

**ANNEX 2**

# **Reports on Belfast Peacelines**

**by  
Civil Representatives  
and  
Belfast Action Teams**

**ANNEX 2**

# **Report by Civil Representatives**

## BELFAST PEACELINES

### 1. CUPAR WAY/BOMBAY STREET

This stretch of peaceline runs from Lanark Way along Cupar Way to Conway Street and is a mixture of wall and palisade fence. It was one of the first peacelines to be established in Belfast in the early seventies because of serious sectarian disturbances in the area. The position of the wall very close to Catholic housing results in continuing attacks from Cupar Way by youths from the Shankill Road area. There is space available to create a sterile area between the 2 communities and this, along with NIHE plans to redevelop the Bombay Street area, should provide the means to create a more effective and environmentally pleasing peaceline. Attitudes on both sides of this interface have hardened considerably and there is no chance whatsoever of a wall not being required at this location in the foreseeable future.

### 2. AINSWORTH AVENUE/SPRINGFIELD ROAD

The peaceline which stretches from Workman Avenue to Lanark Way along the Springfield Road is made up of palisade fencing and derelict housing. It was created in the mid-seventies following serious civil disorder in the area. Over the years a significant number of people have left the area and the houses became derelict and were eventually demolished. Again because of the proximity of the 2 communities there continues to be

sectarian disorder at this interface particularly during the "marching season". There are plans to develop this area within the Springvale Project and this should have a considerable impact on the general state of this interface. The communities are totally polarised on each side of the peaceline and again there is no hope of it being made redundant in the near future. There is a slight hope that an adjoining development at Watermouth Street which is presently mixed will prove a success although realistically this is not likely to be a trend elsewhere along peacelines.

### 3. SPRINGFIELD PARK/SPRINGMARTIN ROAD

This peaceline stretching from Ballygomartin Road to Springfield Road has been created in bits and pieces beginning from the mid-seventies. It is partially wall with added lengths of palisade fencing. There has been continuous sectarian problems



at this interface including serious rioting at the Springhill Avenue junction during the late 1980s. This was largely eliminated by the construction of a wall at the end of Springhill Avenue in 1990. Since then there has been little or no serious rioting but there have been at least 10 assassination attempts in Springfield Park by loyalist paramilitaries. This has understandably caused considerable tension and fear in the area and although the peaceline separating the 2 communities has been strengthened and added to over the years there is an urgent need to look at a more effective, permanent structure which will give both communities reassurance. This peaceline will be required for the foreseeable future and there is no hope of any reduction in the security requirement..

#### 4. **STEWARTSTOWN ROAD, SUFFOLK**

This peaceline runs from Lenadoon Avenue to Suffolk Road and apart from a small section of 3.7 metre palisade fence at Kells Avenue is fairly low key. There are a number of NIHE fences and planting which provide limited security and this along with the close presence of the Woodbourne RUC Station gives reassurance to both communities. There have been recent sectarian clashes but it is hoped to avoid having to provide any further major walls or fences. The Protestant Suffolk estate has a number of empty properties and I understand that the NIHE would be keen to attempt some form of redefining the community borders. This is of course extremely sensitive and

would necessitate a shifting of the peaceline and a perceived "giving up" of ground.

#### 5. **CRUMLIN ROAD**

This peaceline stretches from the Holy Cross chapel to Cambrai Street/Flax Street on both sides of the Crumlin Road. It was perhaps where the first instances of sectarian violence began in the late 1960s and for many years both sides of the road were separated from each other by a mixture of derelict buildings and corrugated iron fences. In the late 1980s this was replaced by the Housing Executive with environmentally friendly walls and planting. With a few exceptions this has proved an effective and reasonably attractive peaceline. Both communities are completely polarised and there is no hope of any reduction in the need for these measures.

#### 6. **TORRENS/HEATHFIELD**

This peaceline largely surrounds a small Protestant area in the Oldpark area of North Belfast and is a mixture of walls, fences and open ground which have developed piecemeal as the surrounding area changed. The presence of the nearby Oldpark RUC Station provides the small community with a degree of perceived security but the area has the potential for continuing sectarian disorder. Both communities are completely polarised and although the Protestant community is declining in numbers

there will be considerable reluctance to give up ground. The need for security measures will remain for as long as this community exists at this location.



