneration as a means of providing a sustainable security without formal barriers.

The challenge is thus to regenerate the interface areas of Belfast, in a way that will provide a safe and secure environment for local residents, but also to regenerate interface areas in a way that that improves people's access to resources, increases opportunities for employment and encourages the creation of a more diverse and integrated social demography.

The document is set out in eight brief sections:

- A list of all the barriers and security structures associated with residential areas of the city;
- A list of PSNI interface CCTV cameras and intrusive security associated with PSNI stations;
- Police data on interface violence in north and west Belfast from 2004-2007;
- A review of those interface and security barriers that have been removed and some that might be considered for removal in the short to medium term;
- A brief review of recent attitudes to community relation;
- A review of a recent survey of people living in six interface areas;
- An overview of recent policy initiatives and research that related to interface areas; and
- The key stages of an outline strategy for regenerating interface areas.

The paper makes just a small number of specific recommendations, which are presented together at the end of Section 11: A Strategy for Interface Regeneration. However, it should also be noted that many of the documents reviewed in Section 9 include many valid recommendations that have yet to be acted upon.

## SEGREGATION AND SECURITY BARRIERS IN BELFAST

There has never been a definitive figure for the total number of interface or security barriers across Belfast. In part this is due to different interpretations of where one barrier stops and another starts, in part due to different understandings of what should be classified as interface barrier, and in part to incomplete data and recording.

The term interface barrier or 'peaceline' is generally used to refer to those barriers that have been authorised and built by the NIO in response to concerns for safety and security in an interface area. But this does not include all existing barriers and security structures, as some have been built by other agencies, such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive or Belfast City Council, in the course of regeneration or redevelopment or in response to safety issues. There is also an array of security architecture associated with police stations and a network of CCTV cameras at many interface areas.

Research by ICR for BIP has aimed to map all the interface and related security architecture across the city. These included fifty-two barriers that had been identified by the NIO as structures whose construction they had authorised plus a similar number of other barriers in or near to interface areas that were not included on the NIO list. Some of these are similar to the NIO structures, but most of the newly mapped barriers have been built or are owned by an agency such as the NIHE, Belfast City Council or private owners.

These various barriers and structures include:

- Physical structures such as walls and fences, which serve to divide or protect residential areas or close off roads or pathways;
- Security gates designed to enable roads to be closed off;
- Fencing between residential properties and parks or public open spaces;
- Fencing to protect non-residential property near interfaces;
- Buffers of walls, fences and vegetation to residential areas that result in the houses having their orientation turned away from the main thoroughfares; and
- Buffer zones of derelict land or brownfield sites at an interface or at the boundary of a marked residential area.

The eighty-eight barriers include fifteen parts of the city where there are identifiable clusters of barriers - geographical areas in which there are a number of distinct and separate structures that demark different sections of an interface - while just four of the barriers are isolated and are unconnected to any other adjacent defensive or protective security structure.

The fifteen areas where there are clusters of barriers are very similar to the main interface areas identified by the NIHE in their internal review of interface areas, carried out in 2006. Table 1 below sets out the two lists of the main interface areas/barrier clusters.

**Table 1: Main Interface Areas in Belfast**

<b>ICR / BIP Clusters</b>	<b>NIHE Clusters</b>
Suffolk – Lenadoon (6 barriers)	Stewartstown Road
Upper Springfield Road (6 barriers)	
Falls Shankill divide (9 barriers)	Springfield & Falls / Shankill
The Village (3 barriers)	
Ormeau Road (4 barriers)	Lower Ormeau
Short Strand (9 barriers)	Inner East
Inner Ring area (7 barriers)	Peters Hill / Carrick Hill
Duncairn Gardens (7 barriers)	Duncairn / New Lodge
Limestone Road (6 barriers)	
Dunmore – Mid-Skegoneill (4 barriers)	Skegoneill / Glandore
Whitewell Road area (6 barriers)	Whitewell
Girdwood – Lower Oldpark – Manor Street (2 barriers)	Lower Oldpark / Clifton / Oldpark
Torrens (3 barriers)	
Crumlin Road – Ardoyne (11 barriers)	Ardoyne & Woodvale
	Ardoyne / Alliance & Glenbryn
Ligoniel (2 barriers)	Ligoniel, Upper Crumlin Road & Ballysillan

### **Security and Segregation Barriers**

This section lists all security and segregation barriers that have been identified in Belfast, where possible the body responsible for the construction of the barrier and the date of construction is indicated.

#### **South West: Suffolk Area Cluster (1)**

- 1 Carnanmore Park, Suffolk (NIHE - 1980s):** A 2 metre high steel fence runs from the junction of Stewartstown Road between rear of houses in Carnanmore Park and the Glen River. The fence ends abruptly while adjacent path continues.
- 2 Stewartstown Road, Suffolk (NIO - 1970s):** A short section of fence at the rear of Carnanmore Park and Donegore Gardens. The fence runs from Stewartstown Road (opposite Suffolk Road) to the junction with Blacks Road
- 3 Stewartstown Road:** A steel fence with barbs on top runs in front of the properties in Donegore Gardens. Access to Donegore Gardens from Stewartstown Road has been closed off.
- 4 Oranmore Drive – Malinmore Park, Suffolk (NIO - 1970s-1996):** A steel fence runs from Blacks Road parallel to Oranmore Drive to the junction with Willowvale Avenue. A second fence runs parallel to this at the rear of Brook Drive and Brook Close and then turns 90 degrees at rear of River Close. A double fence cuts across

Willowvale Avenue, across the end of Suffolk Drive to join a fence surrounding the Lidl supermarket on Stewartstown Road. Note: the fence across the junction of Oranmore Drive and Willowvale Avenue has been covered over with steel sheeting to prevent any visual contact.

- 5 **Kells Avenue, Suffolk (NIO - 1970s-2000):** A wall and gates close off the junction of Kells Avenue with Stewartstown Road. The barrier has two pedestrian gates and one vehicle gate. This is effectively a continuation of the Oranmore Drive barrier. There is a further security fence along the face of Stewartstown Road in front of two portacabins used by Suffolk Community Services Group, while a wooden fence runs at the rear of the properties on Ringford Crescent. Further security walls and fences protect properties in Lenadoon on the opposite side of Stewartstown Road from close to the Woodburn PSNI station to opposite the library.
- 6 **Stewartstown Road:** Low steel fence with buffer of vegetation runs from the junction with Lenadoon Avenue to the junction with Woodburn PSNI station.

**West Belfast: Upper Springfield Road Cluster (2)**

- 7 **Moyard (NIO - 1991):** A steel fence c3 metre high runs from the rear of Moyard Parade, across the rear of Moyard Crescent. It continues across the head of Springfield Park and at the rear of houses at Springfield Heights. The fence separates the various properties from rough hillside and grazing land. The fence has recently been covered in steel sheeting due to ongoing problems from youths accessing the area from Upper Ballygomartin Road.
- 8 **Upper Ballygomartin Road (NIO – No date):** An intermittent fence runs along the south side of Ballygomartin Road from near the junction with Springmartin Road for approximately half a mile.
- 9 **Springmartin Road - Upper Ballygomartin Road (NIO - 1990 + 1994):** A 5 metre high wall and fence runs from the junction of Springfield Road and Springmartin Road, parallel with Springmartin Road until c50 metres from the junction with Ballygomartin Road. There is a substantial buffer zone on either side of the wall. A short return fence runs at right angles to the end of the main barrier, and continues at the rear of houses at Springfield Park as a continuation of the main Springmartin barrier.
- 10 **Springfield Road (NIHE):** Buffer of empty land/vegetation/fencing between Springmartin Road and Dunboyne Park and from Orange Hall to near West Circular Road.
- 11 **Springhill Avenue (NIO - 1989):** A wall with a steel fence in front closes off Springhill Avenue at the junction with Springfield Road, facing New Barnsley PSNI station. The security wall continues the length of Springhill Avenue at the rear of Springhill Heights, Gardens and Close and the rear of Westrock Court. In the other direction from Springhill Avenue a low security wall continues along Springfield Road at the rear of properties on Springhill Crescent.
- 12 **Springfield Parade – West Circular Road (NIO – no date):** A wall and fence runs behind properties at West Circular Road and then parallel with Springfield Parade along the boundary of waste land.

