



CREATIVE SPACE FOR CIVIC THINKING

IMPACT REPORT 2014 - 2018

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FOREWORD

In my foreword to the 2011 Building Change Trust Annual Report I stated that,

“The sector is under substantial stress of increasing demand for services combined with reduction in resources. Creating and providing space for dialogue, information sharing, reflection on practice and creative thinking has been an appreciated facet of the Trust’s interventions. The economic turmoil and recession which is engulfing us all, and which no one seems to have answers to or a clear direction of travel for recovery, has a disproportionate impact on society’s most vulnerable. Local communities are responding daily to the consequences of this turmoil and our modest investment to reflect and share is a commitment by the Trust to support and develop resilient civic leadership.”

In 2013 the Building Change Trust, after considerable engagement with the voluntary and community sector launched ‘Creative Space for Civic Thinking’ as a strategic theme. Those we engaged with helped to set a vision for the work,

“an empowered and organised citizenry which actively informs, influences and holds to account decision-making relevant to their lives”

Building Change Trust has sought to support both a resurgence and a reimagining of citizen participation work and has resourced work at both local and regional level. We’ve sought to combine the best of local and international expertise and have engaged in co-design, partnership and creativity rather than a traditional grant-making process. We have sought to act systemically by locating our work within the bigger challenge of building a more deliberative and participatory democracy in Northern Ireland.

It has been a privilege through ‘Creative Space for Civic Thinking’ to have worked with some incredible organisations and individuals. Their ability for innovation has been extraordinary and the projects that have emerged carry the potential to have significant long-term impact.

To identify both the impacts and the learning from our ‘Creative Space for Civic Thinking’ work we have produced this Impact Assessment Report and are indebted to Peter Osborne, and all those who contributed.

A decent society requires a public sphere in which all citizens have the capacity and freedom to participate. As Charles Handy stated in 1998 in his book ‘The Hungry Spirit’

“Government needs to return responsibility to the people. Only then can we feel that life and society is ours to shape”

Bill Osborne OBE
Chairperson, Building Change Trust



Prosecution, Defence & Judge at the 'Democracy on Trial' event organised by the NI Open Government Network at Democracy Day 2017

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INTRODUCTION

This is the final of three impact reports on the Creative Space for Civic Thinking Programme, for and on behalf of the Building Change Trust. The report takes in the entire period of the programme to date – from mid 2014 to late 2018 – and draws out an overall assessment of impact, as well as lessons learned.

The Building Change Trust (the Trust) was established in 2008 with a Big Lottery Fund allocation of £10million for the purpose of investing in innovation and assisting transformation, community capacity building and promotion of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in Northern Ireland over a ten year period until the end of 2018.

The Creative Space for Civic Thinking programme was developed by Building Change Trust in 2014 as a means of re-exploring and re-shaping how the VCSE delivers citizens involvement in decision-making.

The original vision and aim of the Creative Space for Civic Thinking included four key messages:

- An empowered citizenry;
- An organised citizenry;
- Participation in decision-making;
- Holding decision-makers to account.

The actions anticipated included provision to:

- 1 Make available to citizens, and those in the VCSE sector seeking to facilitate citizen engagement, tools to effectively enhance participation with imagination that motivated;
- 2 Provided vehicles for participation and engagement;

- 3 Sought to work with government, central and local, to influence and improve.

Democratic societies depend on a healthy relationship between civil society and its representative institutions and government, with structured and non-structured interventions often through established organisations.

The programme has addressed the need to strengthen democracy by: deepening civil society's capacity to be active and engage with the issues and government; building civil society ability to utilise tools that enhance deliberation; developing mechanisms for civil society to assert itself. Government, local and central, is then challenged to respond to that more robust civil society role which, at its heart, strengthens democracy.

The original aims, outcomes and actions anticipated were ambitious. The programme has delivered successfully on them all.