#### 7. **DUNCAIRN GARDENS**

This peaceline stretches the full length of Duncairn Gardens and separates the New Lodge Road and Tigers Bay communities. It has developed since the mid-seventies with a shift in population and is made up of derelict buildings, fencing and walls. The whole area has been allowed to degenerate and what was in the past a thriving shopping area is now almost non-existent. Sectarian tension in the area remains high and although a significant number of properties on the Protestant side are empty

there will be considerable reluctance to give up ground. The proposed Northgate development will hopefully provide an opportunity to improve this area although the need for security between the 2 communities will remain for the foreseeable future.

#### 8. **ALLIANCE AVENUE/GLENBRYN**

This peaceline stretches along Alliance Avenue from Deerpark Road to Berwick Road and was established in the mid-seventies following serious sectarian rioting in the adjoining Ardoyne area. It was originally a series of corrugated iron fences but this was replaced in 1990 with an NIHE wall and corridor. As in other areas the Protestant community has declined considerably and although the Glenbryn area has a lot of empty houses there is a great reluctance to give up ground. If the Protestant community remain in this area there will continue to be a need for physical security measures between the communities.

#### 9. **NORTHUMBERLAND STREET/ARDMOULIN PLACE**

This peaceline runs along Beverley Street and separates the Lower Falls/Lower Shankill. It is made up of walls and palisade fencing and because of the close proximity of housing to both sides of the divide there has been sporadic instances of sectarian violence at this location. Both communities are polarised and the likelihood of walls and fencing being removed or reduced is slim.

10. **RODEN STREET/WESTLINK**

This peaceline stretches from Roden Street to Donegall Road and was created when the Westlink was opened in 1985. The presence of the motorway and the adjoining Royal Victoria Hospital provides space between the 2 communities and this plus a number of palisade fences have provided a reasonably effective and unobtrusive peaceline. The need for security will remain for the foreseeable future.

11. **SHORT STRAND**

The Catholic community of Short Strand in East Belfast is provided with protective security measures by a mixture of walls and fencing and the careful redevelopment of the area leaving large open spaces to be used as roads between communities. The need for these measures, albeit unobtrusive, will continue for the foreseeable future.

12. **MANOR STREET**

This relatively new environmentally friendly security wall runs from Clifton Park Avenue to the Rosapenna Street area. While it does not physically stop the movement of people from one community to the other it does provide the perception of a dividing line and has been welcomed by both sides. This area has been the subject of serious sectarian disorder and the need for this peaceline will remain for the foreseeable future.



**ANNEX 2**

# **Report by Belfast Action Teams**

# LIST OF PEACELINES

Ainsworth Avenue

Alliance/Glenbryn

Bryson Street

Cluan Place

Crumlin Road

Cupar Way

Duncairn Gardens

Elimgrove Street

Lower Newtownards Road

Manor/Row Street

Northumberland/Ardmoulin Street

Roden Street

Springhill Avenue

Springmartin Road

Stewartstown Road

### **Ainsworth Avenue**

The general perception on the Shankill Road side of the peaceline is fear of encroachment. People will point out that while housing on the other side of the wall is right up to the physical barrier, houses at the bottom of Ainsworth Avenue are being vacated. They also cite repeated stoning attacks from the 'other side'.

There is an overall feeling of being under siege, that expanding Catholic West Belfast has designs on their territory and the suspicion that tracts of derelict land on the Protestant side would be incorporated into Catholic West Belfast by moving the peaceline.

There would be no support in the area for the removal of the peaceline.

### **Alliance/Glenbryn**

This peaceline does not arise often as an issue on the Catholic side who appear to accept that it has to be there and that it will be there for some time.

On the Protestant side the location of the peaceline emerges frequently as a major issue, particularly amongst the community in the Alliance district. Redevelopment possibilities for the

Alliance/Glenbryn area have been under discussion between the Belfast Development Office, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Planning Service and the residents and community groups in this area for some time. It is evident, and it is acknowledged by the people in the area, that whatever the outcome of the redevelopment process the amount of replacement housing in the area will be considerably less than is there at present. A large area of spare space will be left in the area unless some, as yet unforeseen, alternative use can be found for the land. A few of the activists in the area believe, and a greater number accept as a result of fear, that the Government's intention is to leave a band of unused land between the peaceline and any new Alliance housing.

