

Network UPDATE



FOR THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN THE NORTH-WEST

"Promoting equal citizenship, justice and equality of opportunity"

WINTER
2010-11

Drafts & Winds of Change

At time of writing, a fast-moving and complex scenario is unfolding in these parts.

The UK Coalition has handed down a budget, couched in language that assures us that the most disadvantaged will not become more so. The 2.5% increase in VAT might represent something of a challenge to that. Messrs. Cameron and Clegg really need to put some flesh on the bones of what they mean by The Big Society lest their "mission" be seen as more an ideological drive rather than sound socioeconomic policy.

And of course, the NI executive has proudly shared the headline detail on how it plans to work on its share. We have been promised more detail on what the ramifications will be for each department but this has been piecemeal thus far – how can our communities properly assess the direction of travel if they do not know the precise nature of future budgets? As consultations go, this current draft budget does not yet provide enough to afford meaningful interpretation and therefore response.

A lot of catching-up is needed by the Executive, not least in elaborating on what are frontline services. Are these services provided only by statutory agencies? Or do they include state-resourced services provided by our sector to some of the most marginalised sections of the community? We really do need to know.

The phrase "changing the way we do things" has been used extensively in recent times, and is of course subject to

interpretation. To quote another oft-used term, in these times of austerity, surely the biggest changes required are around getting back to being needs-led rather than structure-led, sustaining how a particular body functions or has functioned. And if that led to more effective cross-departmental working, where response to needs becomes collective and therefore more cohesive, wouldn't that be a big step forward?

The first part of 2011 brings a run of elections across the island and commentary has begun on whether a sea-change is to be expected or the shallowness of the talent-pool will instead show.

Considering the RoI election, it will be interesting to find out where all-island policy finds itself should for example, Fine Gael become coalition leaders. While a Derry-Dublin throughway is an important economic driver, surely citizens in border areas should be clamouring just as loudly for greater collaboration in public services?

In the northern context, we can hope for a significant erosion of double-jobbing and possibly an influx of new personalities and talents. Of course, there is little to indicate any shake-up of the five-party pigeonhole but this should not constrain all of our efforts in demanding real politics on real issues, in the stead of constitutional posturing.

What 2011 might also deliver is renewed focus on the importance of engaging with the "civic voice" on an ongoing basis.

New NWCN Project— Participation, Engagement & Skills Project (PESP)

November 2010 saw the commencement of PESP – the Participation, Engagement & Skills Project.

Funded by Big Lottery over three years, PESP welcomes the appointment of two Project Officers, Gabrielle Quinn and Martin McCrystal who arrive with many years' experience in the fields of training, education and community development.



Martin McCrystal & Gabrielle Quinn, PESP Officers

The project will be active mainly in the Council areas of Derry/Londonderry, Limavady, Strabane and Omagh. It will provide support for communities, community groups and individuals so that they can become better informed and therefore more closely involved with the wide range of decisions that have a real impact on everyday life.

From now until 2013, PESP will undertake work in a number of key areas:

- producing and disseminating relevant information via themed factsheets, presentations, media output and web content.
- delivering workshops for community groups, and public sector bodies, on topical issues as well as around the core themes of Participation and Engagement.
- providing direct support to those groups with particular needs around e.g. sustainability, governance, organisational development.
- identifying and confronting barriers for the hard-to-reach in our communities.
- devising opportunities for networking, sharing of best practice and of course celebrating the all too often under-valued contribution made by our sector.

These activity areas are not exhaustive and it is at the heart of PESP to be needs-led - in ways

that enhance participation, create purposeful engagement and develop associated skills. PESP is essentially a hands-on, practical project that will act as an extension to the valuable work long since carried out by North-West Community Network.

It is based on a foundation of solid partnership, underpinned by the principles and practices of collaborative working and genuine user involvement.

After recent and forthcoming structural changes in many areas of public service, local and regional authorities, allied to the challenges presented by the financial climate, it is hard to imagine a more appropriate time for an initiative such as PESP.

The PESP team is already linking up with a growing number of groups from across the North-West. You are warmly encouraged to contact Gabrielle and Martin as of now to discuss what kind of support might be available to your group or the community you serve.

During the life of the project, referral to PESP will be mostly informal and geared towards building a relationship with your group or association. How this develops will vary according to the needs presented and the emphasis will always be on building your knowledge, confidence and capacity to deal with the challenges you face.

This three year project will culminate in a showcase conference allowing groups to highlight their achievements through their involvement in PESP.