School children from Harpur's Hill voting in the Big Dish Out participatory budgeting event

Taking all of the activities anticipated, outputs and goals, a new, bespoke model was developed for the Creative Space for Civic Thinking programme. ASPIRE is based around the following themes:

- 1 The extent to which the programme has raised awareness of the needs of the VCSE sector and of solutions to it (Awareness);
- 2 The degree of new collaborations, methods and tools that the VCSE uses to meet the identified needs (Sharing);
- 3 Take up of the potential solutions, new collaborations or further examination of need and new people and organisations involved (Participation);
- 4 In what ways it has influenced decision making or policy making or changed how government and the VCSE sector/civil society work (Influencing);
- 5 The degree to which new or impactful practices and new skills, people or organisations will be sustained in the future (Resources/Sustainability).
- 6 General other conclusions feeding recommendations for the future (Overall Effectiveness).

CREATIVE SPACE FOR CIVIC THINKING STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN AS APPROVED IN FEBRUARY 2014

VISION

Our vision is for an empowered and organised Citizenry which actively informs, influences and holds to account decision-making relevant to their lives.

AIM

The aim of our action plan is enable the community and voluntary sector to better facilitate meaningful participation in decision-making processes (i.e. civic thinking)

OUTCOME 1

Support Creativity and Build Capacity

The NI Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector has greater capacity to engage with and involve individuals and communities in decision-making processes that impact upon their lives.

OUTCOME 2

More Open and Accountable Government

NI Government institutions and processes, at regional and local level, are more open, accountable and responsive to individuals and groups of citizens seeking to influence decision-making that impacts upon their lives.

OUTCOME 3

Sector Independence

The VCSE sector in NI has improved understanding of existing threats to its independence (of purpose, voice and action) and is acting to mitigate them.

ACTION 1

Action 1.1: Civic Activism Fund

A resource to support new and creative local or regional initiatives

Action 1.2: Structured Learning

Gathering and sharing civic thinking and participation experience

Action 1.3: Longer Term Funding

Identifying and helping secure longer-term sources of funding for civic participation work

ACTION 2

Action 2.1: Engaging with local / regional Government

Demonstrating mutual benefit of participatory practices

Action 2.2: Open Government Partnership

Advocating for the implementation of the OGP in N. Ireland

Action 2.3: NI Democracy health check

Research on the health of participatory democracy in N. Ireland

ACTION 3

Action 3.1: Research and monitoring on VCSE sector independence

Testing approaches that address challenges to independence

Action 3.2: Debate and dialogue within the sector and beyond

Seeking consensus and supporting response

ACTION 4

Action 4.1: Flagship initiative

Creating the infrastructure for on-going research, monitoring and challenge



Colm Burns and David McBurney, Chair and Coordinator respectively of the NI Open Government Network

CASE STUDY// NI Open Government Network

The NI Open Government Network was established in 2014 to advocate for more open government, have regional input to the next iteration of the UK Open Government Partnership action plan, and work with government to develop and implement open government commitments. Launched with the support of the then Finance Minister the Network has been sustained by a growing membership base, significant numbers of followers and participation in the volume and range of stimulating events – and of course most crucially funding from Building Change Trust.

The Network achieved four specific open government commitments from the NI Executive and has managed to substantially shape the NI regional commitments in the UK Open Government Partnership action plan. The open government commitments made by the Executive before its collapse were to trial open government policy making, promote greater levels of innovation, investigate implementation of the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) in Central Procurement operations, and support open government more generally. In addition, the Minister for Finance committed to producing a citizens budgeting in association with the publication of the overall Northern Ireland Executive budget, making five commitments overall.

While not as full as the Network would have liked these were the first open government commitments achieved in Northern Ireland and were included as part of the UK Open Government Action Plan produced by the Cabinet Office. However, with the collapse of the NI Executive it has been challenging to progress the commitments with lack of Ministerial lead. The most recent evaluation of the UK Action Plan suggests there has been substantial progress in the commitment toward more open data standards in procurement, but minor progress in the other commitments. A citizens' budget has not yet been produced.

The Network has continued to engage with the review of the UK Open Government Action Plan and in developing new commitments for that Action Plan. While implementation of the open government commitments to date has been slower than anticipated, the awareness of open government within the Department for Finance has been considerably improved; officials continue to engage in discussion and some progress has been made.