**Falls / Shankill Divide (3)**

- 13 Workman Avenue (NIO - 1990):** A gate with a pedestrian entrance closes off access to Workman Avenue from Springfield Road.
- 14 Springfield Road/Workman Avenue (NIO - 1988-2003):** A security wall, with fencing above, runs from Workman Avenue to Lanark Way. It cuts off Woodvale Avenue, Bainesmore Drive, Mountcashel Street and Ainsworth Avenue from Springfield Road.
- 15 Elswick Street / Pollard Street (NIO – no date):** A fence approximately 150 metres long on the boundary of wasteland, it terminates at the junction with Forfar Street.
- 16 Lanark Way (NIO - 1988):** Electronically controlled gates at Lanark Way, between Springfield Road and Merkland Place, can be used to restrict access at certain times.
- 17 Cupar Way (NIO - 1969):** A multi-level fence runs from Lanark Way to the rear of properties at Cupar Street and cuts off access between Cupar Street and Cupar Way. It then runs parallel with Cupar Way to the junction with North Howard Street. The barrier cuts access with Conway Street.
- 18 North Howard Street (NIO - 1970s):** Security gates at North Howard Street are used to restrict access at certain times.
- 19 Northumberland Street (NIO - 1970s):** Security gates are used to restrict access at certain times. The area between North Howard Street and Northumberland Street is secured by the boundary walls of the Twin Spires Industrial Estate. The area between Northumberland Street and Percy Street is secured by industrial buildings.
- 20 Percy Street – Boundary Way (NIO - 1970s):** A barrier closes off Percy Street, it continues at the rear of Ardmoulin Avenue, cuts off the end of Beverley Street, Dover Street and Boundary Street and continues to the junction with Townsend Enterprise Park on the Shankill Road side. It runs at the rear of properties in Finn Square and Finn Court off the Falls Road.
- 21 Townsend Street (NIO - 1992):** Security gates close to junction with Cargill Street are used to restrict access at certain times.

**Westlink**

- 22 Roden Street / Westlink (NIO - 1985/2008):** A solid brick runs along the Westlink from Distillery Street to Roden Street near the junction with Mulhouse Road. This was partially upgraded as part of the Westlink renewal in 2008, with an addition of a section of fencing above a section of the wall adjacent to the footbridge over the Westlink.

**South Belfast: Village Cluster (4)**

- 23 Broadway (NIHE):** Brick and steel barrier across the end of Broadway restricts vehicle access to Glenmachan Street.

**24 Glenmachan Street (NIHE):** Buffer zone of brick wall, steel fencing and vegetation from junction with Broadway to Frenchpark Street. Vehicle access between Frenchpark Street and Glenmachan Street closed off.

**25 Glenmachan Street (NIHE):** Buffer zone of brick wall, steel fencing and vegetation at rear of houses in Lecale Street from Frenchpark Street along Glenmachan Street and then around corner on Tates Avenue until junction with Lecale Street.

#### South Belfast: Markets

**26 Stewart Street:** Properties in Stewart Street area of the Markets face inwards to Friendly Street, with medium height walls facing footpath. There is also a large fenced brownfield site, which acts as a buffer between Stewart Street, East Bridge Street and Central Station.

#### South Belfast: Ormeau Road Cluster (5)

**27 Cooke Street (BRO):** Area of fenced-off waste-land at junction with Ormeau Road. Sign stating purchased for regeneration by BRO.

**28 Shaftesbury Avenue:** An area of fenced-off waste-land at junction with Ormeau Road.

**29 McClure Street (Belfast City Council):** An area of unused land running much of the length of McClure Street adjacent to the railway line and beyond this to the Donegall Pass area.

**30 Dromana Street:** Buffer of land between road and river walk. Land has been built up, grassed over, and fenced off from Ormeau Road. Trees planted.

#### East Belfast: Short Strand Cluster (6)

The barriers in East Belfast largely surround the nationalist Short Strand area and separate it from Albertbridge Road, Cluan Place, Templemore Avenue and Lower Newtownards Road.

**31 Strand Walk (NIO - 1980s-2003):** A brick wall runs between Strand Walk and Lower Newtownards Road. The wall runs from the chapel grounds and follows the line of the road into Short Strand. The barrier cuts off vehicle access between Mountpottinger Road and Bridge End, but pedestrian access remains.

**32 Bryson Street (NIO - 1970s-2003):** A brick wall with a fence above runs the length of Bryson Street from the junction of Lower Newtownards Road to Madrid Street.

**33 Madrid Street (NIO - 2002):** Gates have been installed used to restrict access along Madrid Street at the junction with Bryson Street.

**34 Clandeboye Gardens and Langtry Court (NIO - 1970s-2003):** A wall with fencing above runs from the rear of a property on Madrid Street between Clandeboye Gardens and Langtry Court. The barrier abuts the wall of a commercial property near Albertbridge Road.

- 35 Clandeboye Gardens/Cluan Place (NIO - 1970s-2003):** A wall with fencing above runs between Clandeboye Gardens/Clandeboye Drive and Cluan Place and across end of Cluan Place, cutting off Cluan Place from Mountpottinger Road. The wall ends at the junction of Mountpottinger Road and Albert Bridge Road.
- 36 Short Strand – Mountpottinger Link (NIHE):** Houses on section of Short Strand and Mountpottinger Link face inwards to Lough Lea and rear protected by wall and vegetation.
- 37 Short Strand – Albertbridge Road (NIHE):** Buffer of footpath, vegetation and second footpath between houses and main road.
- 38 The Green (NIO – No Date):** Open public space bounded on Albertbridge Road & Mountpottinger side by five metre high steel fence.
- 39 Woodstock Place – Albertbridge Road:** Houses and sheltered accommodation protected by deep buffer of vegetation. Pedestrian access onto Albertbridge Road blocked by steel fencing.

#### Inner Ring Cluster (7)

- 40 Millfield:** Buffer of brick wall, fencing and vegetation from Brown Street to near Peter's Hill.
- 41 Peter's Hill:** Brick wall with metal fencing above at junction between Peter's Hill / Lime Court and Carrick Hill estate.
- 42 Carrick Hill:** Buffer of fencing and vegetation from junction with Peter's Hill to Lower Regent Street.
- 43 Clifton Street – Regent Street:** An area of undeveloped waste ground between Regent Street, Clifton Street and Westlink.
- 44 Stanhope Street:** A chain link fence c4 metres in height projects above a brick wall that serves as the boundary to the Westlink slip road. The fence runs for about 300 metres from near the junction with Regent Street along the rear of houses in Stanhope Street.
- 45 Frederick Street:** High mess fencing runs across the open yard at rear of St Kevin's Hall.
- 46 York Street:** Wall with fencing above protecting houses on Lancaster Street.

#### Lower North Belfast: Duncairn Gardens Barriers (8)

- 47 Duncairn Gardens (New Lodge) (NIO - 1970s):** There are four remaining sections of security fence on the New Lodge side of Duncairn Gardens.
- The New Lodge section of Halliday's Road is closed by a wall and fence structure; access is restricted to a pedestrian gate.
  - The entrance to Edlingham Street has been partially built over on the New Lodge side, while the remainder is blocked by a double steel gated fence, which is permanently closed.

- Access between Lepper Street and Duncairn Gardens is restricted to pedestrians by a steel and brick barrier. This is a similar structure to the one across Halliday's Road.
- There is a section of sheet steel fence atop the wall at the rear of the car park of the North City Business Centre.

**48 North Queen Street (New Lodge) (NIO – No date):** Brick wall with three levels of fencing in front of houses on North Queen Street between Spamount Street and Duncairn Gardens.

**49 Duncairn Gardens (Tigers Bay) (NIO - 1970s):** There are two sections of fencing on the Tigers Bay side of Duncairn Gardens.

- Access between Halliday's Road and Duncairn Gardens is restricted by a brick wall. A metal gate provides pedestrian access.
- A section of steel fencing runs across the gap between number 171-179 Duncairn Gardens and number 161-163. This fencing is at the rear of Syringa Street.
- The remainder of the Tigers Bay side of Duncairn Gardens has various walls protecting commercial properties along its length. The only point of entry is via Edlingham Street.

**50 Adam Street (1990s) (NIO – No Date):** Access between Adam Street and Duncairn Gardens is restricted by a metal gate.

**51 Moyola Street:** Three metre high gated steel barrier across the road restricts access to Adam Street. Pedestrian access to Duncairn Gardens during daytime.

**52 Brougham Street – North Queen Street (Tigers Bay) (NIHE):** Brick wall and steel fencing, with trees and vegetation behind as buffer to houses in Orchard Street & Bentinck Street.

**53 North Queen Street (Tigers Bay):** Fencing in front of entrance to doctor's surgery has been extended in to five metres in height.

#### **Lower North Belfast: Henry Street**

**54 Henry Street – Westlink (NIO - date uncertain):** A low gate barrier is permanently locked to restrict vehicle access between Henry Street and York Street, while a short section of steel fence separates Henry Street from the Westlink.

