



Belfast City Council

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Report to: | Development Committee |
| Subject: | Re-Imaging Communities Update and Approval for Participation in a proposed event with Derry City Council |
| Date: | 20 April 2009 |
| Reporting Officer: | Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext. 3470 |
| Contact Officer: | Shirley McCay Head of Economic Initiatives ext 3459 Keith Sutherland Planning & Transport Policy Manager ext 3578 |

Relevant Background Information

This report provides an update on the ongoing implementation phase of the activity in respect of the "Re-Imaging Communities" initiative funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI). The initial project identification activity that formed the basis of the approval was carried out by consultants appointed by the Good Relations Unit to identify both the potential for a range of projects and the basic brief for the final form of art piece with associated budget costs.

Following the Arts Council approval of the first phase of activity the Development Department, through the Planning & Transport Unit, was tasked with the implementation of the twelve potential projects across the city.

At a presentation to the Arts Council to update on the ongoing work and progress across the different projects, the potential for additional activity based on the exchange of experience was highlighted. Following the meeting the facilitator appointed to work with the different communities explored the potential for the exchange of experience and shared learning in relation to the re-imaging work. On the basis of this independent work and contact with other organisations an offer to participate in a joint event was received from Derry City Council.

Key Issues

Project Updates

The “Re-Imaging Communities” initiative focuses on both Council and ACNI corporate objectives in encouraging positive community relations through physical works to address visible signs of sectarianism and racism. The objectives of the programme are to contribute to the creation of a welcoming local environment for all residents and visitors through direct works and a facilitated engagement process with local communities and artists.

The project seeks to facilitate sustainable transformation of the physical environments with civic leadership and pride engendered within the local communities as they lead the change through a facilitated project development process.

The ACNI approved an overall budget of £232,000 for the Council to deliver 12 projects covering North, South, East and West Belfast, subject to further approvals at the final design stage. In order to secure the involvement and continued engagement of the local communities the funding has enabled the appointment of two facilitators to work with Council staff on the development and final implementation.

The individual projects have an artist appointed to work with the community on the development and delivery of high quality artwork which will either replace existing sectarian murals or target the re-imaging of local environments to enhance the space for the communities to enjoy and celebrate their culture in a more inclusive manner. The selection of the artist and the final artwork is carried out through local panels with the participation of the local groups, facilitators and Council officers.

From the potential twelve projects identified through the initial work eleven projects are progressing towards final implementation having secured ACNI approval. This implementation will follow completion of the facilitated developmental work between the artists and the local groups. A summary of the projects that are progressing to implementation is outlined below:

An Droichead: A sculptural piece to be situated on the railway bridge adjacent to the Klondyke building on the Lower Ormeau Road. This project has been developed with the communities living in the Lower Ormeau area. The sculpture will be made of steel with a glass inlay and seeks to reflect the cultural diversity of the area.

Ballysillan/ Benview: A sculptural piece is being developed with Ballysillan Primary School and local community groups to reflect and celebrate their culture through an iconic artwork. The final pyramid sculpture piece will be located on a site opposite the primary school.

Conway Wall: Workshops have been completed with community groups adjacent to Conway Mill and the local Travelling Community to produce a mural for the wall opposite the Mill incorporating images from the communities set alongside ‘The Sky’ poem by Tom Kerr.

Donegall Pass: A mural is being developed with the local community to replace an existing mural on Oak Street where it meets Donegall Pass. Developmental work with the facilitator is currently finalising the design which it is anticipated will see the new mural completed and unveiled at the end of May.

Glenbryn: A mural between Alliance Road and Alliance Parade will be replaced with a new mural developed to positively celebrate local community culture. The agreed mural will incorporate a local sports theme and reflect the setting of the hills. The final implementation is expected to be completed by the end of May.

Inverary: A sculptural piece will be situated in a square within the housing estate to enhance the immediate environment and seek to deflect anti-social behaviour and dumping. The proposed metal sculpture has been developed by the community to celebrate their local culture and history.