There continues to be ongoing perceptions about openness in government in Northern Ireland with a legacy caused by Freedom of Information delays, and the consequences of investigations such as Red Sky, NAMA and most recently RHI which highlighted lack of record-keeping, ongoing problematic relationships between civil servants and Special Advisors, and transparency in what decisions are taken and why.

The Network continues to raise awareness of the importance of open government by organising and supporting conferences, seminars, social media and lobbying activities. These have been highly successful and increasing numbers of people are involved with the Network.



KEY ACTIVITIES



Launch of the Civic Activism Toolkit in January 2015



School students from Abbey Community College play the 'My Places' participatory card game as part of Community Places' Community Planning is Here project

THE CIVIC ACTIVISM TOOLKIT

The Civic Activism toolkit was drawn together for Building Change Trust by Involve, an NGO specialising in public participation, through crowdsourcing and sifting through existing online databases. It sets out 29 innovative ways to help people more effectively participate in democratic and decision making processes. These are techniques and methodologies that have not been used previously in Northern Ireland but that have been used elsewhere as part of a democratic process. The methods include citizens' juries, community visioning, digital factchecking, forum theatre and consensus conferences to name a few.

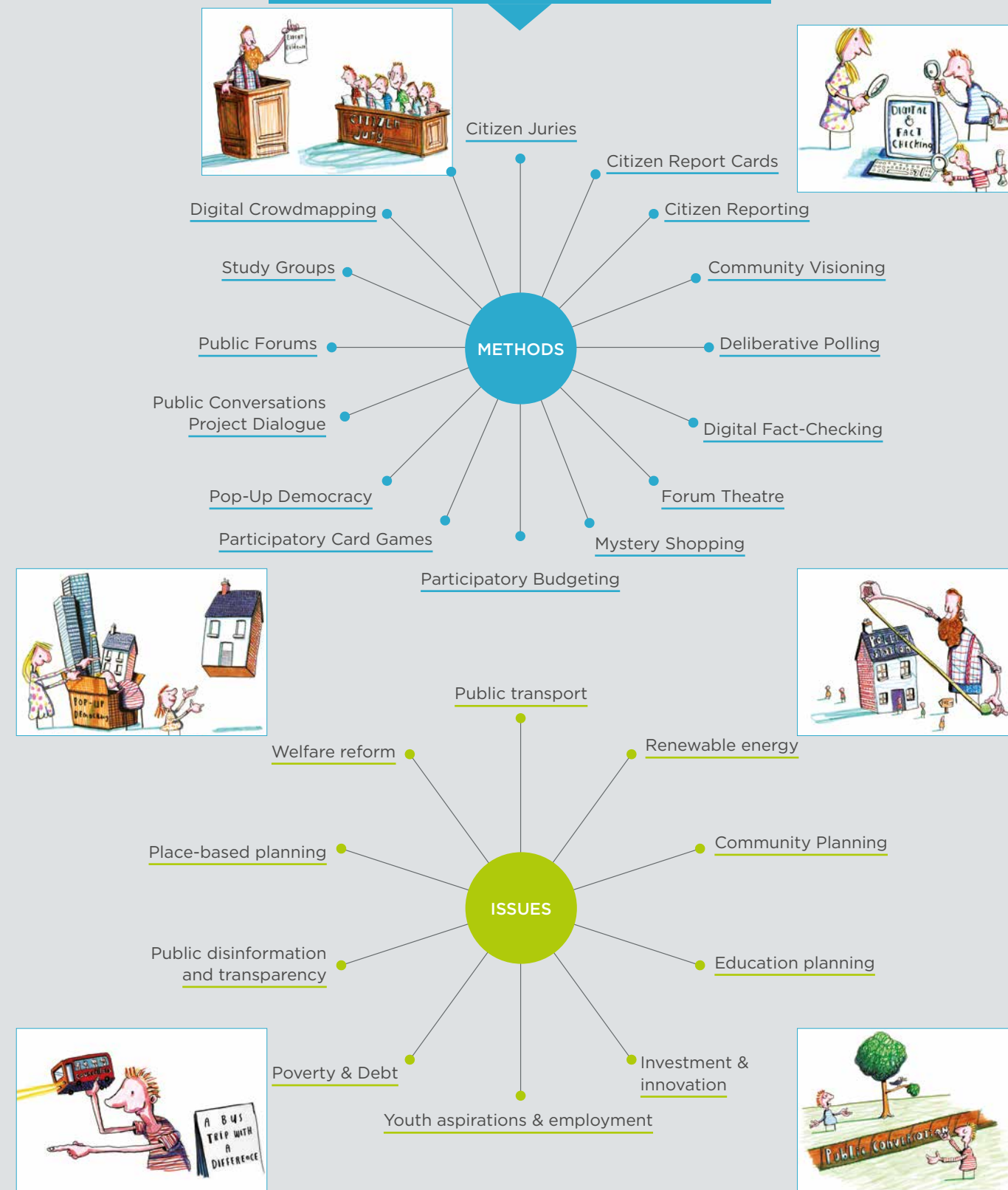
The toolkit was made available on the BCT Civic Activism website alongside case studies of local civic activism projects and a series of 'top tips' for practitioners, identified through a series of workshops with VCSE sector representatives.

