

BUILDING CAPACITY TO SUPPORT TRANSITION IN KILCOOLEY AND RATHGILL

(Clandeboyne 2&3 SOA and Conlig 3 SOA)

FIELDWORK REPORT FROM PHASE 1 – BUILDING CAPACITY IN COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION

AUGUST 2018



The
Executive Office

Foreword

In July 2016 the Northern Ireland Executive published an Action Plan setting out 38 actions it would take to address some of the most difficult issues which continue to disrupt peaceful and democratic society, in particular, the issues of continued paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime.

This plan seeks to achieve four ambitious outcomes; a society where citizens and communities feel safe and confident; where paramilitarism has no place; where the public support and have even more confidence in the justice system; and where those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures are supported to do it.

The Executive Office has responsibility for delivery of Action B4 of the Executive Action plan through the Communities in Transition project, which aims to support eight areas where there has been a history of paramilitary activity and coercive control to transition into open and accessible communities where paramilitary activity no longer plays a role.

The Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Board, which oversees delivery of the Executive Action Plan, commissioned independent research which identified the eight areas of focus for this project that have been most impacted by paramilitary activity and associated criminality. The report will focus on Kilcooley (Clandeboyne 2&3 SOA) and Rathgill (Conlig 3 SOA).

In September 2017, we appointed a Consortium, led by Co-operation Ireland in partnership with the Mitchell Institute (QUB), INCORE (Ulster University) and the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) as Strategic Partner to develop a two-phase programme to build capacity to support transition within these communities.

A partnership approach sits at the very heart of this project; we recognise that delivery on the ground needs to include those people who are most affected by these issues.

Phase 1 of the project consisted of extensive consultation with local communities and key stakeholders in each of the areas. This report provides a summary of the findings from Phase 1 and our proposed next steps as we move forward.

We recognise and value the extensive range of important and often challenging work that has already been undertaken by individuals and groups at local level in tackling these issues. This project gives us the opportunity to further drive forward with a new and innovative approach to tackling paramilitary activity and we look forward to continuing to work alongside the communities involved, who are often best placed to propose and deliver solutions to the problems they face.

The Executive Office, in partnership with the Communities in Transition

Introduction

It has been twenty years since our society said YES to peace. Although much has changed, there are still many challenges as we continue to transition into a peaceful society.

The Executive's Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime recognizes the role communities must play in tackling paramilitarism by developing a culture sympathetic to the rule of law and addressing the systemic issues that these groups seek to exploit. Lawfulness is binding on all, extending across communities, the justice system and statutory agencies. Many of the actions within the plan seek to promote culture of lawfulness across society.

ACTION B4

seeks to provide programmes to build community capacity so that they can move beyond the coercive control and malign influence of groups involved in criminality. As such, Action B4 will **'Support ambitious initiatives aimed at building capacity in communities in transition, including through developing partnership across civil society and across community divisions.'**

OUR AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Antiville and Kilwaughter in Larne together with Northland and Castlemara in Carrickfergus
- Brandywell and Creggan in Derry/Londonderry
- Kilcooley (Clandeboyne 2&3 SOA) and Rathgill (Conlig 3 SOA) in North Down
- Drumgask and Kilwilkie in Lurgan
- Lower Falls, Twinbrook, Poleglass, Upper Springfield, Turf Lodge and Ballymurphy in West Belfast
- New Lodge and Greater Ardoyne in North Belfast
- Shankill (upper and lower, including Woodvale) in West Belfast
- The Mount and Ballymacarrett in East Belfast

Between November 2017 and March 2018, the CIT consortium conducted an engagement process in each of the selected eight areas as part of the phase 1 of the project.

The process included a desk-based review of the locality in conjunction with interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders in each area, including services providers, community groups, faith-based groups, elected representatives, the business sector, residents and others.

THIS REPORT REFLECTS THE MAIN FINDINGS THAT EMERGED FROM THE FIELDWORK AND THE PROPOSED NEXT STEPS.