LORAG: An art piece will be installed at the bottom of Balfour Avenue, following the completion of the Council's alley-gating scheme. The three dimensional art work on the themes of the river, history and environment will be incorporated onto a wall which will be constructed by the Housing Executive as part of the alleygate works.

Lower Shankill: Ten murals will be replaced by new imagery developed by four artists working with the communities in different artist techniques including traditional mural painting, digital media and aerosol murals. The new murals and images, for which implementation works have commenced, will reflect the positive community theme of the 'New Shankill'.

Muck Hills: Four art panels will be erected alongside the M2 motorway fence at St Peter's Hill, alongside implemented landscaping work, as part of the works to transform the local environment. The artwork has been developed in conjunction with different groups using the Hammer Activity Centre and will portray imagery and stories from "under the mountains".

Short Strand: The existing peace line at Bryson Street will form the basis for the proposed installation of a three dimensional art work. The local community in Short Strand is seeking to soften the appearance of the wall and have created individual artworks which the artist has translated onto tiles to form a work that celebrates Belfast's maritime history and marine life. This three dimensional tiled work will be supplemented by an element funded by Greencare and facilitated by Groundwork.

Village Focus Group: Sculptural figures have been created with the community to reflect the working class heritage of the Village and celebrate their industrial past. The figures will be set onto the piers on the Tate's Avenue railway bridge with additional sculptures of trains acting as a welcoming feature to people entering as a link or representations of the former railway halt. A welcoming mural has been designed to replace existing murals and cover graffiti at the underpass of the bridge.

As stated above only eleven of the twelve potential projects are projected to be completed within the programme timescale. The potential project for the replacement of murals in Inner East is unlikely to proceed. Unfortunately it has not been possible to secure local agreement for the proposed scope of the potential works or the process for the delivery of the final artworks.

Attendance at Proposed Re-Imaging Event

Following the update meeting with the ACNI, the facilitator appointed to work with the different communities, explored the potential for the exchange of experience and shared learning in relation to the re-imaging work. The idea for exchange and shared learning was discussed with the ACNI and groups involved in the facilitated project development processes at Short Strand and the Lower Shankill.

The potential for the exploration of the parallel work and the potential for the further experience from the projects was welcomed by the participants and supported by the ACNI as complementary activity under the scope of the Re-Imaging programme. Following further work and contact with organisations carrying out similar activity an offer was received from Derry City Council for the groups to participate in a joint event structured around the experience with these transformation projects.

The proposed event is scheduled to take place on the 13 May 2009, with participants from the Lower Shankill and Short Strand communities who were involved in the development of their respective art works. The groups would be accompanied by the facilitators, artists and the Council project management staff directly responsible for the re-imaging work.

The proposed event also presents the opportunity for local Members to participate in the activity and Committee approval is sought for the attendance of the Members from the Pottinger and Court Electoral Areas with the Director of Development or their nominees.

Whilst the proposed event is considered to be supportive of the overall programme the ACNI have indicated that they are unable to support the costs associated with the visit under the Re-Imaging Communities funding. The approximate costs for coach hire and catering for up to 20 participants has been estimated as £850, on the basis of Derry City Council meeting the costs for the venue facilities and their participants at the event. In the absence of funding from ACNI the costs for the participation in the event would have to be met by the Belfast City Council. As the event offers the potential for the Council to highlight both the positive work developed in the two target areas and the ongoing activity under the wider Re-imaging programme it is suggested that the Committee approves the proposed activity and the participation of local Members.

Resource Implications

The approximate costs for coach hire and catering for up to 20 participants has been estimated as £850, on the basis of Derry City Council meeting the costs for the venue facilities and their participants at the event.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- note the update in respect of the individual projects as set out within the report;
- approve the attendance of Members representing the Court and Pottinger Electoral Areas and the Director of Development or her nominee at the event organised by Derry City Council scheduled to be held in Derry on 13 May 2009
- approve the allocation of £850 towards the cost of participating in the event with Derry City Council

Abbreviations

ACNI – Arts Council of Northern Ireland