THE CIVIC ACTIVISM PROGRAMME

The Civic Activism Programme was established in order to provide local VCSE organisations with an opportunity to try out for VCSE organisations to try out one or more of the methods in the toolkit as a way of engaging the public more widely and deeply in decision-making on a key issue of public concern. A key distinctive feature of the programme was that applicants needed no prior knowledge or experience of the methods. Following a tender the Trust appointed Involve and the Democratic Society as Learning Support partners for the programme – their role being to provide one-to-one mentoring for the projects, connecting them with relevant external experts on the methods and facilitating a series of group workshops over the course of the programme.

Following an open call for applications eight projects were awarded a grant under the programme ranging from £17,000 up to £60,000 for periods of up to 18 months. Six of these projects were awarded follow on funding in June 2017 to enable them to consolidate the impact of their work and share the learning with other stakeholders – with a focus on encouraging statutory agencies to adopt some of the civic activism methods. A detailed learning resource for each project is available on the Trust's civic activism website at civicactivism.buildingchangetrust.org

The following diagram illustrates the methods used in the projects, as well as the issues they were applied to:



OPEN GOVERNMENT

In addition to resourcing local activism the Trust sought to provide a new vehicle for civil society in its broadest sense to come together and campaign for governance reforms that could unlock greater public participation in decision-making. After a period of research and dialogue the Trust established the NI Open Government Network in November 2014 and facilitated the development of its first steering group and action plan. The Trust appointed Northern Ireland Environment Link to provide Secretariat services to the Network in July 2015 following a tender process. This arrangement enabled the Trust to support the Network financially whilst also retaining its character as an informal alliance of individual activists and organisational

representatives. The Trust's funding to the Network was renewed in September 2017, to last until the end of the Trust's mandate in December 2018.

Over the period since its establishment the Network has engaged in intensive dialogue with government and politicians to advocate for open government reforms – with some, albeit limited Network success. It has also engaged with hundreds of individuals and organisations across Northern Ireland to raise awareness and involve people in campaigning around open government topics such as open data, freedom of information, open policy-making, political transparency and public accountability.

RESEARCH STRAND

Underpinning these major activity-based interventions has been a research strand that sought to provide a robust evidence-base for the Trust's work and to situate it within prevalent theoretical models around the role of civil society and the critical challenges facing representative democracy in the 21st century.

In the first of these, the Trust commissioned Ulster University to conduct a two year research project examining the Independence of the VCSE Sector in Northern Ireland, inspired by similar work undertaken at UK level and following a 2013 opinion piece by Dr. Nick Acheson. It identified some critical challenges for the relationship between the VCSE sector and government including the creeping dominance of service delivery functions over activism and campaigning, the shift of funding patterns from grants to procurement, an attitude on the part of government that sees that sector as simply an instrument of policy delivery and the tendency of VCSE organisations to 'self-censor'. Two reports were produced as part of the research – in January and November 2016 respectively – and a series of workshops and seminars with VCSE sector and government representatives followed. One lasting

output of the research has been incorporation of an independence self-assessment questionnaire within the 'DIY Committee Guide' good governance toolkit for the VCSE sector hosted by Volunteer NOW.