The information presented in this document represents the views and suggestions expressed by the participants in Phase 1 of the project. We are conscious that there will be other views and perspectives on the document and the purpose of the publication is to stimulate discussion and promote debate on issues that are of utmost importance to the continuing development of your community. In addition, as stakeholder conversations took place over a limited period of 3-4 months, it was not possible to speak to everyone within the community.

With this in mind, it should be noted that the suggested interventions are therefore not funding commitments but the starting point for continued dialogue on the possible options moving forward.

Outline

The first section of this report presents an outline profile of the area, the headline findings and the relevant context for successful transition in the area. The second part of the report provides a detailed thematic description of the findings and possible solutions as suggested by various participants. Although each area is unique, seven common themes arose as the major issues regarding building community capacity for transition – Community safety and policing; Young people; Health and well-being; Environment and culture; Community development issues; Restorative justice and restorative practices and; Personal transition. The final section presents the next steps in the project and the timeline for their implementation.



Area Profile and Headline Findings

Area Profile of Kilcooley (Clandeboy 2&3 SOA) and Rathgill (Conlig 3 SOA)

Politics

The Clandeboy 2 and 3 and Conlig 3 Super-Output Areas (SOAs) are within the North Down constituency area used for Parliamentary and Northern Ireland Assembly elections. The constituency is represented by Sylvia Hermon (MP) at Westminster, and elected two DUP, one UUP, one Alliance and one Green Party MLA at the last election. It is considered to be a safe Unionist constituency.

Clandeboy 2(3) and Conlig 3 lie within the Bangor West and Bangor Central District Electoral Areas of Ards and North Down Borough Council. Bangor West DEA is represented by one councillor from each of the DUP, UUP, Green Party and Alliance Party. Bangor Central has elected two councillors from each of the DUP and UUP, one Alliance and one Independent councillor.

Social and Economic Issues

There is considerable disparity in Overall Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) ranking across the SOAs. Clandeboy 2 is ranked 702 for overall deprivation; while Conlig 3 was found to be the 134th most deprived SOA.

Clandeboy 2

- Clandeboy 2 SOA ranks comparatively well across most measures.
- However, it is ranked 140th for deprivation in terms of the rate of crime and disorder.
- It is also less favourably ranked on the proximity to services indicator (n=395).



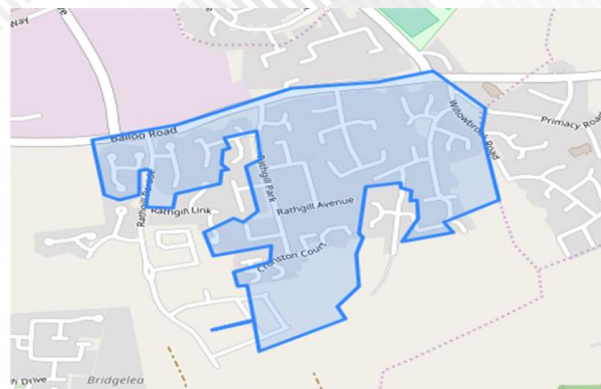
Social and Economic Issues

Clandeboyne (3)



- Clandeboyne (3) SOA is ranked 356th for overall deprivation.
- It is ranked 124th most deprived in terms of Education, Skills and Training attainment. 59.6% of school leavers have not achieved five or more GCSEs at A*-C and 36.1% of working age adults (25-64) have no or low levels of qualification.
- This is reflected in a comparatively low ranking in terms of Household Income (n=283) with 25.19% of households in relative poverty.

Conlig (3)



- Conlig (3) SOA is ranked 86th most deprived in terms of health deprivation and disability. On census day 2011, 23.95% of people reported having a long-term health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activities
- It also ranks poorly in terms of Household Income (n=96) with 45.99% of households living in relative poverty.

