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cc Image Working Group

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IMAGE WORKING GROUP

1. These are some thoughts on items i and iii of our Terms of Reference.

i. Factors that influence NI Image.

General lack of knowledge and ignorance of NI

External, ie, people who have never been to Northern Ireland

Downside

- Reports of riots, bombings and shootings
- Reports of urban dereliction and "peace" walls.
- Reports of discrimination and "lack of justice" through Diplock Courts.
- Anti-Northern Ireland groups abroad - mainly in USA.
- The perspective and publicity of certain national (eg, Ken Livingstone), foreign (eg, Joe Kennedy) and Irish (eg, Neil Blaney) politicians.
- the attitude of certain Governments - RoI, Holland, Libya
- peripherality - "the edge of Europe"
- the "Paddy" factor
- sectarianism and lack of common identity
- "Troops Out" - "Not our problem"

Upside

- friendliness and spirit of people
- grants for business
- fishing, golf and sailing



- beautiful scenery
- personalities: Gloria Hunniford, Mary Peters, Dennis Taylor, James Galway, Barry McGuigan, Barry Douglas
- genealogy and mythology
- curiosity
- Titanic/Giants Causeway

External - people who have visited Northern Ireland

Downside

- soldiers and policemen with automatic weapons on the streets - soldiers "sighting"
- security gates
- propaganda murals/graffiti
- marking of territory on kerbstones
- checkpoints
- helicopters
- urban dereliction/buildings under repair

Upside

- "McDonalds" investment
- hospitality of hosts
- "surprise" - "not a Beirut" people go about their business - only 3 miles to the countryside - greenery, leisure facilities, places of historic interest
- "just like England"
- lack of congestion
- the Ulster Fry; variety of restaurants
- countryside
- heritage
- church going
- Catholics and Protestants work together - they are not all at each others throats
- realisation that the problems are due to a minority of people
- energy of so many to try and improve things



Internal - people who live here

Downside

- socio-economic status determines the image: thus those
- in deprived areas have a pretty poor view since they suffer
- the problems of multiple deprivation
- "haves" - we're OK - some pretty poor areas
- "have-nots" - why should we care - we're not interested in making it a better place
- PR on incidents perceived not to be even-handed eg SoS visits Coleraine but not the bookmakers on the Oldpark Road
- politicians are poor quality;
- "Catholics are persecuted" (Catholic view)
- "Catholics are getting everything" (Protestant view)
- "Protestants are better off" (Catholic view)
- "Protestants are worse off" (Protestant view)
- there's no end to the troubles
- Government doesn't care
- RUC no longer interested in ordinary policing
- road blocks
- security forces insensitive to wider social and economic needs
- unemployment/poverty/"no future in this place".

Upside

- "great wee country"
- Tall Ships and all that
- community spirit - "back in business"
- self help
- great housing
- the Opera House/Golden mile
- Donegall Place/Royal Avenue
- Laganside/MBW/Springvale/BATs



(iii) Desirable and realistic image

- this is not Beirut or Sarajevo
- major problems of civil unrest - yes but people are housed, fed and educated to modern western standards and enjoy superb shopping and leisure facilities
- administration acknowledges the problems of multiple deprivation and security and makes honest and sincere efforts to address them - complacency does not figure.
- this is not a police state
- we are not in the business of jingoism or trying to pretend that we don't have problems; propaganda is not on the agenda
- the market economy operates here - people can do honest and good business
- people are not cut off - regular air and sea services to London, Europe and the world
- leisure is catered for
- don't believe the blarney; come and see us and judge for yourself.

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