The second research project was the Beyond Voting report which examined the health of democracy in Northern Ireland from a citizen's perspective. It was based on the deliberative democracy school of thought within political science and employed a 'deliberative systems framework' to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of democracy in Northern Ireland, taking in the institutions of government as well as the 'public space' (media, civil society, etc.) and the 'private space' (homes, workplaces, etc.). It identified some substantial gaps in Northern Ireland's deliberative system whereby public participation in policy-making is highly constrained, with elections and identity politics being dominant. A key consequence of this has been not only a significant fall in public trust in government but also a legislative and policy output that digresses significantly from public opinion. The report was produced by independent researchers Dr. Paul Nolan and Dr. Robin Wilson.

Both reports are available on the Trust's website.



Members of the public share their ideas for the future of democracy at the Campervan of Dreams as part of Democracy Day 2017

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY PROJECTS

Based on the successes and learning from the Civic Activism programme and using the Beyond Voting report as a prompt to more systemic thinking, the Trust commissioned a series of workshops from March to September 2017, starting with Democracy Day at the Imagine Festival. The workshops employed an open space approach to invite participants from the civil society, the public sector and academia to propose new initiatives that could help progress a more deliberative model of democracy in Northern Ireland. Working groups were formed around each of the key ideas and proposals were worked up for the Trust's Board for consideration in autumn 2017. Whilst each project had a lead organisation they were all collaborative in their approach to design and delivery and have retained a sense of collective ownership. Three projects were resourced through this process:

- The first ever **citizens' assembly** in Northern Ireland, to be delivered by Involve in autumn 2018 on the topic of adult social care. More information is available at citizensassemblyni.org
- The **Participatory Budgeting Works** project, led by Community Places aims to catalyse and support participatory budgeting processes across Northern Ireland, with a focus on encouraging local government to adopt this approach. More information is available at participatorybudgetingworks.org
- **Deliberative Engagement Training** for public officials and VCSE sector representatives. This has been delivered by Involve, in collaboration with the NI Open Government Network and others, to around 60 participants including clerks of the NI Assembly, representatives of government departments and other public agencies.

CONTEXT

The overall programme operated with a context that both helped and hindered the delivery of outcomes including:

- The lack of a Northern Ireland Executive during the latter part of the CSCT programme has been challenging at one level and impacted on delivery with government;
- Increasing focus on alternative mechanisms for engagement with the collapse of the Executive and Assembly, especially local government as an alternative moderator between elected representatives and citizens, amid a desire for an enhanced civil society role and presence in influencing decision-making;
- A civil service unsure of its role and the limitations of what it can support without Ministers and without, therefore, clear direction;
- The last years of the BCT endowment providing an extra focus on closure issues.

However, the context has also:

- Created opportunity to highlight lack of citizen involvement in decision-making and stimulated more interest in new ideas;
- Provided additional focus on the initiatives to identify exit or sustainability strategies.

Building Change Trust has provided a strident focus for addressing citizen's engagement as an important aspect of health in a democratic society. It has taken risks in being involved in that space given the often contentious nature of politics in Northern Ireland; and how efforts to strengthen democratic space can be perceived and used within a sectional democratic system.

The space created by Building Change Trust, the advances made through the tools and mechanisms it has facilitated, can easily regress once Building Change Trust is no longer in existence.

Protecting the legacy of Building Change Trust means reinforcing, and indeed further building, civil society's role and mechanisms that change the relationship between it and government, both central and local.

“

FactCheckNI - Northern Ireland's first dedicated fact-checking service - could only have started with Building Change Trust funding, which enabled us to deliver high-quality fact-checks and training in schools and local communities. This helped us establish our non-partisan credentials, and our working in a contested society attracted interest from all over the world. FactCheckNI is currently part of a European research and development project, as well as other international fact-checking initiatives.

Allan Leonard, Fact Check NI.