Crime Statistics: REPORTED Crime in September 2017

Clandeboyne (2) (with crime clusters)



Total	14
Violence and Sexual Offences	1
Burglary	1
Anti-social behavior	9
Criminal Damage and Arson	2
Drugs	1

Clandeboyne (3) including Kilcooley (with crime clusters)



Total	22
Violence and Sexual Offences	9
Burglary	1
Anti-social behavior	8
Criminal Damage and Arson	4

Crime Statistics: REPORTED Crime in September 2017

Conlig (3) (with crime clusters)



Total	18
Violence and Sexual Offences	2
Anti-social behavior	11
Criminal Damage and Arson	4
Drugs	1

Context for transition:

Transition in Kilcooley and Rathgill continues to be shaped by:

- Pervasive paramilitary presence and control
- A cycle of deprivation affecting consecutive generations
- High levels of drug and alcohol abuse and addiction
- Complex mental health needs and a lack of corresponding support services
- A perceived lack of positive political leadership and civic engagement
- A perceived class divide between Councillors and residents
- A lack of trust in PSNI and other statutory service providers

Headline Findings Arising from Kilcooley and Rathgill

1. There was no clear understanding of the term “transition”. For some it was about dismantling paramilitaries but for others social and economic factors were of greater concern.
2. There was a general feeling that the Tackling Paramilitarism Action Plan had not been effectively promoted amongst the general population and there was very little awareness of the other actions, aside from B4, being taken forward under the Plan.
3. There was frustration at perceived inconsistent and disproportionate resource and funding allocations. Particular community groups were seen as repeatedly benefiting from government funding without proper oversight or assessment of outcomes or lasting benefits to the community. At the same time others appeared to miss out almost completely or had to lobby hard for any investment.
4. There was repeated criticism of the PSNI. This was framed as perceived inefficiency and inadequacy of the police and criminal justice response in dealing with individuals who the community knew to be members of paramilitary organisations involved in criminality.
5. The multiple paramilitary groupings present have different capacities to impact the area. The relationship between communities and paramilitaries is complex. There was very little sense of community opposition to the groups—they were considered to be integrated into the infrastructure and identity of the area with no expectation that they would ‘go away.’
6. Yet, residents continue to feel intimidated and threatened by the physical and material presence of paramilitaries in their communities; particularly when this takes the form of exploitative recruitment practices, aggressive drug-dealing and loan-sharking.
7. Interviewees reported a general lack of positive political leadership and effective civic engagement in the Council area which undermined the capacity of communities to subvert paramilitary influences.
8. There was a widespread sense that greater support is needed for “unaligned” community development work in the area to move away from an infrastructure dominated by ex-combatant/prisoner organisations and individuals.
9. Interviewees reported widespread complex mental health needs and/or issues with substance abuse and addiction impacting the area’s residents with completely inadequate services to support individuals and families affected.

What does this mean for the Executive Action plan?

SUCCESS IN KILCOOLEY AND RATHGILL AREA IS LARGELY DEPENDENT ON:

- A robust and visible PSNI and CJS response to paramilitarism
- Improved community-statutory partnership working to build community confidence
- A clear statement or recommitment by Council and Councillors to ending paramilitarism
- A revised approach to cultural expression, bonfire management and mural reimaging to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment
- Mentorship opportunities for young people and training provision in participative democracy, local government functions and citizenship to raise the morale and aspirations of the area
- Better provision and more effective signposting to mental health and substance abuse support services for people of all ages



Themes for transition

Although each area is unique with its own set of circumstances, needs and challenges regarding paramilitarism and associated criminality, seven common themes has arisen out of the fieldwork.

These themes have been used to frame the findings in this next section which are based on the participants opinions and suggestions.

It is important to note that solving the issues raised by the participants will take a multi-faceted and collective response and it is beyond the scope of this project to solve on its own.

Transition will take time and cannot be achieved by communities alone. This project seeks to help build capacity within communities to forge their own pathways towards a peaceful, democratic society were paramilitarism has no place as part of a wider programme. The next section should be read within this context.

Community Safety and Policing

Key issues

There is frustration at the perceived inefficiency and inadequacy of the police and criminal justice response to dealing with individuals involved in paramilitary-linked criminality.

The majority of participants felt that if the local community knew who was involved and who was profiting from illegal means then the police should know too. There was also disappointment at the inability of the police to uphold or enforce flags protocols, however some interviewees pointed to examples of good practice which had reduced tensions and anti-social behaviour in the past. Initiatives such as drop-in police surgeries and estate walkabouts were seen as central to building the relationships which facilitate information sharing in relation to ASB, drug dealing and other crime.