This conspiracy theory still exists and is supported frequently by those who believe it and by others who have their own motives for purporting to believe it. The belief is that, if this proposed open space were accepted by the people as a further buffer, in five to ten years time the growing pressure for Catholic housing on the Catholic/Ardoyne side would allow the peaceline to be moved back to their doorsteps in order to provide additional Catholic housing. They feel they would lose Protestant territory and, in time, the pressure from Catholic housing adjacent to the new peaceline would be such as to restart the process of erosion of Protestant stock of housing away from the peaceline. Ultimately some believe the Alliance/Glenbryn area would become an extension of Catholic Ardoyne.

At a meeting about the area which the Team Leader attended last spring, along with Cecil Walker MP and a number of Unionist councillors, the proposition was made that Protestant migration from North Belfast must be stopped and a critical element in the suggested defence plan would be to ensure that the Alliance/Glenbryn peaceline is never allowed to be moved to permit an extension of Catholic territory, for whatever reason. This proposition was widely applauded and the MP and councillors involved have been analysing the implications of any development plans for the area since then.

#### **Bryson Street, Cluan Place, Lower Newtownards Road**

These three peacelines are located within the Riverside Action Team area and all border the nationalist Short Strand area of Belfast. There have been no Action Team projects which directly involve the peaceline and consequently discussion with the local community on this topic has been minimal. Those comments which have been received have been made by professionals such as Community Relations Officers and Probation Officers who work in the area and they consider that the peaceline is a relatively minor issue within these communities. It has been suggested that some resentment towards the peacelines exists within the nationalist community who think its primary purpose is to confine their community rather than protect them from external threats. However, this cannot be substantiated. The loyalist/Protestant view, where it exists, appears to be one of a

necessary evil and therefore is supportive.

#### **Crumlin Road**

The comments made in respect of Ainsworth Avenue apply here.

#### **Cupar Way**

At Clonard the peaceline is immediately at the rear of many houses whereas on the Shankill side there is a road and a metal fence giving some protection to the houses there. The houses bear the impact of missiles which have been thrown across the barrier. Local residents, anticipating the pressure for housing space which will follow the planned redevelopment of the area, are raising the possibility of moving the peaceline closer to the Shankill to create more space for the overspill.



While this peaceline produces considerable problems for the people who live nearby, the Team has not spoken to anyone who would say that it should be removed and, while there are some complaints about policing, the public and the representatives from both communities have regular access to both the police and the civil representatives.

### **Duncairn Gardens**

Duncairn Gardens has changed from being a pleasant tree-lined avenue of three storey houses, shops and churches in the 1970s to being one of the major interfaces in North Belfast.

- (a) Tension in this area has been high for some months and there have been many incidents including the shootings at Graham's bookmakers in North Queen Street, the Sinn Fein Office in Lepper Street and, most recently, at a local Sinn Fein councillor's house. In addition a number of cars have been set on fire and there have been various stoning incidents.

A couple of specific incidents which did not make the headlines also help to illustrate some of the local concerns.

- (b) In June 1993, DOE took ownership of houses on the Protestant side and promptly started to demolish them. Local residents, including a doctor in a general practice, complained to the Action Team that the resultant gap, in what they saw as their

first line of defence, would leave them open again to gunfire. So concerned were some that they actually sent their children away to relatives until a security fence was erected. Indeed the security forces pressed the contractor to work over a weekend to construct the fence quickly. The Catholic side complained that the 8ft fence was too low and requested the fence to be as high as the security gates to protect them from missiles.

There is a local play scheme which has been running for the last 4 years, partly on a cross-community basis. One group meets in Duncairn Community Centre and the other in Grey Gable Youth Club in Hillman Street but on 2 or 3 afternoons per week they go to the swimming pool or cinema together. Discussions have been taking place about bringing the two groups together more permanently and the use of McCrory Memorial Presbyterian Hall on the Catholic side of Duncairn Gardens was suggested. There was an initial acceptance of this but due to recent tensions parents, mainly Catholic, are now objecting to their children coming through the security gates at specific times making them vulnerable to stone throwing. Although peacelines and security gates in the area do not provide total security, local people do value the gates because they make them feel more secure. Large numbers of children play behind the gates and in the nearby streets and it is doubtful if they would do so without such protection. The reluctance of parents to let their children go through the gates to their play scheme highlights their concerns about stone throwers.