Shannon McKeown-Gilmore, Hala Heenan and Jake Lowry - students from Methodist College who won the Political Studies Association Schools Prize in 2017 for their video on fake news, with FactCheck NI's Allan Leonard

CASE STUDY// FactCheck NI

FactCheck NI was established in 2015 after its founders had attended a global fact checkers conference. It is the only fact checking service in Northern Ireland.

FactCheck NI was established in 2015 by the Northern Ireland Foundation and Transformative Connections inspired by its founders' attendance at a global fact checkers conference and the funding opportunity provided by the Civic Activism Programme. It is the only independent fact checking service in Northern Ireland.

FactCheck NI ran a series of fact checking initiatives in the first tranche of support from Building Change Trust and maintained a relationship with global fact checking initiatives that have continued to provide advice and support. Through their website FactCheckNI tested the veracity of claims made by government and public figures on issues as diverse as Brexit, homelessness, crime, immigration and public transport. They also trained hundreds of community groups and activists on basic fact-checking methods. FactCheck NI believes that maintaining an international perspective and continuing to adopt international learning is very important.

FactCheck NI is clear that it would not have existed without support from Building Change Trust allowing Fact Check after it was established to development of its a website, training packages and testing of its materials and approach.

In the second tranche of funding from Building Change Trust as a legacy project it also engaged with schools and further education colleges to encourage students to think critically and to provide them with the tools to check news and "facts" presented by politicians, media or online.

One outcome from this work was a Political Studies Association award for an article on fake news by pupils from Methodist College. This received widespread news coverage in Northern Ireland. Further work on this project is being undertaken during 2018.

In 2018 FactCheck NI is working with the BBC on reality check training and has worked on a number of fact checking issues including, for example, on border crossings on the island of Ireland with pertinence to the Brexit issue.

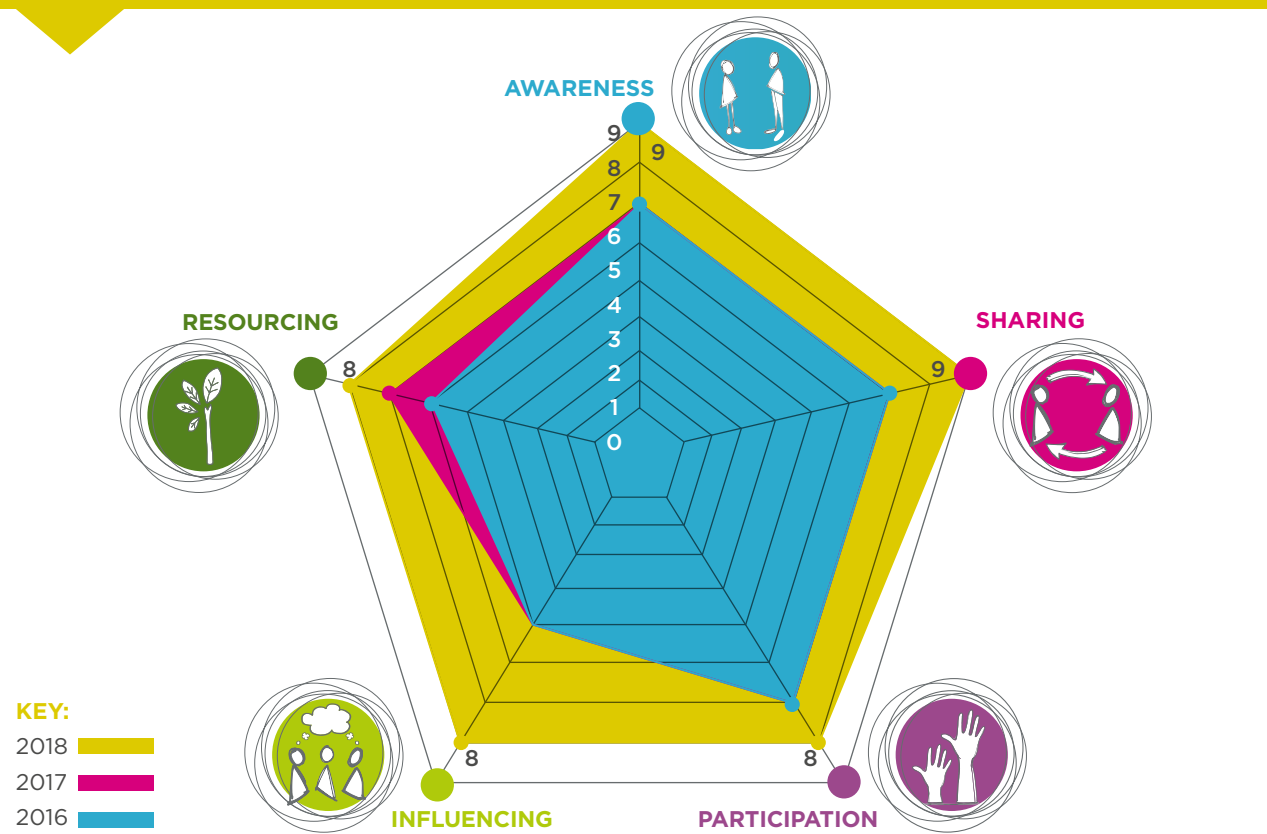
Since then FactCheck NI has joined a major EU funded programme led by Stockholm University on developing fact checking processes and in particular misinformation. FactCheck NI hopes to lead on developing modules for post-primary education. Exploring technological approaches to identifying fake news will be a major part of the three year study.