Possible solutions

Building relationships of trust and reciprocity between police and residents and demystifying the work of the wider criminal justice system.

Moving forward the evidence suggested that a transition plan should consider:

- Increasing the focus on and resourcing of localised responses to policing and neighbourhood policing teams as vehicles for building positive and meaningful working relationships with residents.
- Facilitated dialogues between PSNI and the community to agree more effective approaches to policing and better communication methods in line with action A5 of the Executive Action Plan.
- Initiatives to grow awareness and a sense of ownership of the whole criminal justice system. Providing communities with more accessible information on the work and functioning of the PPS, youth justice, probation and prison services

Young People

Key findings

Participants expressed concern at the social and economic marginalization of young people making them vulnerable to coercive control and influence by paramilitaries.

There was widespread concern at the vulnerability to exploitation by the paramilitaries of young people with inadequate access to mental health or social services. Community development and youth workers described a high level of coercion related to owing money, often for drugs, or because they felt they had nowhere else to go to for support.

There was concern too at the social and economic marginalisation of young people and the environment for recruitment into organised criminality and paramilitarism that this created. There was a feeling that young people were attracted to a lifestyle which they saw being played out by prominent paramilitary-linked individuals and that this held appeal in light of the lack of alternative means of employment.

There was a recognised need to engage disaffected youth who sometimes held a glamorised or romanticised view of the Troubles and by extension of the paramilitaries. This was linked to a lack of widely-available quality information and educational programming on PUL history, culture and values.

Possible solutions

Invest in young people to divest the coercive control and influence of paramilitaries.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should consider:

- Distinctive programmes designed and developed to address issues of lawfulness and paramilitary control and coercion and help take forward conversations about a more positive future.
- The development of youth diversionary programmes and youth clubs to limit potential for young people to become involved with or influenced by paramilitary groups.
- Providing organised visits, informal work placements and shadowing opportunities with the various criminal justice service bodies to build more positive and trusting relationships between young people and the CJS.
- Recognising the need for community youth work to engage with children at a younger age than is currently common practice. It is essential to intervene at an early stage to change the course of a child's behaviour/ marginalisation/ interaction with statutory services.
- A programme of activity aimed at increasing the capacity for young women to take leadership roles and participate fully in shaping their communities in the future.

Health and Well-being

Key findings

Interviewees expressed their concerns for the widespread poor mental health and drugs and alcohol misuse making people vulnerable to paramilitary coercive control and impeding personal transition.

There was significant concern from almost all interviewees about the corrosive impact that drug and alcohol misuse was having on their communities; particularly on young people. This was often linked to complex mental health needs that were not being appropriately addressed.

The under-resourcing of mental health and drug addiction services was a point of frustration for many. The situation was leaving many people vulnerable to exploitation by the paramilitaries and creating an environment ripe for continued recruitment. There was also concern in communities about continuing paramilitary style attacks and intimidation in response to drug debts.

While praising existing counselling outreach work, former combatant and ex-prisoner groups expressed the continued need for counselling support to come to terms with events of the past.

Possible solutions

Better resourcing to address complex mental health needs and inextricably linked substance abuse and addiction.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- An extensive consultation with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, the Public Health Agency, schools and other relevant stakeholders to identify opportunities for improved support to young people and communities around the issue of drug misuse and addiction with a public health focus and message.
- Provision of counselling services in community centres and other local and accessible locations and partnering with community groups to identify those most in need of support.

Environment and culture

Key findings

Participants highlighted shortcomings of the Council's Cultural Expression Strategy alongside a need for educational programming on Loyalist history and identity.

While participants acknowledged the progress which has been made under the Council's Cultural Expression Programme, they doubted whether the programme is sustainable given the high costs involved. A number of community workers shared the perception that the Programme has at times appeased negative behaviour by those with ownership over the bonfires.

While murals were not regularly raised as an issue of concern by interviewees, there has been some backwards slide over the last 18 months from previous progress made in the Ards and North Down Council area through the NIHE's Reimaging initiatives.

There was widespread frustration at the lack of widely-available quality information and education programmes on PUL history, culture and values and the place of Loyalism within wider Irish history. Participants identified a need to provide an alternative narrative to that offered by the paramilitaries.