#### **Lower North Belfast: Limestone Road / Alexandra Park Divide (9)**

**55 Newington Street (NIO - 1980s-2000):** A steel fence with mesh above runs from Limestone Road to Duncairn Gardens along the back of properties on Newington Street and Newington Avenue separating them from properties in Halliday's Road in Tigers Bay. There is a further short section of steel mesh and fence between the first two properties on the corner of Limestone Road.

**56 Newington Street (NIO):** Yellow security gate prevent vehicle access from Limestone Road.

- 57 Limestone Road (NIHE):** Row of boarded up NIHE houses below junction with Halliday's Road (Tigers Bay).
- 58 Limestone Road (Private Development):** Regeneration of old shirt factory site between Milewater Street and Parkend Street.
- 59 Mountcollyer – Parkend Street (NIO - 1994-2001, Consolidated by NIHE):** A mixture of brick wall and fencing divides Mountcollyer Street from Parkside Gardens.
- 60 Alexandra Park (NIO - 1994):** A steel fence runs across Alexandra Park from Parkside Gardens to the rear of the recycling depot on Alexandra Park Avenue. This is effectively a continuation of the barrier between Mountcollyer and Parkend Street.

**Alexandra Park Avenue – Dunmore – Mid-Skegoneill (10)**

- 61 Dunmore Court - Skegoneill Drive (Private Development):** Concrete wall segregating Dunmore development from mid-Skegoneill.
- 62 Dunmore Court - Ashfield Gardens (Private Development):** Concrete wall segregating Dunmore development from mid-Skegoneill.
- 63 Skegoneill Avenue – Glandore Avenue junction:** Wasteland / buffer zone extending across junctions with Queen Victoria Gardens and Ashfield Drive.

**Lower North Belfast: Whitewell Road (11)**

- 64 Whitewell Road (NIO - 2008):** Electronically controlled gate and fence across pedestrian entry between Whitewell Road and Graymount Crescent.
- 65 White City – Whitewell (NIO - 1999):** A steel and mesh fence runs from Gunnell Hill to Serpentine Road at the rear of properties in Serpentine Gardens.
- 66 Navarra Place (NIO - 1999):** A steel fence, with a pedestrian access gate, closes off Navarra Place from Serpentine Road.
- 67 Old Throne Park (NIO - 2007):** Five metre high fence at rear of properties in Old Throne Park, fence runs through grounds of Hazelwood Integrated Primary School.
- 68 Longlands – Whitewell Road (NIO - 1998):** A section of steel palisade fence closes off an entry and adjacent land at Arthur's Bridge.
- 69 Longlands Avenue (NIO – No Date):** A palisade fence with sheeting over divides Longlands industrial estate from playing fields adjacent to Valley Leisure Centre.

**Upper North Belfast: Girdwood / Lower Oldpark / Manor Street Cluster (12)**

- 70 Oldpark Road - Rosapenna Street - Rosevale Street - Manor Street (NIO - 1970s):** A barrier runs from the junction of Beechpark Street (which is closed off by the barrier) and Oldpark Road. It then turns 90 degrees and runs behind properties

in Rosapenna Street, turns 90 degrees again and runs behind properties in Rosevale Street, divides Manor Street and continues along the line of Roe Street to Clifton Park Avenue.

- 71 **Brucevale Park – Duncairn Avenue (NIO – no date):** A low gate and a steel palisade fence close off access between these two streets, which run along the boundary of the former Girdwood barracks.

#### Upper North Belfast: Waterworks

- 72 **Westland Gardens (BCC Parks Department):** Double section of steel fencing at boundary of Waterworks park, extends to rear of houses in Knutsford Drive.

#### Upper North Belfast: Torrens Cluster (13)

- 73 **Torrens - Wyndham Street (NIO - 1980s):** A section of wall with mesh fencing above runs along side of property on Elimgrove Street, turns 90 degrees and continues along the rear of houses on Wyndham Street. It ends at junction of Wyndham Drive and Torrens Crescent; the barrier closes off access to Wyndham Drive from Torrens Crescent.

- 74 **Torrens - Oldpark Road (NIO - 1990s):** A section of wall runs from the junction of Torrens Avenue and Oldpark Road to abut terrace near junction with Oldpark Avenue.

- 75 **Oldpark Avenue (NIO - 1990s):** A brick wall runs along the rear of properties on Oldpark Avenue to Cliftonville Road.

#### Upper North Belfast: Crumlin Road / Ardoyne Area (14)

- 76 **Antigua Street:** Green sheet steel fencing at rear of houses facing wasteland behind Dunne's Stores site / Hillview Road. Appears to be designed to obscure line of site to Crumlin Road - Tennant Street junction.

- 77 **Crumlin Road - Flax Street (NIO - 1994):** A steel fence closes off Flax Street close to the junction with Crumlin Road.

- 78 **Crumlin Road – Ardoyne (NIO – No Date):** Brick wall extending from Flax Complex to Butler Walk, cutting off access to Herbert Street.

- 79 **Crumlin Road – Ardoyne (NIHE):** Buffer of fencing & vegetation in front of houses from Butler Walk to Kerbrera Street.

- 80 **Crumlin Road – Woodvale (NIO – No Date):** Brick wall with steel fencing and vegetation as buffer for houses from Cambrai Street to Bray Street and Holy Cross church.

- 81 **Woodvale - Holy Cross (NIO - 1980s):** A short section of steel fence, now covered by advertising signs, at the end of Woodvale Road restricts the line of sight between

Twaddell Avenue and Brompton Park. The wall of the adjacent Holy Cross Church on Woodvale Road is heightened by a metre high wire fence.

- 82 Woodvale Road (NIHE & BRO):** Row of derelict houses 166-194 Woodvale Road, scheduled for regeneration. Opposite Holy Cross Boys School also stands derelict.
- 83 Mountainview Park - Mountainview Parade (NIO - 1997-2002, Consolidated by NIHE - 2008):** A steel mesh fence runs at the rear of properties between Mountainview Park and Donaldson Crescent, turns 90 degrees and runs along the rear of properties the length of Mountainview Parade. A new brick wall is being constructed at rear of fencing between Mountainview and a new housing development off Forthriver Way.
- 84 Alliance Avenue (NIO - 1991-2002):** A five metre high barrier runs along the rear of properties on Alliance Avenue from Ardoyne Road to Deerpark Road, dividing Alliance Avenue from the Glenbryn estate.
- 85 Ardoyne Road (NIHE):** Protective brick wall to house on Ardoyne side of corner of Alliance Avenue and Ardoyne Road.
- 86 Hesketh Road:** Five metre high steel fence to rear of houses in Hesketh Road and through rear of car park in the Everton Complex.

**Upper North Belfast: Ligoniel Cluster (15)**

- 87 Wolfend Drive - Squires Hill (NIO - 1993-2003):** A metal fence runs across the end of Wolfend Drive and Greenhill Lane in Ligoniel. Below this a short length of fence cuts across the end of Squires Hill Crescent.
- 88 Brookmill Way – Squires Hill (NIO - 1993-2003):** A double fence runs along the edge of Brookmill Way and Hazelbrook Drive in Ligoniel restricting access to a new development at Squires View. A short length of fence cuts across the end of Squires Hill Road.

## OTHER SECURITY ARCHITECTURE AND STRUCTURES

As well as the numerous interface barriers and the various other walls and fences, there are a number of other forms of security architecture that are related to interface areas or to security concerns associated with segregation and division. In particular they include police CCTV cameras in interface areas and structures associated with police stations that are more intrusive than the normal security walls, gates and barriers.

### Police Interface CCTV Cameras

The NIO and PSNI began to introduce CCTV cameras in response to sustained violence and disorder in a number of interface areas in east and north Belfast in 2002. Initially there was considerable local opposition to the cameras and in some cases they were physically attacked and damaged. However, since that time the cameras have become an established feature of the geography of interface areas.

The following lists the location of the fixed PSNI interface CCTV cameras in north Belfast. These are grouped by geographical location or by interface areas.