Please kickstart your involvement in PESP by getting in touch...

Tel: (028) 71 368811 / 71 279090

Email: gabrielle@nwcn.org / martin@nwcn.org

Web: www.nwcn.org

...or call into the Network at 10-12 Bishop Street, Derry~Londonderry (above The Junction) – visitors always welcome!

** Details are being finalised on a formal PESP launch in March 2011 – look out for details.*

Payments Council sets target date for closing central cheque

In December 2009, the Payments Council announced that it was setting a target date of 2018 for closing the UK central cheque clearing. Cheque use has been falling since 1990 and it is generally recognised that cheques are in permanent decline; the Council has set a target end date to ensure that the process is managed and acceptable alternatives are developed and made available to all concerned.

Customers can be assured that cheque book facilities will continue to be available: any changes that do happen should occur in a co-ordinated fashion across the industry.

A final decision will be taken in 2016; until then, the Council has an extensive programme in place looking at specific user requirements and the development of new alternatives and improvements to existing payment methods.

We are keen to make clear that a closure of the central clearing will only go ahead if alternatives are available and people are choosing to use them; we do not see technology-reliant alternatives such as internet banking as suitable alternatives for all and 2018 will not go ahead if this were the only other option. Additionally, we do not view cash as a suitable alternative.

How did the Payments Council reach the decision?

Payments Council undertook extensive research and discussion with stakeholders to understand why cheques are used, what the barriers to alternatives are and whether there was support for a managed decline.

The key findings that came out of this research were that:

- There needs to be an emphasis on education on different payment methods, particularly for SMEs and consumers; There needs to be an alternative for customers who do not use online

or phone banking or automated payments;

- Of key importance is the development of criteria that will be used to assess the situation in 2016 and the targets which will need to be met, particularly what is meant by "acceptable" alternatives; and

- Those to whom we spoke were conscious that they were being asked to take on trust the statement by banks and the Payments Council that alternatives will be developed and that a closure will only go ahead if public targets are met.

These formed the basis on which a decision was taken, namely that the closure of the clearing would only go ahead if the Council could fulfil such obligations

What has the Payments Council been up to since making the decision?

The main challenges lie in the areas of small business, charities, clubs and societies and older people and these are forming the priorities for the current phase of work. Within these, the immediate focus is on person-to-person payments, payments to and by sole traders and other small businesses, and the needs of charities, clubs and societies both in terms of donation acceptance and also in the paying out of grants and other similar expenditures.

Aside from working with these specific sectors, we recognise that there are other major issues to overcome, such as the needs of people living in rural areas with no broadband internet access. Meeting such requirements will be built into the criteria for determining in 2016 whether to go ahead with a 2018 closure.

Later this year we'll be publishing a report on our progress and outlining the key milestones and targets for the project.

Cutting the red tape burden on charities and social enterprises

East Antrim MP Sammy Wilson has called on charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations to write to the Government's red tape task force to let them know about the unnecessary burdens and bureaucracy that they face.

Mr Wilson said:

"The Government have promised to cut the red tape and are asking for charities and social enterprises to get in contact with them with examples of some of the burdens that they are facing and others suggestions as to how charities can be freed up unnecessary regulation.

I also encourage them to do this, as it is extremely important that we make it easier for those who want to start up and grow such organisations. Although red tape has long been a problem for business, it is now threatening the very existence of some charitable organisations and so it is important that steps are being taken to stop this.

No one is better placed to inform Government about the burdens that these organisations face than the people who run them and therefore I would encourage those who do so to send their contributions to the task force by emailing red.tape.taskforce@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk."

Vital Links – Making Policy Work

Vital Links is a policy, public affairs and participation project, supported by PEACE III, which aims to increase interaction and understanding between the key institutions and the voluntary and community sector, to foster and promote positive engagement.

The following information is based around lobbying and campaigning which is a tool we will need to employ more in these challenging times of cuts and reduced funding.

Lobbying and Campaigning

What is Lobbying and Campaigning?

- It is open for any citizen to make a case to government for change in policy.
- The government listens carefully, weighs options and makes the best decisions for everyone.

The reality:

- Your influence depends on your knowledge of the policy makers, understanding how the system works and communicating your message.

Why do we lobby and campaign?

Community & Voluntary organisations lobby so we can:

- influence decision making
- change policy
- create new policy or legislation
- raise awareness of our issues
- get things done
- share our expertise

What you need for lobbying and campaigning

- Issue or idea!
- Get to know the system
- Plan a strategy
- Using the strategy (apply the plan)

Research

- What impact are you looking to make?
- Has this been done before (locally or internationally)?
- What became of it?
- If locally what happened?

