



C/o North Belfast Partnership
North City Business Centre
2 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast
BT15 2GG

Johanne Mullan,
Local Government Policy Division 1,
Department of the Environment,
4th Floor, Causeway Exchange,
1-7 Bedford Street,
Town Parks,
Belfast BT2 7EG.

10th December 2014

Dear Ms. Mullan

Re: Draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 – Consultation Document

I write to you on behalf of the Belfast Area Partnerships (BAPs) listed overleaf. Please accept this correspondence as the formal response to the above consultation by the undersigned BAPs.

At the outset the BAPs feel they should have been included amongst the list of consultees (Annex C) and is therefore disappointed at this missed opportunity and oversight by the Department. The BAPs have played a central role in helping prepare for Community Planning by working with local government and the community sector.

Over this past 15 years, across North, South, East, West and Greater Shankill, the BAPs have been central to supporting Central and Local Government's regeneration policy formulation and outworking, especially in relation to Belfast's most disadvantaged communities. In 2004 Government introduced 'People & Place' Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, and via the Belfast Regeneration Office, BAPs held a leading role taking responsibility for the facilitation of Neighbourhood Renewal in local communities across the City to promote the social, economic, community and physical regeneration in deprived neighbourhoods in Belfast.

BAPs in 2009 compiled and published a collection of Strategic Regeneration Frameworks that set out the regeneration needs and aspirations for the BAPs areas across the City. The Strategic Regeneration Frameworks linked with current policy direction in both central government and the corporate planning of Belfast City Council. The BAPs meet on a regular basis and have a long history of cross city collaboration. The BAPs is a unique framework in Belfast, combining local knowledge and networks with city-wide influence and collaborative working. As an appendix to this letter, I have set out examples of regeneration activity delivered by BAPs at both a local and citywide level.

In relation specifically to the two questions posed in the Consultation Document:

Question 1 – Do you agree with the list of bodies to be named as community planning partners ?

Response: Broadly yes.

Question 2 – Do you think that other organisations should be named as community planning partners, and if so, why?

Response: Yes – However, there is an absence of organisation(s) that represent the community and voluntary/third sector, and thoughtful consideration needs to be given to this issue at this stage and subsequent stages of community planning progression.

It is proposed that consideration be given to including an organisation representative of a majority of community and voluntary organisations as a statutory planning partner. However, this may present difficulties as in doing so such organisations might not be able to assume a statutory responsibility (i.e. for governance or resource reasons). With this in mind it is suggested that consideration is given to naming a separate organisation(s) which, although without a statutory function, is recommended to be involved as a community planning partner and in so doing recognise the importance of community/voluntary influence across the region.

To conclude, BAPs await with interest the guidance on the operation of community planning that will issue for public consultation later in the year. It is our collective experience that getting statutory organisations to the table is important; however, getting their meaningful engagement and commitment to local action can often prove to be a more difficult and protracted process.

Yours sincerely,

John Mc Corry

Chief Executive Officer

For and on behalf of:

- North Belfast Partnership Board, 2 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GG.
- South Belfast Partnership Board, 23 University St, Belfast, BT7 1FY.
- Greater Shankill Partnership Board, Spectrum Centre, 331-333 Shankill Rd, Belfast, County Antrim BT13 3AA.
- West Belfast Partnership Board, 218-226 Falls Road, Belfast, BT11 8AF

Appendix – Examples of Local and Citywide Regeneration delivered by BAPs

Local Level

- £6m Urban 1 programmes in west Belfast and Greater Shankill in the late 1990s.
- £5m for the Integrated Services for Children and Young People programme in west Belfast and Shankill.
- £13m Urban 2 programme managed and delivered via the North Belfast partnership.
- Belfast Gems – the Gasworks Employment Matching Service set up by South Belfast Partnership with funding of £1.5m. GEMS continues to operate as an independent education, training provider, careers and employment advisor throughout the city.
- £32m Connswater Community Greenway project which has stimulated interest across Belfast with potential links to Greater Shankill Farset Way and Ligoneil; potentially opening up green routes across the city.
- Champions of Neighbourhood Renewal; working with local communities in setting local priorities in the Neighbourhood Action Plans, engaging all relevant Government Departments and supporting Neighbourhood Renewal delivery.

Citywide

- Delivering the community education & regeneration programme CATER under Peace 2 in partnership with the Belfast Education and Library Board.
- Providing local analysis and facilitation for the BCC Renewing the Routes programme – an integrated programme aimed at the economic and physical regeneration of the key arterial routes in Belfast.
- With DEL, jointly developing and managing the Graduate Intern Programme with the Department of Employment and Learning which created 40 intern posts generating over 30,000 hours of graduate level professional employment to the benefit of local communities across the 5 BAPs areas. The programme cost £249,200 and had a new potential value to the exchequer of £180,000 (www.dwp.gov.uk) and 85% of the interns subsequently obtained graduate level employment – potential exchequer value of £306,000.
- Collaboration with Belfast City Council and the Public Health Agency (i.e. Belfast Community Planning Consortium) to secure BIG Lottery resources for delivering a community planning pilot in Belfast.
- On behalf of DSD, produced Strategic Regeneration Frameworks for each area, the common themes of which are now being discussed in detail creating a framework with the potential for a Belfast-wide strategic approach to regeneration. These have now been refined in the BCC Corporate plan.