- 1 North Street – Peters Hill
- 2 Carrick Hill – Millfield
- 3 Donegall Street – Clifton Street
- 4 North Queen Street – Clifton Street
- 5 Carlisle Circus
- 6 Carlisle Circus – Antrim Road
  
- 7 North Queens Street, towards Limestone Road
- 8 North Queens Street, towards New Lodge Road
- 9 Halliday's Road - Duncairn Gardens
  
- 10 Limestone Road – Mileriver Street
- 11 Limestone Road – Halliday's Road
- 12 Limestone Road - Parkend Street
- 13 Limestone Road – Newington Street
- 14 Limestone Road – Clanchattan Street
  
- 15 Shore Road, Greencastle, city bound
- 16 Shore Road, Greencastle, country bound
- 17 Whitewell Road – Shore Road
- 18 Whitewell Road – Lower End
- 19 Whitewell Road – Gunnell Hill
- 20 Whitewell Road – Gunnell Hill – White City
- 21 Whitewell Road - Arthur Bridge
- 22 Arthur Bridge
- 23 Merston Gardens
- 24 Serpentine Road
- 25 Navarra Place
  
- 26 Westland Road
- 27 Cavehill Road
- 28 Clifton Park Avenue, towards Cliftonville Street
- 29 Clifton Park Avenue, towards Crumlin Road

- 30 Alliance Avenue – Ardoyne Road
- 31 Ardoyne Road - Alliance Avenue
- 32 Ardoyne Shop Fronts, city bound
- 33 Ardoyne Shop Fronts, country bound
  
- 34 Crumlin Road – Ballysillan Park, country bound
- 35 Crumlin Road – Ballysillan Park, city bound

The following is a list of the fixed PSNI interface CCTV cameras in east and south Belfast.

- 1 Albertbridge junction with Ravenhill Road
- 2 Cluan Place, covering Cluan Place and Clandeboye Gardens
- 3 Cluan Place, covering Cluan Place and Clandeboye Gardens
- 4 Newtownards Road - Bryson Street
- 5 Madrid Street – Bryson Street
- 6 Bridge End
- 7 Woodstock Link – Albertbridge Road
  
- 8 Millfield – Castle Street
  
- 9 Ormeau Road – Ormeau Avenue – Cromac Street

The introduction of CCTV cameras in interface areas was initially controversial and was challenged by some groups and organisations, however they appear to have contributed to a reduction in the scale of interface violence in recent years, at least in some areas. Furthermore, it may well be that an extension in the number of such cameras might contribute to the sense security of local residents in other areas or as part of a package of measures designed to remove some of the barriers.

However, such options are qualified because there has been no formal evaluation of the contribution of the cameras to reducing violence in interface areas, and research in England and Wales has questioned the value and impact of CCTV systems.

### **Recommendation 1:**

**Any extension of the use of CCTV cameras in interface areas should be preceded by an evaluation of the effectiveness of the existing network of cameras.**

### **Intrusive Security at Police Stations**

The Patten Report recommended, as part of the overall reform of policing, that ‘the existing police stations should – subject to the security situation in their areas and to health and safety considerations – be progressively made less forbidding in appearance, more accessible to public callers and more congenial for those working in them’ (Recommendation 53).

To date no evident improvements have been made to the exterior of any of the existing police stations in Belfast, which still retain their extensive security architecture. Furthermore, a number of police stations retain structures and / or fencing that intrude into a public thoroughfare.

- 1 **Donegall Pass:** The footpath in front of the police station is restricted and the carriageway has been narrowed.
- 2 **Posnett Street (Donegall Pass):** A yellow security barrier and concrete blocks have been placed across the former junction with Albion Lane, which is now a PSNI car park area.
- 3 **Harper Street:** The footpath and carriageway have been restricted beside Mountpottinger PSNI station.
- 4 **Castleton Avenue:** Through access for vehicles between North Queen Street and York Road has been closed by security barriers for York Road PSNI station.
- 5 **Torrens Avenue:** Through access to Oldpark Road has been closed by security walls of Oldpark PSNI station.
- 6 **Tennant Street:** The footpath in front of the police station is closed off to pedestrians.

**Recommendation 2:**

**Any overall strategy and process for removing interface barriers and security structures in Belfast should also include a framework for reducing or removing the intrusive presence of security architecture associated with PSNI stations in the city.**

This would facilitate both the process of normalising the physical environment and of making police stations more accessible, and thus might contribute to improving police-community relations.

## QUANTIFYING INTERFACE VIOLENCE

One of the defining features of interface areas, and a persistent problem for people living close to an interface, is the recurrence of acts of rioting, disorder, criminal damage and violent assault. The need to 'reduce tensions at interface areas' was identified in *A Shared Future* as a key issue to be addressed (ASF section 2.3). However, while there is a general acknowledgment of the problem of interface tension and violence, it has proved to be more difficult to quantify it. Prior to 2004 the police did not specifically record sectarian incidents, nor did they isolate outbreaks of rioting or disorder in their published data. The only figures that were available to monitor changing patterns of violence were provided for a limited number of interfaces in north Belfast, and only on request (Jarman 2005).

This issue was highlighted by the publication of *A Shared Future and Racial Equality Strategy: Good Relation Indicators Baseline Report*, published in January 2007, which set out a number of indicators of a 'positive and harmonious relationship between communities at interface areas'. These included:

1. Deaths due to the security situation;
2. Casualties as a result of paramilitary style shooting;
3. Casualties as a result of paramilitary style assault;
4. Security related incidents;
5. Criminal damage offences with a hate motivation; and
6. Intimidation through physical damage to a building or graffiti.

Unfortunately, while each of these indicators has some impact on and relation to tensions at interfaces, none of them are specific to interface areas, but rather relate to a Northern Ireland wide context and they thus offer no real indication of the changing patterns of tensions at interface areas.

Recent research commissioned by BIP (Jarman 2006) identified a limited number of different events and a range of activities that often had a negative impact on tension in interface areas, and which led to outbreaks of violence. The events included:

- Parades;
- Football and GAA matches;
- Bonfires; and
- Halloween.

The recurrent or persistent activities included:

- The use and abuse of alcohol;
- The growth of the night-time economy;
- Flying of flags; and
- The use of fireworks.

These indicate how tensions at interface areas are impacted upon by a growing diversity of events and activities and which are more diffuse than the normative understandings of interface problems in extending beyond the confines of the summer marching season, to include key dates in the sporting calendar and Halloween.

Data provided by the PSNI for the main interface areas in A District (North and West Belfast) for the period January 2004 to end March 2007 are an important contribution in enabling interface violence to be tracked and analysed. The data documents the number of incident by month for fifteen interface areas:

### **Alliance Avenue / Glenbryn;**

- Ardoyne Shop Front / Twaddell Avenue;
- Flax Street / Cambrai Street / Leopold Street;
- Cliftonpark Avenue / Manor Street;
- Oldpark Road / Rosapenna Street;
- Cavehill Road / Westland Road / Waterworks / Hughendon Avenue;
- Duncairn Gardens / Halliday's Road;
- Limestone Road / Parkside / Mountcollyer;
- Alexandra Park;
- Whitewell / Gunnell Hill / Graymount;
- Squires Hill / Ligoniel Road;
- Denmark Street / Carlisle Circus;
- Lanark Way / Workman Avenue;
- Cupar Way; and
- Roden Street.

The data illustrates the diverse patterns of incidents in different areas over different months of the year and on a year-by-year basis. It highlight the problems of trying to draw general patterns across relatively small geographical interface areas, but breaking the number of incidents down in this level of detail will allow greater possibility of linking an increase in incidents with specific activities or events.

Table 2 illustrates the annual number of incidents recorded by the police in each of the fifteen interface areas on an annual basis from January 2004 to December 2006. The figures include all crimes and incidents under the following categories: assaults, bomb scares, intimidation/threats, criminal damage to property and vehicles, arson/fire, petrol bombs, attacks on buses and emergency services, youths causing annoyance, disturbances and suspicious behaviour.

The figures reveal that there is a wide diversity of the number of incidents across the various interfaces, with 38 incidents in Alexandra Park and 83 at Roden Street compared to 823 in the Waterworks area and 662 in the Whitewell Road area. The balance between the figures in different areas is perhaps also rather surprising as few people would probably identify the Waterworks area as the interface with the most incidents over the past three years, while the Ardoyne Shop Fronts has the fourth fewest number of incidents and yet is regarded as a recurrently problematic interface. Some of this diversity may be accounted for by the scale and impact of community workers at the different interfaces, while it may also reflect the nature of the incidents or the location, for example the Roden Street interface has been impacted by the Westlink roadworks.

