

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

3 December 2010



Ford underlines commitment to remove barriers of division

Justice Minister David Ford has today pledged to work with communities who want to remove interface barriers.

The Minister was speaking at the Annual General Meeting of the Belfast Interface Project (BIP) who were marking their 10th anniversary of working with communities in some of the most challenging interface areas in Belfast.

David Ford said that removing the barriers which divide communities is essential if Northern Ireland is to build a new shared future.

David Ford said: **“I very much welcome the opportunity to address the Belfast Interface Project today. The creative approach that BIP takes can make a real difference to people living in interface areas and makes an important contribution to building a shared future.**

“No-one wants to see communities who have suffered years of deprivation and segregation having to continue to deal with these problems and to pass them on to future generations.

“I want to see all our interface barriers removed over time but only when communities are ready. These are not decisions that can be forced on communities and I want to work with them to remove the barriers of division.

“The problems faced by interface areas should not be left to the people who live in them to solve alone. The whole of society has responsibilities in this regard - especially in government - to make sure that we are ready and can work across all Departments to respond when communities ask us to do so.”

The Minister said that the Department of Justice will not be found wanting where communities wanted to make progress.

He said: **“Northern Ireland needs a strong policy for tackling division and segregation and building a shared future and, as Justice Minister, I am determined to play my full part.”**

Notes to editors:

All media enquiries should be directed to the Department of Justice Press Office on 028 9052 6444. Out of office hours please contact the duty press officer via pager number 07699 715440 and your call will be returned.