Get to know the system

Where do you start?

- Local Governance
- Northern Ireland Assembly & Executive
- Westminster
- Europe
- Other

Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive

Get to know the MLAs and parties

- Brief is the main word!
- Make contacts with the party staff as well as MLAs
- Outline the proposal
- Be aware of the party's position on the issue!

Statutory Committees

There are 12 committees - one for each of the ministerial departments. Committees have had a considerable impact:

- 76% of suggested amendments to bills accepted by the Assembly
- 70%+ of inquiry recommendations have been implemented or accepted by Ministers
- Very open to receiving written or oral evidence from voluntary and community organisation.

Plan your Strategy

- Set Clear Objectives
- Use information, documentation and research to back up your case
- Presenting the case
- Network and build a coalition
- Use the media
- Devise an information strategy

Use the Strategy

- Persuading the appropriate people
- Work with the clerks
- Work with the parties
- Work with the consultative process

Media - friend or foe?

Any group that continually lobbies will at some stage work with the media - use the media, not the other way round.

It is very difficult to influence the media unless there is some underlying public concern.

But if you get the media onside then you have more chance of the decision makers engaging with you.

Final Note

- Spend time in Stormont
- Get your face known
- Make contacts
- Sit in on committees
- Get to know the system
- Hold events in the long gallery
- Tailor your requests to suit the MLA
- Keep an eye on the Assembly Website

Funding Opportunities

BIG Lottery Fund NI - The People's Millions

Contest: Local groups will have the chance to win the public's support and share in Lottery Good Cause money. There are 4 awards of up to £60,000 up for grabs. The BIG Lottery Fund is looking for proposals that inspire communities to work together to tackle a local problem or make a real change. Entry forms are available by calling the hotline 08450 101112 or by visiting www.peoplesmillions.org.uk

Closing date: 4 February 2011

North West PEACE III Partnership - Small Grants Programme Applications

Applications are invited for Small Grants Programmes within the Peace & Reconciliation Action Plan Phase II 2011-2013 under Priority 1.1 of the Peace III Programme 'Building Positive Relations at the Local Level'. The Priority aims to challenge attitudes towards sectarianism and racism, to support conflict resolution and mediation at the local level. Applications are invited across the following Strategic Priorities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Sharing spaces

throughout the North West through celebration of culture, arts, sports, heritage and identity.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Influencing and sustaining positive attitudes of young people from an early stage and through an inter-generational focus.

A series of information sessions have been scheduled as follows:

Strabane 17th Jan 2011 11am & 7pm
Strabane District Council, Strabane

Derry 18th Jan 2011 11am
YMCA, 51 Glenshane Road, Waterside
7pm The Junction, 8 Bishop Street.

Omagh 20th Jan 2011 11am & 7pm
Strule Arts Centre, Townhall Square, Omagh

The closing date and time for return of completed applications (Part A and Part B) is 12 noon on **Friday 11th February 2011**.

For further information on the Programme and to book a place at the above sessions please contact Paul McPhillips on (028) 71308466 or via email paul.mcphillips@derrycity.gov.uk. Guidance notes, the local action plan and application forms will be available at www.eugrants.org and www.derrycity.gov.uk.

Ten FREE social media tools for charities:

1. **Twitter Search** - Twitter's search function will let you pull up a list of tweets containing your chosen keywords within a timeframe and location. Find out what people are talking about right now and save it as a news feed - www.search.twitter.com

2. **Google Alerts** - get notified by email whenever Google finds new content based on any keywords (for example the name of your organisation). Like Twitter Search, it will help you to stay abreast of what people are saying about your organisation. www.google.co.uk/alerts

3. **Bit.ly** - this provides a method of simplifying and shortening the URL of web pages you wish to share via Twitter or in a publication. Great analytics let you find out which of your links people like and click on in real time - www.bit.ly

4. **Sharing Tools** - these are little buttons that live on your web pages and make it easier for your visitors to share your content e.g AddToAny.com and Addthis.com

5. **Twibbon** - is a tool to promote awareness of your cause on Twitter and Facebook. The service overlays a small icon onto supporters' profile

images to create a 'Twibbon', making a visual, impactful online statement. The basic service is free www.twibbon.com

6. **The Facebook "Like" Button** - if you've an active Facebook, you'll want to tie it in more closely with your website. The "Like" button and similar tools let your visitors show their support in an easy and visible way.

