



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Re-Imaging Communities Update and Exhibition
Date:	12 August 2009
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development ext. 3470
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Relevant Background Information

This report provides an update on the ongoing implementation phase of the “Re-Imaging Communities” initiative funded by the Arts Council Northern Ireland (ACNI) and outlines a proposal for an exhibition and event to bring together the participating groups and capture the work carried out during the Re-Imaging process.

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 the art pieces with associated budget costs.

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

From the identified twelve projects, eleven projects are progressing towards final implementation. The proposed project for the replacement of murals in Inner East was unable to proceed as it was not been possible to secure local agreement for the works developed from the first phase of the overall re-imaging initiative.

The work on the remaining projects is ongoing and it is anticipated that all eleven will be completed by September 2009.

Key Issues

Project Updates

The “Re-Imaging Communities” initiative supports 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 welcoming local environments for all residents and visitors through direct works and a facilitated engagement process involving local communities and artists.

The individual projects have artists 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 public realm for the communities to enjoy and celebrate their culture in a more inclusive manner. The selection of the artist and the final artwork was carried out through local panels with the participation of the local groups, facilitators and Council officers.

Members may wish to note that as part of this process the scope of one of the projects has changed. The An Droichead proposal instead of developing a mosaic at the railway bridge on Ormeau Road will now install a sculptural piece on top of the bridge parapet. The change of direction arose from the detailed consultations and the recognition of the prominence of the location. The modification, which required ACNI approval for the re-allocation of resources between budget headings, can be accommodated within the overall programme and will enable completion of all the projects to schedule. The overall programme budget did not change as no additional funding was required.

All the project details have now been finalised and five of the eleven projects have been successfully completed. A summary of the current status of each project is outlined below (with additional information in Appendix I):

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.

Following completion of the additional structural survey required by Roads Service an engineer and contractor have been appointed. The structure will be installed in mid August and the piece will be formally unveiled on Thursday 27th August 2009.

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.

Permission from the landowner had to be sought prior to construction of the artwork. The project will now be completed by the end of August and launched at the start of September 2009.

Conway Wall: Following local workshops with community groups adjacent to Conway Mill and the local Travelling Community the mural for the wall opposite the Mill buildings has been completed. The finished art piece incorporates images from the communities set alongside ‘The Sky’ poem by Tom Kerr. It was completed at the end of May and launched by the Lord Mayor and Tom Kerr on Wednesday 10th June 2009.

Donegall Pass: A mural was developed, through consultations with the local community, to replace the existing imagery on the gable wall of Oak Street where it meets Donegall Pass.

The new mural depicts a poppy field, with the Ulster Tower at Thiepval as its centerpiece commemorating the lives of all those servicemen who died in the First World War. The mural was completed in June and launched with a local event on Wednesday 8th July 2009.

Glenbryn: The mural between Alliance Road and Alliance Parade has been replaced with a new mural with imagery that positively celebrates local community culture.

The mural incorporates a local sports theme and reflects the backdrop of the hills. Work was completed in July and the launch is scheduled to take place at 11.00 am on Wednesday 12th August 2009.

Inverary: A sculptural piece will be situated in a public space 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. The scale of the proposed piece required planning permission which was granted at the end of June 2009.

The local community has applied for separate funding from Groundwork NI for landscaping the area to enhance the setting for the art piece. It is anticipated that a decision on the application will be announced in August. The community aspiration is for the art piece, which has already been produced by the artist, to be installed at the same time as the landscaping work. Subject to the approval of Groundwork it is hoped to be completed by the end of September 2009 although works may run into October 2009.

LORAG: The final art piece will be incorporated onto a wall at the bottom of Balfour Avenue which was built as part of a joint initiative between the Council and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as part of the local pilot alley-gating scheme.

The art piece has been fabricated off site and will be installed in mid August 2009. The launch is scheduled to take place at 11.00 a.m. on Wednesday 26th August 2009.

Lower Shankill: Ten murals have been 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 reflect the positive community theme of the 'New Shankill'. The project was completed in early June and received positive local and national media coverage, when launched on Tuesday 16th June 2009.

Muck Hills: The four art panels will be erected on a fence on the Lower Shankill Road. The artwork has been developed in conjunction with different groups using the Hammer Activity Centre and portrays imagery and stories from "under the mountains".

It is anticipated that work will be completed by the end of August 2009 with a launch proposed for early September 2009.

Short Strand- The existing peace line at Bryson Street formed the basis for the installation of a three dimensional art work. The local community in Short Strand

sought to soften the appearance of the wall and created individual artworks which the artist translated onto tiles to form the work that celebrates Belfast's maritime history and marine life.

The three dimensional tiled work was supplemented by further art pieces funded through Greencare and facilitated by Groundwork. The work was completed in April 2009 and launched on Thursday 7th May 2009.

Village Focus Group: The artist, working with the community, has created sculptural figures to reflect the working class heritage of the Village and celebrate their industrial past. The figures will be set onto the piers of the Tate's Avenue railway bridge with additional sculptures of trains acting as a entrance feature for people coming into the area and linking to the former railway halt. A new welcoming mural has also been designed to replace existing imagery and cover graffiti at the bridge underpass.

Planning permission was granted at the end of July and completion is scheduled for the end of August with a planned launch of mid-September 2009.

Celebration of Completed Projects

Re-imagining Communities Projects have provided positive learning and development experience for the participating communities and has exceeded targets in terms of media coverage, participants and community engagement with positive feedback from within the projects and externally. It would be valuable for this work to be encapsulated and celebrated through a publication to chart the different stages of projects from initial workshops, through to implementation of artworks and unveiling.

An exhibition of completed projects could also enable the public and visitors to the city to view the new artworks / imagery and learn about the positive changes currently taking place in Belfast. The exhibition event and programme documentation could bring together the participants from the local communities with the artists and facilitators to share their experiences and celebrate the achievement of the completed projects. It is hoped that an exhibition / event could take place in late September 2009 to coincide with the completion of the projects.

Whilst resources have been identified from within existing budgets to meet the cost of the proposed publication, funding has not yet been identified for the suggested exhibition / event. Discussions with ACNI are ongoing in respect of the potential for a contribution to such an event and Committee approval is sought for the officers to pursue further funding opportunities to support the event which would cost approximately £2,500.

Resource Implications

Financial

Funding of £2,500 will be sought for the development of an exhibition / event to mark the completion of the current re-imagining initiative and celebrate the work carried out by the participants from across the city.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees:

1. to note the updates in respect of the individual projects, as set out within the body of the report and Appendix 1; and
2. to approve the organisation and delivery of the exhibition/ event to celebrate the completed work, subject to the funding being obtained.

Abbreviations

ACNI Arts Council Northern Ireland

Decision Tracking

Following approval by the Committee the Project Manager will explore funding opportunities to support the organisation of an exhibition / event and report back to the next Committee.

Timeline: September 2009

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Attachments

Appendix 1 Photographs and imagery documenting progress and completed projects

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