Possible solutions

Renew efforts to build upon progress already made on bonfire management and the reimaging of paramilitary murals alongside promoting positive narratives of Loyalist history and identity.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- A consultation process to inform a revised approach by Council to cultural expression and bonfire management.
- A recommitment to the reimaging and removal of paramilitary murals. Exploring new possibilities and opportunities with the Housing Community Network as a priority.
- Engaging on a sensitive and inclusive basis with identified "at risk" groups as well as the wider community on a new 'Culture and Identity' education and empowerment programme; encouraging key local influencers to work together on the theme of 'Culture and Identity' given the significance of these within the PUL community.
- Facilitating community dialogues around cultural exchange, inclusivity, class, personal development and the aspirations for Loyalism going forward.

Community Development Issues

Key finding

A clear need for capacity and partnership building to improve civic engagement and local leadership.

The majority of participants identified a cycle of deprivation in the area affecting consecutive generations as a major challenge to the community's capacity to subvert paramilitarism. This cycle begins at an early age with low aspirations in educational attainment translating into poor employment outcomes later.

There is a widespread perception within communities that available funding and resources were not being used in the best interests of the community. It was felt that the estates were often overlooked in the allocation of resources due to a class divide between working class Loyalist communities and middle-class Unionist Councillors in the rest of the Ards and North Down Council area. This created a level of resentment towards and disengagement from Council.

It was alleged that some community organisations are associated with paramilitary organisations or individuals with paramilitary links. This can be a source of disillusionment for community organisations engaged in "unaligned" community work. It was reported that these alleged paramilitary links prevent some residents accessing community led services delivered by these organisations.

There is a clear need for capacity and partnership building for community development organisations Council wide to improve civic engagement and local leadership. This includes conversations around how statutory agencies and community organisations work together.

Possible solutions

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- The development of clear protocols for Ards and North Down Council and other statutory agencies for engaging with paramilitary groups and individuals to ensure that they do not inadvertently give legitimacy to paramilitary actors.
- A Recommitment by Councillors, Council and Civic Leaders to the message that "Paramilitaries Have No Place" accompanied by public meetings with residents associations to reaffirm the message.
- Community-led outreach events to rebuild relationships between residents and statutory service providers and connect individuals to opportunities in their area with a focus on volunteering opportunities, health and wellbeing, employment and training, cultural exchange, community safety.
- The creation of a network of "community champions" drawn from positive influencers within the local area to act as mentors to groups, individuals and clubs and societies.
- A training programme aimed at confidence building, critical thinking, informed decision making and increasing aspirations of local people by engaging them on a pathway to democratic community participation, partnership working and promoting greater community participation.

Restorative justice and restorative practices

Key findings

Interviewees recognised that restorative justice approaches are effective in mediating low level disputes but are critical of their approach in relation to cases of housing intimidation.

Interviewees acknowledged the effectiveness of restorative justice in mediating most low-level issues around anti-social behaviour and territorial markings in the area and positive engagement with vulnerable young people. Others, however, were critical of how the restorative justice apparatus deals with housing intimidation. It was suggested that the restorative justice apparatus at times facilitates, rather than challenges, the expulsion of individuals at the behest of paramilitaries and that statutory agencies and the PSNI do not do enough to protect housing allocations.

Possible solutions

Mainstreaming the use of restorative justice approaches beyond established practitioners.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- Promoting a better understanding of restorative approaches to tensions and disputes and encouraging the mainstreaming of restorative approaches beyond established restorative justice practitioners.
- The delivery of training in restorative justice and mentoring techniques to youth & community workers, potentially to be delivered in and through local schools.
- A review of the way that instances of housing intimidation are managed.

Personal Transition

Key findings

Interviewees from ex-prisoner organisations noted that there are many social and economic barriers that persist to individual members dissociating from paramilitary groupings.

Interviewees from ex-combatant/prisoner organisation reported on the many barriers to individual members dissociating from paramilitary groupings. Groups felt they needed to maintain a presence in order to prevent their communities being “taken over” by other, more aggressive elements and required assurances from the PSNI that this would not happen.