7. **Blogger & Wordpress.com** - these free, hosted blogging engines provide a fast route to blogging that lets you concentrate on the business at hand: communicating your message.

8. **Social Animals Ireland** - A free Irish social media support network. www.socialanimalsireland.com

9. **Irish Social Media Monitor** - the Irish Social Media Monitor has been developed as a resource to track the growth of commercial Facebook pages in Ireland. It has a dedicated section for non-profits. www.irishsocialmediamonitor.com

10. **TweetDeck** - TweetDeck is a free, real-time browser, connecting you with your contacts across Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Foursquare, Google Buzz and more. www.tweetdeck.com

Training Opportunities

Had your free training yet?

Over 200 groups have now availed of the free training from A2B in how to carry out entitlement checks using the Benefit Calculator. If you are an organisation which works with the public, in particular older people, and you have internet access on your premises, you may be interested in availing of the free training which will allow you to carry out benefit calculations for your service users and others in your area. To find out more or to book a training session, contact our Training Officer Amanda Boyd at amanda@a2b.org.uk or on 028 9075 4070.

Training on the A2B Benefit Calculator lasts approximately 2.5 hours and comprises of:

- A brief background explanation about A2B
- A demonstration of relevant features on the A2B website

- A demonstration of the Benefit Calculator, the questions asked in it and the results page
- An opportunity to use the calculator and run through sample cases

In addition all participants are provided with a Training Manual and can use this as a helpful guide when doing calculations in the future.

Arts Council NI - Compendium of Training Events

The Arts Council has compiled a user-friendly compendium of training events, taking place between now and February 2011, which will be relevant to the arts sector in Northern Ireland. Further details at www.artscouncil-ni.org/news/2010/new14102010.html

"Ethical Remembering: Acknowledging the Decade of Change & Violence, 1912-1922"

A 6 Session Course from Jan - Feb 2011

The Junction, Bishop Street, Derry/Londonderry

Course Description:

The events of 1912-1922 provided a decade of enormous change in Ireland leaving a legacy for good and ill. The events shaped the rest of the 20th century and still cast a long shadow into the 21st century. The Ulster Covenant and the Easter Proclamation, in ways a mirror of each other, became foundational documents of two states in Ireland after 1921. Everything had changed by 1922 but the decade was also a decade of intense and often brutal violence. The legacy of violence remained and erupted again in Northern Ireland for a further 35 years at the end of the 20th century.

The centenaries of these dramatic events will be remembered between 2012-2022. The critical question is how? In a very different world and context how will we remember events of change steeped in violence? Both the change and the violence need to be remembered and acknowledged together in Ireland and Britain. Ethical remembering will mean asking critical and ethical questions about violence, justice, peace in the context of the present and the desired shared future.

The course will take place in a relaxing

environment, giving the opportunity to contribute, listen, discuss, learn from others and make new friends.

The course will explore the events of the decade, the change that took place and the violence that surrounded it all. Above all what is our future vision?

Programme: (all 7-9 pm)

Thursday 20 January 2011 - Ethical Remembering and Future Vision
Thursday 27 January 2011 - Covenant, Guns and Militarised Politics
Thursday 3 February 2011 - Rising, Blood Sacrifice and Equality Deferred
Thursday 10 February 2011 - The Somme, Slaughter and Sectarianised Memory
Thursday 17 February 2011 - An Irish Parliament and a War of Independence
Thursday 24 February 2011 - Partition, Civil War and Legacy

Course Facilitator: Dr Johnston McMaster

Course Fees: Unwaged £10, Waged £20

For more information and registration, please contact:

Karen Nicholson
Irish School of Ecumenics, 683 Antrim Road,
Belfast BT15 4EG, Tel: 048 9077 5010, Email: cenisec@tcd.ie

*Irish School of Ecumenics
(Trinity College Dublin)*



The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is the principal source of official statistics and social research on Northern Ireland's population and socio-economic conditions. The statistics produced by the Agency inform the policy process within Government, research within Academia and contribute to debate in the wider community.

The Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS), operating under the auspicious of NISRA, provides free access to statistical and locational information, relating to small areas across Northern Ireland. Information is available across a range of themes including Population, Social and Welfare, Agriculture & Education.

Information workshops on the service are provided by NISRA staff for anyone with an interest in Neighbourhood Statistics. The primary aim of the workshop is to provide information on the background to and purpose of Neighbourhood Statistics and to give a demonstration of the NINIS website.

NINIS workshops now also incorporate PC based training, where practical exercises are set and participants get the opportunity to navigate the NINIS website and familiarise themselves with the functionality and range of data on NINIS. These workshops are normally delivered one day a month in Belfast. However, to facilitate the North West area NISRA agreed to deliver NINIS training in the local area.

Initially two sessions were hosted at The Escape Project Derry (Iona Park) on Tuesday 16th November. The workshops included an overview of the various sections of the website and aimed to provide attendees with the necessary skills and knowledge to utilise the full range of facilities and features provided on the NINIS website.

The workshops were attended by the Network's new PESP Project Officers, Gabrielle Quinn and Martin Mc Crystal, who see the service as an invaluable community resource.

Further NINIS Information Workshops will be arranged in the North West area subject to demand.

The service can be viewed at:
<http://www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk/>

New Older People's Network for Derry and Strabane – North West Ageing Well Together

North West Ageing Well Together has been chosen as the name for the new sub regional network for older people in the Derry and Strabane areas. Supported by Age NI (the new charity combining Age Concern NI and Help the Aged in Northern Ireland) and facilitated by the charity's Age Sector Development Team, North West Ageing Well Together has become a network built by 'older people and older people's representatives for older people'.

The newly formed network, one of 11 area networks across Northern Ireland working to strengthen the voice and influence the future planning and delivery of public services for older people, reached final agreement of its vision, mission and values. North West Ageing Well Network will continue to engage with the Western Health & Social Care Trust, Strabane and Derry/L'Derry district councils, and many other statutory and voluntary organisations across a wide range of service areas including health, housing, education, transport, local government and the voluntary sector.

North West Ageing Well Together is inviting individual older people and representatives from older people's groups to join one of three sub groups which are: 1) supporting older people's groups; 2) campaigning & lobbying – to highlight local issues and having an influencing role; 3) communication & collaborative working group - addressing how to effectively communicate with older people and older people's groups in the Strabane and Derry areas including networking and fundraising. Age NI will offer training for the roles within each sub group to help build confidence and knowledge.

If you would like to join one of the North West Ageing Well Together sub groups or to find out more about the network, please contact Elaine Simpson, Development Manager, on 079 1204 6534 or Una Mulgrew on 028 9089 2634 or email una.mulgrew@ageni.org.

VAT increase - what will it mean for you?

Are you VAT registered and wondering what impact the increase will have on you? Sector Matters has received [an update it wishes to pass along](#) to others working in finance in the voluntary and community sector.

Remember that if you need advice or help with any financial or HR issues, Sector Matters will be happy to discuss them with you. Contact the team on 028 9087 5018 or email paula.reynolds@sectormatters.com

New government idea: donate to local charities while shopping

The government is examining proposals for a scheme to allow people to donate to good causes in their communities by adding a nominal charge to their bills in local shops and restaurants. The idea emerged in the government's new strategy document, [Building a Stronger Civil Society](#).

It said: "To help small-scale local organisations the government will explore ways to encourage local people and businesses to offer their skills and time to support local charities, voluntary organisations and community groups.

"We will work with partners to establish a 'community fund' to enable local grassroots organisations to access sources of funding by making it easier for consumers to donate to local good causes through restaurants, shops and other retailers."

It said some businesses were already experimenting with the idea of adding 0.5 to 1.5 per cent to their bills, while still leaving customers with the option to opt out. "This revenue could then be used to support a local 'community fund' for good causes."

For more on the strategy, click on the link below:

(http://www.civilsociety.co.uk/finance/news/content/7537/government_plans_new_support_programme_for_sector?)

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NWCN Membership Form 2010-11

To become a member of North-West Community Network for the year 2010/11, please complete the form below and return to the Network with your £10/€14 membership fee.

****Membership is only open to community/voluntary organisations****

Your Organisation:

Name Of Organisation:	_____
Named Contact(s) & Designation:	_____
Address:	_____
	Postcode: _____
Telephone:	Fax: _____
Email(s):	_____
Website:	_____
Brief Description Of Organisation's Role & Activities:	_____

Please make your cheque payable to North-West Community Network, or contact the Network if you wish to make payment in another way.

Network Update is sent electronically to those groups for whom the Network has a reliable email address.

This supports the Network's sustainability efforts, both fiscal and environmental.

Please feel free to circulate the document and/or to encourage groups not currently in receipt of Network Update to contact us and therefore ensure future inclusion.

**Network Update
Winter 2010/11**