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SECURITY

**Table 2: Incidents recorded by PSNI in interface areas in A District, January 2004 – December 2006**

	2004	2005	2006	Total
Alliance Avenue / Glenbryn	80	106	79	265
Ardoyne Shop Front / Twaddell Avenue	31	51	41	123
Flax St / Cambrai St / Leopold Street	33	63	106	202
Cliftonpark Ave / Manor St	128	123	122	373
Oldpark Road / Rosapenna Street	37	39	75	151
Cavehill Rd / Westland Rd / Waterworks/ Hughendon Ave	295	263	265	823
Duncairn Gardens / Halliday's Road	41	69	64	174
Limestone Road / Parkside / Mountcollyer	62	198	166	426
Alexandra Park	10	13	15	38
Whitewell / Gunnell Hill / Graymount	168	264	230	662
Squires Hill / Ligoniel Road	35	64	106	205
Denmark St / Carlisle Circus	23	34	27	84
Lanark Way / Workman Ave	37	56	91	184
Cupar Way	107	183	188	478
Roden Street	35	22	26	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>1122</b>	<b>1548</b>	<b>1601</b>	

The figures also indicate that there was a substantial increase in the total number of incidents between 2004 and 2005 and a further small increase in 2006. But within this there were some variety of experiences with the number of incidents in Clifton Park Avenue, the Waterworks area and Roden Street all peaking in 2004, while Alliance, Ardoyne Shops, Duncairn Gardens, Limestone Road and Whitewell all had the largest number of incidents in 2005. The increase in 2005 might in large part be associated with the riots following the Tour of the North and Twelfth parades at Ardoyne and the Whiterock parade in September, although the monthly breakdown of figures indicate uncertainty about the immediate impact of these events. But it is perhaps worrying that the 2006 figures indicate a further increase.

In fact the monthly breakdown in the figures for each interface illustrate a very diverse pattern of peaks and troughs with no consistency and no overall pattern. This suggest that the ebbs and flows are more likely to be due to very localised factors, and tit for tat responses, than they are to be influenced by events occurring on a city-wide basis.

The police data is a very useful guide to the levels of crime and disorder in the various interface areas of north and west Belfast and the diversity of experiences highlights the fact that interfaces need to be addressed as individual areas as much as generalised spatial locations, and illustrates how the collective noun of interface areas obscures as much as it reveals.

**Recommendation 3: PSNI data on incidents in interface areas should be compiled for all interface areas of the city in order to (a) enable further analysis of the localised problems and (b) provide general baseline indicators of interface tensions.**

**Recommendation 4: The Interface Working Group should agree a broad range of indicators that will meet the needs of illustrating 'positive and harmonious relationships in interface areas' as set out in *A Shared Future*, or any comparable aspirations in the replacement document.**

## REMOVING BARRIERS

The interface and security walls and fences walls were initially viewed as a necessary short-term response to a particular crisis. In fact when the British Army created the first 'peaceline' during the Troubles<sup>1</sup> by rolling out barbed wire between the Falls and Shankill, it was considered to be a very short term response. However, in practice the walls and fences have stayed up longer than was originally anticipated, and have all too readily become accepted as part of the routine of daily life.

The first peaceline was constructed from rolls of barbed wire; later metal fencing or steel sheeting was used, while low gates were used to close off roads on a temporary basis. But over the years more elaborate structures have been constructed, although there are still many examples of green steel sheet or galvanised steel fencing being used to divide areas and segregate communities.

Many of the interface barriers are now built of brick, sometimes with designs incorporated into them, with coloured steel fencing on top and with buffers of trees and bushes planted in front to disguise the harshness of the wall. Such structures are clearly not conceived as temporary measures; rather they are obviously regarded from the outset as a permanent intervention on the landscape.

And while the security architecture and structures that once surrounded the commercial city centre have long been removed, only a small number of security barriers in or near to residential areas have been removed. We have been able to identify five security structures that have been removed, in four cases this has happened very recently.

- 1 **Donore Court – Antrim Road:** Steel security fencing closing off the road was removed sometime around 1996. This was not an interface barrier, but rather was associated with the nearby Girdwood Barracks.
- 2 **Dunboyne Park – Springfield Road:** Yellow security gates were removed sometime around 2006-2007.
- 3 **West Circular Road:** Yellow security gates at the junction with Springfield Road, which had been left open for some considerable time were removed in Spring 2008.
- 4 **Roden Street:** Part of the barrier between the Roden Street area and the Westlink which served to close off the junction with Distillery Street has been incorporated into the walls that have been built as part of the Westlink regeneration and extension.
- 5 **Duncairn Gardens – New Lodge:** One of the six sections of security fence on the New Lodge side of Duncairn Gardens has been removed and another will shortly be removed due to regeneration.
  - Sheet steel fence between 164 and 188 Duncairn Gardens removed due to housing and commercial redevelopment in early 2008.
  - Sheet steel fence between 52 and 88 Duncairn Gardens will be removed when current housing redevelopment is completed.

<sup>1</sup> There is evidence of a 'peaceline' being constructed in the Sailortown area in the 1930s see Smyth, 1991: 26.

- 6 Alexandra Park Avenue:** Steel sheeting attached over existing fencing to Alexandra Park facing Dunmore housing development was removed in April 2008.

A further barrier at Longlands – Whitewell Road (No 61) is adjacent to the works rebuilding the Arthur Road bridge, and may well be removed in this process.

Whilst this is a limited number of removals that has taken place, it highlights that there are a variety of circumstances and contexts in which barriers can be taken down: either because the barrier no longer serves any useful purpose due to the changing political context, because an area is being regenerated or in response to requests from the local community. These various reasons for removing barriers offer one line of approach to the remaining barriers.

It is therefore reasonable to ask of all the barriers:

- Are they still needed / do they serve a security or safety purpose?
- Could they be removed through a regeneration programme?
- Is there any community interest in removing them?

The following is a list of some of the interface barriers across Belfast that might be considered as possible candidates for complete or partial removal.

### **Are they Still Needed?**

It is questionable whether any of the following barriers still serve any security function.

- 1 Carnanmore Park, Suffolk (No 1 in the main list):** This steel fence runs at the rear of houses in Carnanmore Park and the Glen River. The fence ends abruptly while adjacent path continues.
- 2 Moyard (No 7):** A steel fence runs at the rear of Moyard Parade, Moyard Crescent, Springfield Park and Springfield Heights and separates the properties from rough hillside and grazing land.
- 3 Springhill Avenue (No 11):** A wall and steel fence closes off Springhill Avenue facing New Barnsley PSNI station, it continues the length of Springhill Avenue in one direction and in the other a low security wall runs along Springfield Road at the rear of Springhill Crescent.
- 4 Henry Street – Westlink (No 49):** A permanently locked low gate barrier restricts vehicle access between Henry Street and York Street.
- 5 Woodvale - Holy Cross (No 74):** A short section of steel fence at the end of Woodvale Road restricts the line of sight between Twaddell Avenue and Brompton Park. The wall of the adjacent Holy Cross Church on Woodvale Road is heightened by a metre high wire fence.

### Opening Access

A number of roads are currently closed on either a part-time or full-time basis. It is worth considering whether they could be opened or how the opening hours might be extended as a step to the permanent opening of some roads.

- 6 **Lanark Way (No 13):** Electronically controlled gates at Lanark Way restrict access at certain times.
- 7 **North Howard Street (No 15):** Security gates restrict access at certain times.
- 8 **Northumberland Street (No 16):** Security gates restrict access at certain times.
- 9 **Townsend Street (No 18):** Security gates restrict access at certain times.
- 10 **Brucevale Park – Duncairn Avenue (No 66):** The road was closed off due to its proximity to the Girdwood Barracks site, which is no longer used.
- 11 **Crumlin Road - Flax Street (No 72):** A steel gate closes off Flax Street near the junction with Crumlin Road.

### Remove with Regeneration

Regeneration is occurring in many parts of the city, in developments at Dunmore and near Mountainview in north Belfast barriers have been or are being incorporated into the new developments, which only serves to reinforce the established patterns of segregation and division. Similarly the construction of that factory site on Duncairn Gardens reinforced the divisions between Tigers Bay and New Lodge, but perhaps more significantly also provided little in the way of employment opportunities for those living in nearby areas. A more positive example has been the community-initiated regeneration of parts of the interface between Suffolk and Lenadoon, which helped create employment and economic resources for the local communities. However, even here some security barriers remain in place.

**Recommendation 5: There should be a presumption that any redevelopment or regeneration in interface areas should aim to remove barriers and rigid physical divisions, rather than consolidate existing ones or create new barriers.**

**Recommendation 6: Proposals for the redevelopment and regeneration of interface areas should involve consultation with the local communities and, where appropriate, should aim to have a positive impact on employment opportunities and the local economic base.**

One location currently being regenerated is the old shirt factory on Limestone Road (No 53) at the interface between Parkside and Mountcollyer and opposite the derelict interface between Newington and Tigers Bay. This could be an opportunity to initiate a wider regeneration / removal process to include:

- 12 **Newington Street (No 51):** Yellow security gate prevents vehicle access from Limestone Road. None of the neighbouring streets are closed off.

**13 Limestone Road (No 52):** Row of boarded up NIHE houses below junction with Halliday's Road (Tigers Bay).

**14 Alexandra Park (No 55):** A steel fence across Alexandra Park from Parkside Gardens to the rear of the recycling depot on Alexandra Park Avenue.

Torrens is another area of north Belfast that is being subjected to extensive regeneration. This should provide an opportunity to review the necessity of retaining the various security barriers in the area.

**15 Torrens - Wyndham Street (No 66):** A section of wall with mesh fencing along side of property on Elimgrove Street, Wyndham Street, Wyndham Drive and Torrens Crescent.

**16 Torrens - Oldpark Road (No 67):** A wall closes access to Oldpark Road from Torrens Avenue.

**17 Oldpark Avenue (No 68):** A brick wall runs along the rear of properties on Oldpark Avenue to Cliftonville Road.

A similar approach could be developed for the regeneration of Duncairn Gardens, where two barriers have already been removed.

**18 Duncairn Gardens – New Lodge (No 42):** There are four remaining sections of security fence on the New Lodge side of Duncairn Gardens.

- The New Lodge section of Halliday's Road is closed by a wall and fence structure but with a pedestrian gate.
- The entrance to Edlingham Street has been partially built over, while the remainder is blocked by a permanently closed steel gated fence.
- Access between Lepper Street and Duncairn Gardens is restricted to pedestrians by a steel and brick barrier.
- A section of sheet steel fence tops the wall in the car park of the North City Business Centre.

**19 Adam Street (No 45):** Access between Adam Street and Duncairn Gardens is restricted by a metal gate.

**20 Moyola Street (No 46):** Gated steel barrier restricts access to Adam Street. Pedestrian access to Duncairn Gardens during daytime.

Finally, proposed or possible regeneration in a number of other areas should be undertaken with a view to increasing scope for sharing and integration rather than further entrenching segregation. The following barriers might be included in any such approach:

**21 Springfield Road (No 9):** Buffer of empty land/vegetation/fencing between Springmartin Road and Dunboyne Park.

**22 Stewart Street (No 23):** A large brownfield site acts as a buffer between Stewart Street, East Bridge Street and Central Station.

- 23 **Cooke Street (No 24):** Area of fenced-off waste-land at junction with Ormeau Road. Sign stating purchased for regeneration by BRO.
- 24 **Shaftesbury Avenue (No 25):** An area of fenced-off waste-land at junction with Ormeau Road.
- 25 **Millfield (No 36):** Buffer of brick wall, fencing and vegetation from Brown Street to near Peter's Hill.
- 26 **Clifton Street – Regent Street (No 39):** An area of undeveloped waste ground between Regent Street, Clifton Street and West Link.
- 27 **Skegoneill Avenue – Glandore Avenue (No 58):** A wasteland / buffer zone extending across junctions with Queen Victoria Gardens and Ashfield Drive.
- 28 **Antigua Street (No 69):** Green sheet steel fencing at rear of houses facing wasteland behind Dunne's Stores site / Hillview Road.
- 29 **Woodvale Road (No 75):** Derelict houses scheduled for regeneration. Opposite Holy Cross Boys School also stands derelict.

This brief review of the barriers in interface areas of Belfast suggests that more than one third of them could be removed or replaced relatively easily as part of a process of regeneration or normalisation given local support, political will and financial resourcing.

It is understood that the barrier at Dunboyne Park was removed following a security assessment by the PSNI, and this decision was welcomed by members of the local community. Furthermore, there have already been discussions in some areas in relation to the continued presence of security barriers, in some cases the local residents have sought to ensure that some sort of barrier is retained, although not always for simple security purposes, while others are open to the exploring the idea of removal, which indicates that not all communities regard all the barriers as necessary and may in fact regard them as an impediment to aspects of progress in the local area. At present the PSNI conduct a security review every two years to determine whether the barriers are still required, but there is no formal requirement or mechanism for engaging with local residents and organisations to assess their attitudes to the barriers.

The final section of this report outlines a process by which communities and local residents would be consulted about the option of removing interface and security barriers in the context of a process of sustainable regeneration of interface areas. However, before that the following two sections review the opinions of people to community relations in general and review the findings of a recent survey of residents living in three interface areas to the possibility of the barriers being removed, and a third section briefly reviews recent policy initiatives related to interface areas.

## ATTITUDES TO COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The number of people who believe that relations between Protestants and Catholics have been improving has increased (although not steadily or consistently) over the course of the political transition. However, in recent years views have been more positive and more stable. Between 52 and 56 per cent of respondents have supported the proposition in each year between 2003 and 2006 according to the Ark Survey Online data<sup>2</sup>. with a similar small majority believing that inter-communal relations will also be better in the future.

The most recent Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (2006) found that 62 per cent of people lived in an area where 'all' or 'most' of their neighbours were of the same religious background. But the same survey found that 79 per cent of respondents would prefer to live in a mixed neighbourhood; 90 per cent would prefer to work in a mixed workplace; and 67 per cent would prefer to send their children to a mixed school.

Although Catholics were slightly more supportive of mixed residential areas and workplaces, and Protestants more favourable to mixed schooling there was not a major difference between the two communities. The level of support for mixed residential and work areas has been stable since 2004, while support for mixed education has increased.

Other questions in the NILT survey indicated that 79 per cent of respondents believed that better relations will only come about through more mixing and 78 per cent said they were in favour of 'much' or 'a bit' more mixing where people live.

The recent survey data thus indicates that people:

1. Generally have more positive view of relations with the other community;
2. Were favourable to ideas of greater levels of mixing in residential areas, workplaces and at school; and
3. Agreed that there was a correlation between the levels of mixing and the quality of relationships.

This data provides a more positive baseline than a few years ago, but it also refers to the attitudes of the general population across Northern Ireland to the other community and to mixing. It does not directly provide any insight into the views of people living in interface areas to increasing levels of mixing, through for example, the removal of the interface barriers.

<sup>2</sup> All the survey data discussed can be found at: [www.ark.ac.uk](http://www.ark.ac.uk)

## ATTITUDES TO INTERFACE BARRIERS

In the late summer of 2007 Trina Vargo of the US-Ireland Alliance held a series of discussions to explore the potential interest in removing one or more interface barriers. Following these she commissioned a survey. The survey polled 1,037 people who lived near an interface barrier in six areas of Belfast: the Falls and Shankill in west Belfast; Antrim Road and Tigers Bay in north Belfast; and Short Strand and Templemore Avenue in east Belfast, in order to explore their views of the barriers and their response to the possibility of their removal<sup>3</sup>.

Two questions explored people's understanding of why the walls had been erected and the purpose they served. An initial open question about the purpose of the wall produced the following answers:

- 51% thought it was built 'to stop the troubles, fighting etc';
- 39% believed the barriers were built 'to keep the two sides apart / segregation';
- 15% said it was 'to stop rioting';
- 10% believed the walls were built for 'protection / keep people safe / feel more secure'; and
- 6% said it was to keep the peace.

Only 2% believed that the walls were not needed or should never have been put up.

A second question asked to what extent people agree with the reasons for the walls, the answers are set out in Table 3.

**Table 3: Reasons why interface walls should remain.**

Reason	Strongly agree (%)
Help people feel safer	67
Keep communities segregated from each other	64
Stop the other side from intimidating 'our' side	59
Stop young gangs causing trouble	54
Protect against Loyalist violence	54
Stop 'our' side from intimidating the other side	51
Protect against Republican violence	48
Keep communities under control of security forces	25
Help police catch criminals	17
Make life awkward for people	11

<sup>3</sup>See <http://www.us-irelandalliance.org/wmspage.cfm?parm1=779> for details of the survey, questions posed and full results.

## TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SECURITY

The survey also explored people's attitudes towards the possible removal of the walls in each area. Overall 21% of respondents were in favour of the wall coming down right away, while 60% said that the wall 'should come down whenever it is safe to do so', and just 16% said they did not care if the wall never came down. In each case there was slightly more support for to the removal of a wall at some time in the nationalist community than the unionist community. However, although a large percentage (76%) were opposed to the immediate removal of the wall, in response to another question just 10% of people said they would be inclined to move house if the wall was removed. The responses to a number of statements or questions, listed below, are tabulated for each of the six areas.

1. I would be in favour of the wall coming down.
2. I think the wall should come down now.
3. I think the wall should come down when it is safe to do so.
4. Opposed to wall coming down because it is not safe enough without it.
5. Opposed to wall coming down because it is too soon, people are not ready, or there are still tensions.
6. Opposed to the wall coming down because trouble would start again.
7. Opposed to the wall coming down because it is still needed.
8. I have lived in the area more than ten years.
9. There is a very strong sense of community in the area.
10. I would be inclined to move house if the wall came down.
11. Very or fairly confident in police if the wall was taken down.
12. Investment and tourism would increase if the wall was down.

**Table 4: Attitudes to barriers and area by location** *Note: all figures refer to percentages.*

Question	Falls	Shankill	Antrim Road	Tigers Bay	Short Strand	T/more Avenue	Total
Favour wall down	36	25	33	31	35	28	32
Wall down now	20	15	25	23	24	24	21
Wall down future	69	63	56	54	55	42	60
Not safe enough	38	37	27	35	15	23	33
Too soon	48	19	32	14	29	21	31
Trouble start	18	29	15	35	26	36	23
Still needed	8	19	15	15	33	12	15
Living	73	73	66	72	86	66	70
Community	40	47	28	36	60	30	40
Move	7	17	11	9	6	9	10
Police	29	20	27	18	24	20	25
Investment	53	38	45	36	39	40	44

People were also asked what they thought might happen if the wall was removed, just 11% thought that it would have no real impact and things would remain as they were, while most people believed it would lead to an increase in some level of violence:

- 32% thought it would involve minor violence that could be handled by the police and community leaders;
- 23% thought it would lead to significant incidents requiring a heavy police presence, but only on particular dates, anniversaries or when marches took place;
- 17% thought it would lead to some significant incidents requiring a heavy police presence; and
- 15% thought it would lead to constant problems of a serious nature.

Concerns over safety and or outbreaks of violence were identified as a key concern for many people and this was underpinned by the confidence people had in the police. Overall just 25% said they were very confident or fairly confident in the ability of the police, while 58% said they would be fairly worried or very worried about their capacity to maintain peace and order. Perhaps rather surprisingly in each paired area people in the nationalist community expressed higher levels of confidence in the police than did people in the unionist community.

Those people who were opposed to the wall coming down were also asked to indicate what types of actions might change their minds and make them more receptive to the idea of its removal. This produced a limited range of responses, Table 5.

**Table 5: What factors would increase likelihood of support for removing a wall?**

Factor	Would change mind (%)
Regular contact between community leaders on both sides of the interface	37
Special jobs training programmes for the interface areas	27
Construction of more new housing in the area	22
Construction of new leisure centres to keep young people occupied	21
Statement from the police that they would increase police presence	15
CCTV cameras installed in the area	14

Finally, people were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of more general statements related to the continued presence of the wall. This revealed the following percentages of people who 'strongly agreed' or 'tended to agree' to the statements:

- 62% agreed that the wall was still necessary because of violent factions within the communities,
- 43% agreed that the wall served to maintain tensions and antagonism between the communities;
- 45% agreed that removing the wall would encourage better community relations;
- 52% agreed that the two communities were already growing in confidence with each other;

- 61% agreed that local politicians should be doing more to create the conditions for the walls to come down;
- 49% agreed that some local politicians used the wall to play on the fears of the community; and
- 41% agreed that the politicians were not interested in whether the walls come down or stay up.

The following key findings can be drawn from the survey findings:

- 1 Overall, local residents would be willing to have the walls removed, but not necessarily immediately.
- 2 There was a belief that the wall did serve some purpose in reducing acts of violence, and most people believed that removing the wall would not result in anything more than minor or occasional acts of violence.
- 3 Many people felt that the walls did provide some degree of security for people living near them and it was still too soon to remove the barriers.
- 4 There was also limited confidence in the ability of the PSNI to preserve the peace, without a physical barrier as a last resort.
- 5 While the walls provide some security, they also maintain tensions and antagonism between communities, and some local politicians use the walls to play on people's fears.
- 6 A majority felt that the politicians should do more to create the conditions for the walls to come down, and the removal of the barriers would also lead to an improvement in community relations.
- 7 The majority were not convinced by any of the ideas that were suggested to remove opposition to the removal of the wall, but a substantial minority identified contacts between community leaders and regeneration, in terms of jobs, houses and resources, as the factors that might lead them to change their minds.

The surveys, although limited in scope, are extremely useful in beginning to explore the context in which it would be possible to begin to remove some of the interface barriers. They identify people's concerns, but also highlight possible ways to take the debate forward. The key factors would include: ensuring residents sense of safety, more positive efforts from local politicians, more diverse and effective regeneration of interface areas and more cross-community engagement and dialogue.

## DEVELOPING POLICY FOR INTERFACE AREAS

There have been a number of research reports, policy documents and practice reviews relating to interface areas and issues impacting on interface communities over recent years. This section briefly summarises some of the key issues from the most recent of these documents.

*A Shared Future* highlighted the need for a more coherent longer-term approach to tackle the problems of interface areas and areas at risk of becoming flashpoints and argued for going beyond a 'band aid approach' with:

*A combined short, medium and long-term approach that is earthed in encouraging local dialogue and communication, the sharing of resources, which is set in a wider context of social and economic renewal* (ASF para 2.3).

This recommendation was broadly similar to the recommendations made in Belfast Interface Project (BIP)'s document *A Policy Agenda for the Interface* (2004), which set out what still remains the most extensive and integrated series of proposals for an effective and coherent response to the ongoing range of problems that affect interface areas and interface communities. This highlighted the importance of developing a strategy for the regeneration of interface areas across and between government departments; a strategic response to interfaces to be developed at city level through the work of Belfast City Council, Belfast Community Safety Partnership and the Belfast Area Partnerships; the provision of capacity building training and sustained resourcing for community based organisations and initiatives; and an assessment of the range of current policy, practice and other initiatives in interface areas. This strategy must include the vision of a shared and inclusive society between and within the communities of Northern Ireland both old and new, taking into account our constantly and rapidly growing multi cultural society.

Although *A Shared Future* identified the essential requirement of an integrated and co-ordinated approach to interfaces, the subsequent *Triennial Action Plan* (2006) did little more than reiterate the range of existing initiatives and projects supported by the various government departments, without any indication of a more co-ordinated approach, while as was noted earlier, the *Baseline Indicators Report* (2007), similarly relied on presenting existing security statistics as a guide to the experience of interface communities, rather than producing specifically focused data.

Paul Donnelly's more recent review of interface issues in CRC commissioned research *Sharing over Separation* (2006), highlighted the need for government to work with interface communities to develop a long-term vision for the areas, with reference to regeneration, development and working in partnership, and also identified the importance of working with young people, capacity building and mapping existing resource and service provision.

Importantly, Donnelly also recommended that there be a commitment to building no more barriers and the eventual removal of all barriers in interface areas.

One recent practical initiative involving representatives of the community and statutory sector has been the production of *An Action Plan for North Belfast's Interface Communities* by the North Belfast Interface Working Group under the framework of the North Belfast Community Action Unit, which was published in May 2007. This report focused specifically on issues related to regeneration, good relations and young people. The report made a series of recommendations including:

- The area becoming a pilot study area for A Shared Future;
- Supporting a pilot social economy project;
- Promoting a re-imaging programme; and
- Training and work with young people.

North Belfast is one of the most diverse community in the region as it houses the Jewish Synagogue, Sikh Community Association, Indian Community Centre and Hindu Temple. A number of projects in north Belfast have been working to engage with black and minority ethnic groups and residents to encourage understanding and engagement will have a positive contribution to interface regeneration. Therefore, regeneration plans for interface areas must include neighbours (old and new) from a variety of different religious beliefs and a diverse range of nationalities and cultures.

Each of these recent reports highlighted the need to identify, disseminate and learn from models of good practice that have been developed by people working in interface areas and in relation to the management of conflict and violence. This was the aim of *Working at the Interface* (2006), commissioned by BIP which highlighted the growing capacity among interface workers across the city to work with a variety of agencies and groups to effectively respond to rising tensions and violence. However, the study also noted that community projects were seeking to develop longer-term strategic approaches to interface areas that included economic and environmental regeneration of interface areas.

The most recent studies that touch on issues relevant to interface areas are the series of reports commissioned by BCC as part of its Conflict Transformation Project. These address issues such as the provision of shared services (Deloitte 2008); good practice in planning (Bradley and Murtagh 2007); creating shared space (Gaffikin et al 2008) and promoting shared residential space (ICR and Trademark 2008). These studies add to our general understanding of the legacy of the conflict in extending and sustaining segregation and division and identify a number of key actions and actors that are central to increasing sharing and integration.

The studies also highlight the negative impact that segregation and the sustained presence of interface areas will have on the future long-term development of the city in general and the specific impact that division and territoriality has had and will have in many more localised regeneration initiatives.

In particular, the BCC studies highlight the issue of safety and security. This is important because while the previous documents have tended to highlight the role of quantifiable acts of violence, they have paid less attention to the more subjective element of a sense of personal and familial safety. And, as is well documented from numerous crime studies, fear of crime can be persistent and debilitating, and can remain high even when incidents of crime or violence are rare or decreasing in frequency.

The BCC commissioned studies usefully highlight that if the individual's concerns for safety are not addressed any attempts to create effective and meaningful sharing and integration of space and resources will be limited. The Deloitte study for example notes in relation to accessing services that 'if an area has a reputation as being unsafe for one section of the community, people are less likely to cross community boundaries to attend' (Deloitte 2008: 101). The sense of insecurity on one hand has encouraged people to seek comfort among their own kind, but on the other hand the segregation that emerges from such processes only serves to reinforce and help legitimise concerns for safety and security at any possible subsequent opportunities for inter-communal interaction. thus leading to an ongoing spiral of fear, mistrust and further division.

The study by Gaffikin et al notes that the walls which were 'built to offer a short-term solution, had become part of a long-term problem. While they might offer some respite for anxiety, they did not offer sustainable security' (Gaffikin et al 2008: 33). Segregation is thus not only a factor in sustaining division, but also in sustaining the fear and insecurity that underpins any rationale for continued segregation. The report also highlights the importance of 'mental maps', the subjective personal geography of where an individual feels safe and welcome, and which serves to guide decisions about movement around the city (Gaffikin et al 2008: 83). Gaffikin et al thus conclude that that 'Unless there was a targeted ambition to start removing or scaling down these barriers ... Belfast would remain a fortress city' (Gaffikin et al 2008: 33).

Bradley and Murtagh note that while segregation is a persistent problem, there is a danger of the issue sliding down the policy agenda as greater emphasis is placed on the role of the private sector (Bradley and Murtagh 2007: 11). As an example they offer as a case study the successful regeneration of the Duncairn interface in the 1990s through the use of Comprehensive Development powers, but note the lack of subsequent other examples of this type of approach (Bradley and Murtagh 2007: 21-22). In their conclusions they argue that effective planning has a role to play in operationalising sustainable good relations and argue for a list of strategic objectives that should be linked to planning issues, one of which is to: 'work progressively to remove interfaces and contested sites in concert with a range of interests' (Bradley and Murtagh 2007: 35).

The key theme from these studies is the importance of moving beyond the management of tensions and violence in interface areas, or the regeneration of them as interface areas, and rather the policy agenda needs to assume that the walls and barriers across the city must be removed if the aspiration of developing a more shared and integrated city is to come to fruition.

The reports highlight the fact that a 'one size fits all' is not appropriate for an interface strategy and that each area requires its own assessment and plan but each must most definitely be tied into the wider Belfast regeneration plan and long term investment and mobility strategies eg Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

## A STRATEGY FOR INTERFACE REGENERATION

This brief review of interface areas has highlighted the scale and diversity of the existing security architecture across Belfast, which is more extensive and varied than the forty plus interface barriers that have been acknowledged by the NIO.

It also highlights that a small number of barriers have been removed and that there are potential opportunities to address the legacy of segregation and division within the physical environment, as long as the issues of safety and security can be adequately addressed.

However, to date there is no overall strategy that is designed to try to remove the existing barriers, prevent new barriers being constructed or to regenerate the various interface areas across Belfast. The following briefly sets out a number of stages and elements that might be included in developing such a strategy and which will build on the mapping exercises that have already been commissioned by BIP.

The first stage in developing a strategic approach to respond creatively to the legacy of security and interface barriers is to ensure that there is the appropriate level of support and engagement within the devolved government and relevant government departments, among political parties, within key statutory agencies and in the police and other agencies responsible for safety and security. The creation of the Interface Working Group was the initial stage in this process.

The second stage involves developing local strategic approaches to barriers, safety and security and this must be based on two key elements: it must be inclusive and thus involve community representatives and local residents, as well as local representatives of key agencies; and locally grounded approaches must be developed to meet each specific local context.

We propose that there needs to be four principle phases in the development of locally based regeneration strategies:

### **Phase 1: Pre-Consultation with Political and Community Representatives**

The first stage in developing each local strategy would involve consultation with a wide range of political representatives and community leaders in each area or cluster. This would include consultation with political representatives, various community activists and workers, church leaders, the business community, youth workers, the police and others.

The aim would be to identify the key issues and concerns in each area in relation to the existence of any interface barriers and to explore ideas and possibilities for a new approach to community safety which would involve better relations, new agreed approaches to policing, regenerating the areas currently occupied by barriers, and the potential for removing the barrier. It would also be to seek their opinion on and leadership of the design of an inclusive consultation process and broader community engagement.

At this stage, there would be opportunity to complete a desk review of existing regeneration strategies and opinion gathered through other community engagement processes, such as residents' surveys. This will seek to avoid duplication, clearly demonstrate its added value and minimise frustration with the process.

It would also be useful to initiate early engagement with the service providers in an area, especially those with a local knowledge, such as area housing officers and community development workers, as well as to engage organisations with city-wide responsibilities such as the City Council.

### **Phase 2: Consultation with Residents**

Having agreed an approach with local leaders, a full consultation with community representatives would form the basis for developing a practical framework for engaging with the people who live in the areas adjacent to each barrier, including determining the extent of the core residential community in each area.

The consultation with residents would explore concerns and fears, identify possible alternatives to current practice and seek local ideas for the regeneration of their neighbourhood. The means of consultation could take the form of a questionnaire similar in style and format to the work undertaken by Tina Vargo during 2007, or it could involve a more open consultation based on the 'Co-Influence Approach to Shared Urban Environments' model that has been developed by McQueen, Elkadi and Miller at the University of Ulster in a Peace 2+ funded project.

A balance must be maintained between eliciting innovative regeneration schemes as well as the realities of available resources, time-frames and the necessity of priority-setting. Those engaged in the consultation must be skilled in developing creative options without building unrealistic expectations.

### **Phase 3: Development of Local Regeneration Plans**

The two levels of consultation would be brought together in the development of a series of Local Regeneration Plans. Each plan would focus on one barrier or cluster of adjacent barriers and would set out the main ideas and aspirations for regenerating the area and would set out a timeframe for implementation. It is essential that these localised plans are aligned to broader regeneration frameworks, including Neighbourhood Development Programme, Strategic Regeneration Frameworks and any other local area working models emerging as a result of the implementation of community planning.

While some of the plans would aim for the removal / replacement of a barrier in the short to medium term, others might only set out an aspiration for physical transformation and might prioritise relationship or capacity building in the short to medium term. All plans would aim to improve the safety of all, to reconnect interface communities to one another and to the wider city and to improve the economic and social quality of the area.

It is assumed that these three phases would broadly happen in parallel in each of the interface communities in Belfast and would be carried out by independent consultants working with local community organisations and workers.

The full process of consultation and the development of the Local Regeneration Plans will take no more than 2 years. It is important that locally elected representatives are appropriately and regularly involved as the process continues, and that the local plans are integrated into wider city planning and development including community planning processes as they develop.

### **Phase 4: Statutory Endorsement**

The Local Regeneration Plans will be presented to the Interface Working Group for endorsement. As appropriate, individual agencies will engage in specific pieces of work on the basis of these plans. IWG will incorporate the local plans into a broad interface regeneration strategy and action plan. This will identify short, medium and long-term actions and activities and prioritise those areas where communities are keen to address the physical transformation of their area in the short term.

The success of this process will demand that financial and other resources are made available to enable work to begin on the physical transformation of some of the interface areas. However, this should be eased by aligning with agreed regeneration frameworks and the enhancement of existing agency objectives.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations based on the analysis in this report are offered as positive contributions to the development of the wider strategy for regenerating the interface areas of Belfast.

Recommendation 1: Any extension of the use of CCTV cameras in interface areas should be preceded by an evaluation of the effectiveness of the existing network of cameras.

Recommendation 2: Any overall strategy and process for removing interface barriers and security structures in Belfast should also include a framework for reducing or removing the intrusive presence of security architecture associated with PSNI stations in the city.

Recommendation 3: PSNI data on incidents in interface areas should be compiled for all interface areas of the city in order to (a) enable further analysis of the localised problems and (b) as provide general baseline indicators of interface tensions.

Recommendation 4: The Interface Working Group should agree a broad range of indicators that will meet the needs of illustrating that 'positive and harmonious relationships in interface areas' as set out in *A Shared Future*, or any comparable aspirations in the replacement document.

Recommendation 5: There should be a presumption that any redevelopment or regeneration in interface areas should aim to remove barriers and rigid physical divisions, rather than consolidate existing ones or create new barriers.

Recommendation 6: Proposals for the redevelopment and regeneration of interface areas should involve consultation with the local communities and, where appropriate, should aim to have a positive impact on employment opportunities and the local economic base.

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