The lack of employment opportunities and ways to remain relevant continued to be an issue for many ex-combatants/prisoners. There was a clear need for capacity building around social enterprise opportunities.

Emotional ties to the group were a prominent feature of discussion. It is important that initiatives are designed to replace this and offer a space for camaraderie as well as personal development. The provision of mental health and counselling services to support ex-prisoners/combatants in moving on was a further priority issue.

Possible solutions

Creative approaches to enable ex-combatants/ prisoners to build a life outside of paramilitary structures.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- A feasibility study of social enterprise and business networking opportunities in the area to identify further opportunities for training; employment and capacity building.
- Promoting collaboration between businesses, training centres, education providers in the wider Ards and North Down Council area.
- Provision for better Debt counselling and support working in conjunction with credit unions, banks, Citizens Advice and others to respond to this issue.



What next for the Project

Next Steps

The Executive's Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime sets out a range of actions which will work towards an end to all forms of paramilitary activity, the use of peaceful and democratic means and the rule of law in all communities.

This is a challenge for society as a whole and we all have a part to play. Delivery of the Executive Action Plan presents a unique opportunity for new partnerships to develop both across Government and with the community sector. Through the Communities in Transition project, we want to support areas that are significantly impacted by paramilitarism and criminal activity and build capacity amongst the people who live there and the community organisations that are working extremely hard to make a difference to their neighbourhoods.

The scope of the Communities in Transition Project is to build the capacity of these communities through specific, practical interventions to enable them to affect positive change for themselves, break the grip of coercive control and transition away from paramilitary activity.

Tackling Paramilitary Programme Outcomes:

- Paramilitarism has no place
- Citizens and communities feel safe and confident
- The public support and have increasing confidence in the justice system
- Support is available for those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures

The Project will work with those local communities to put in place interventions to develop capacity and confidence through:

- building capacity to address underlying social issues and achieve improved outcomes for all;
- building capacity to transition in neighbourhoods and places and for groups of people that make up local communities;
- building capacity to proactively move towards a culture of lawfulness; and
- building capacity to become open, accessible and lawful communities.

The area-based approach being taken forward in this project enables activities to be tailored to take consideration of local contexts and for them to be designed and delivered in a way which empowers and supports citizens to continue to deliver change in their communities beyond the lifetime of the project.

Underpinning Principles:

- **Empowerment:** Empower and support citizens and communities to address the problems they face.
- **Sustainability:** Embedding capacity within communities so that change can be continued beyond the lifetime of this programme.
- **Collaboration:** Working together within communities and between communities and statutory agencies.
- **Lawfulness:** Commitment to the use of peaceful and democratic means and upholding the rule of law across all communities.
- **Inclusivity, Fairness, transparency, impartiality and democratic accountability**

Next Steps- In Your Community

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

We would like to thank everyone who was involved during the first phase of this programme, and we look forward to continuing the collaborative work achieved up until now and extending the range of voices involved in the process.

Over the next few months we will bring together individuals from Kilcooley and Rathgill who want to see an end to paramilitarism and are willing to act to make change happen. We will work together to define priorities, activities and outcomes that will form the basis of commissioned activity in Kilcooley and Rathgill. The activities will add value to existing provision and develop the capacity and resilience of individuals and of the local community to address issues connected with paramilitarism and organised crime. This will mean both building capacity to proactively move towards a culture of lawfulness and to address the underlying systemic issues which are exploited by paramilitary and organised criminal gangs.

ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESS

As part of the participatory design process and to help inform design discussions in this phase, there will be a number of supporting activities happening within your area:

- **Community Development Activities**
Community-led events and platforms to rebuild relationships between residents and statutory service providers and to connect individuals to opportunities in their area.
- **Community Learning and Safety Dialogue Activities**
Community led events to increase knowledge and understanding of the justice system and the responsibilities of the different agencies within the system.
- **Social Enterprise Actions**
Inform the development of alternative pathways and income sources and identify opportunities for training; employment; capacity building and collaboration.

This document is the result of a community engagement process commissioned by TEO from the Communities in transition consortium: Co-operation Ireland in partnership with the Mitchell Institute (QUB), INCORE (Ulster University) and the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR)