

Community Dev

438/93

11/8/2

From: Mary Butcher
Secretary of State's Private Office (B)
10 February 1995

*Ms Butcher
To note. The Greater
Shankill Partnership has submitted
(to DED) an application for EU funding,
which Mr Pinkerton (T&EG) was
preparing to discuss with relevant
departments. However to date the discussion
has not taken place. My knowledge. 15/2*

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Spence
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Cowan
- Mr Canavan - B
- Mr Magcabe - B
- Mr McCusker
- Mr Templeton - B

- PS/Sir John Wheeler (DFP, B&L) - B
- PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L) - B
- PS/Baroness Denton (DED, DANI&L) - B
- PS/Malcolm Moss (DHSS, DOE&L) - B

1. cc Mr Thomas

2. Mr Cowan

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15/2

GREATER SHANKILL COMMUNITY PLANNING WEEKEND - FEEDBACK

During the weekend 3-6 February the people of the Greater Shankill area were invited to take part in a Community Planning Weekend - an event organised by the Greater Shankill Partnership and John Thompson and Partners, one of Europe's leading firms of Community Planners. The weekend attempted to engage the people of the Greater Shankill area at every level of the regeneration process.

2. The event offered an opportunity for everyone in the Greater Shankill area to participate in a series of workshops, listen to others and to give their views on issues such as employment and training, shopping and retail, education, health and social care, young people, crime-prevention, arts, sport, culture and the quality of the environment. Hands-on "Planning-for-Real" sessions brought people together in small groups to develop ideas about how the area could be improved and what it should look like.

3. On Monday 6 February, Lady Mayhew attended the report back session, an evening which attempted to pull together the ideas generated over the weekend into a vision for the future of the

Greater Shankill. She was greatly impressed by the energy, confidence, and sense of hope which she encountered at the meeting and thought it might be useful to give some feedback to Ministers - attached is her note of the report back session and reactions to the weekend.

Signed

MARY BUTCHER
PS/Lady Mayhew

PM/SOFS/22019

NOTE ON THE GREATER SHANKILL STRATEGY PLANNING WEEKEND FEEDBACK
SESSION ON MONDAY 6 FEBRUARY 1995

I thought Ministers might be interested in reactions picked up at the feedback session after the Greater Shankill Strategy Planning Weekend.

2. The meeting, attended by between 300 and 400 people, took place in the Shankill Leisure Centre. About 600 people had taken part in the workshop sessions over the weekend representing at least 60 different community groups, more than 40 agencies and governmental organisations, as well as a large number of individuals including two workshops full of young people. A large number of local community leaders and opinion formers were present.

3. There was a tremendous atmosphere of buzz and excitement. I was told that the weekend had been a huge success and many seemed quite stunned by the impact of it all. They were especially pleased that so many officials and representatives of different agencies had come which encouraged them to feel that their ideas had been listened to by key people who could make things happen.

4. There was astonished recognition, and strong approval that at last they were being given a significant input into the decisions which would affect their lives and that of the whole Shankill community. Their confidence was encouraged by the high quality of the company which had stage-managed the weekend. The company had rapidly responded to the suggestions made in the workshops by producing presentation slides, a summary leaflet, with the main points made by each of the workshops, and also by producing professional drawings incorporating the design suggestions for the Shankill area. These were presented both on slides and in the accompanying exhibition.

5. Participants were very encouraged by what the presenter, John Thompson, said both about the Shankill's physical assets and about their own personal talents, while acknowledging the extent of the problems that they have had to face.

6. I suspect for the first time, the community felt that the extent of their deprivation, and the causes of it, had been officially acknowledged and affirmed. They realised also that the good things about the community were equally understood and affirmed, and they had all played a part in developing a vision which was achievable. They had moved on from an acceptance of the past and of the present and were gazing wide-eyed at the future.

7. It was also encouraging to see a community which seemed at ease with itself. Jackie Redpath and May Blood appeared in relaxed control of the proceedings, accepted as having authority (especially May) by the others present. It felt as if everybody who was anybody in the Greater Shankill area was there, plus the key professionals of relevant agencies.

8. The reaction to me was one of relaxed and friendly acceptance. I was treated as nobody particularly special but just as a friend with a common interest who had dropped in and who would obviously be keen to hear all about it. Several people came up to me and filled me on the news in their area, such as the Fairhill Ladies who wanted to tell me about the new youth centre which had opened after Christmas in Glencairn, and some young men from the Highfield Estate who wanted to tell me about the plans for their new club.

9. Billy Hutchinson (UDP) commented to me that nobody seemed to be in the least interested in talking about the constitution or 'whether we are going to be out of Britain tomorrow', but only in the future of the Greater Shankill. Pastor Jack McKee remarked on how many members of 'the Organisations' were present and had remained behind to talk to others present afterwards. He said 'I hope that they are listening'.

10. People were well aware of the money available to Northern Ireland from Europe and America and knew that if they could put together a sensible strategy it would be extremely unlikely that none of what they wanted would happen. They were particularly encouraged in this belief by the practical and simple suggestions that the organising company had put forward in the drawings for

incorporating their ideas into reality which did not appear to be vastly expensive. They were also encouraged by Jackie Redpath's commitment to them that the consultation process with the community would continue throughout all future developments.

11. One boy named Martin aged 9 who had asked during the weekend whether there was room on the future development committee for anyone of his age, asked in the final session "Are the things that we have discussed actually going to happen?", and the unspoken reaction by adults present was that, despite their recognition that further developments of plans would be necessary, they firmly believed that the answer was "Yes".

12. We remember the communal shock, horror and misery that the whole Shankill community experienced after the Shankill bomb and the Greysteel massacre. Then people seemed to feel that they were locked in a horrific tit for tat blood bath from which there was no means of escape and no end.

13. On February 6 I experienced another kind of communal shock in the Shankill, not perhaps as intense, but still remarkable - the shock of realisation that there was hope, there was a way out of the stalemate of their lives, that good things would come and that they were already part of that exciting reality.