With the current tensions the peaceline environment and security gates will continue to exist for some time. The proposed design of new gates will soften the image and considerably enhance the area. If funding were available, this work could usefully be advanced to initiate the main in scheme in Duncairn.

### **Elimgrove Street**

Removal of the peaceline at this location would not appear to be an issue nor is it seen as a threat.

### **Manor Street/Roe Street**

This peaceline does not often emerge as an issue amongst the communities on either side. The BAT assessment is that the peaceline is there, its existence is accepted, whatever objections there were to the building of it now appear to be put aside and no change is anticipated in the foreseeable future. On the Protestant side there is evidence of some physical movement away from the peaceline, similar to Alliance, but not on the same scale.

However, although housing in the area is generally of a good standard, there is still a high turnover of tenants and an increasing number of empty houses.

There does not appear to be any fear about possible encroachment of territory being felt by either side in this area.

Discussions are taking place with the two communities on the short to medium term use of the land lying idle on either side of the fence. Ideas being discussed include small football pitches, kickabout areas for small children with some seating for the adults with them and landscaping. The NIHE have agreed to the short-medium term lease of the land for such purposes and the Belfast City Council have agreed to become involved in the provision and maintenance of any agreed facilities. These developments would seem to indicate acceptance by the two communities and the statutory authorities involved that for the foreseeable future the peaceline is an environmental feature to be accommodated rather than an issue to be resolved.

### **Northumberland/Ardmoulin Street**

The peaceline at this location has not been raised as an issue by the local community.

### **Roden Street**

Roden Street, which is split by Westlink, falls into 2 Action Team areas. On the Lower Falls/Lower Shankill side there have been some attacks on a local play facility and local people feel vulnerable. This is partly as a result of their perception that the nearby police station at Grosvenor Road is often slow to respond to their complaints. On the Donegall Road side, which lies in the Milltown Action Team area, the peaceline has a locked

barrier at the bottom of the street. This barrier was removed 2 years ago but was replaced by public demand after 2 men were murdered in a local pub and the street used as an escape route.

Now trouble usually occurs only around the July bonfire season. The RUC and BAT sponsored a bonfire competition but without success. In the coming months the RUC and BAT will try to agree with the bonfire builders a way to remove the bonfire further from the confrontation zone. Recent meetings with residents and the RUC indicate that, whilst a few local business men wish the barrier removed to permit access for customers, residents are overwhelmingly against its removal because it would reduce their security and increase the amount of traffic using the area.

Removal of this particular barrier would seem to be a long way off.

### **Springhill Avenue/Springmartin Road**

The Springhill Avenue and Springmartin Road peacelines, although some distance apart, serve the same purpose of separating the nationalist Springhill and Springhill Park areas and the loyalist Springmartin and Highfield estates.

Informal discussions with community leaders on both sides would suggest that there is a general welcome for the peacelines. The interface was the scene of constant confrontations between groups of young people on both sides with all the consequential problems

which arise. In addition there were incidents of a more sinister nature e.g. shootings and petrol bombings. The provision of the peacelines stabilised the situation considerably and both communities welcome the respite.

Some people, while welcoming the security the peacelines afford, regret their necessity but others would have a more polarised and sectarian attitude to them. It is important to realise therefore that in the Springfield area both sides feel there is no threat of encroachment by the other community, unlike areas of North Belfast. Hence any development of the vacant land on the north (loyalist) side of the Springfield Road would not excite great interest and concern in both communities.



As with other areas both communities are accepting the security advantages of the peacelines and are proposing that they should be landscaped to improve their environmental impact. While this formalises peacelines, the geography of the Springfield area lends itself to it quite naturally but it prevents cross community activity in the area.

### **Stewartstown Road**

The Stewartstown Road peaceline is located between the predominantly Protestant side of Suffolk and the Catholic private development of Ladybrook and Trenchard and consists of a 10-15 metre fence.

The peaceline would appear to be as much to protect the private development from stone throwing as to protect the Protestant estate from invasion by Catholics. A representation has been made by the residents of Willowvale Avenue and Willow Gardens to create some kind of environmental screen to the peaceline fence to make it more aesthetically pleasing. During the last 4 years there has been no representation from either community to have the peaceline removed. However there would be a minority view that the peaceline could be replaced by something not as divisive. However it is the Team's opinion that the peaceline will be required for the foreseeable future to provide a calming influence for the residents in respect of their perceived anxieties in relation to their personal and property security.