FactCheck NI believes the Building Change Trust support has been crucial, but not just in financial terms. FactCheck NI says that Building Change Trust provided freedom and flexibility as a funder, and was prepared to take risks with a fledgling idea.

FactCheck NI is exploring a sustainability model similar to FullFact in London. Its increasingly recognised presence and its involvement in the EU research project will give it a life for many several years, at least, after Building Change Trust.



OVERALL IMPACT



Radial Chart

Scores allocated to the CSCT Programme using the ASPIRE model allow for the creation of a radial chart for each of the three years of the programme as below. Scores are averaged out of ten through consultation with projects and after assessment of the qualitative and quantitative available information; and they demonstrate gradual improvement and excellent final results.

It is clear that initially lower scores in, for example, how the programme was influencing have been improved in the last year – perhaps understandable as influencing government takes time.

The radial scoring, at a glance, indicates that given the relatively limited budget of the programme and variety and volume of activities:

- The programme has been particularly strong in the last year with new initiatives targeting deliberative processes such as a pilot citizens' assembly and several participatory budgeting initiatives;
- Thousands of people have participated in a broad range of activities that strengthen deliberative democratic processes and citizens understanding of them;
- There is significant and far-reaching evidence of collaborations between key VCSE organisations, and also between the VCSE and government;

- Its ability to influence government has increased substantially with successes, for example, relating to deliberative polling in education (or community conversations as the Integrated Education Fund refers to the process), interest in the citizens' assembly, and inroads on participatory budgeting;
- Additional resourcing for various elements of projects has been identified in the last year, and sustainability beyond funding through integration of skills or processes in to the core work of organisations or with public agencies;
- There have been considerable advances in sharing learning within the programme and with influencers external to the programme through collaboration and outreach for the citizens' assembly and participatory budgeting.

“The three pilot deliberative polling processes we ran were so successful that the Education Authority and the Department of Education are considering whether the processes should be more formally integrated in to area planning for education. We are delighted. The support of Building Change Trust was critical to their success.

Sam Fitzsimmons, Integrated Education Fund.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED ONLY BECAUSE OF BCT FUNDING



Most of those organisations that were involved in the Creative Space for Civic Thinking programme thought support from Building Change Trust was crucial to their activities. They believed these outcomes only happened because of that support:

- Establishment of the NI Open Government Network;
- Adoption by the Northern Ireland Executive of its first ever open government commitments on a cross-departmental basis. These included commitments for a pilot open policy-making project, improvements in procurement processes and promoting public sector innovation;
- Commitment by the then Finance Minister to publish a more accessible and readable peoples' budget alongside the usual government budget;
- Inclusion of Northern Ireland open government commitments in the UK national action plan for the first time;
- Development of open government-related knowledge, awareness and skills of civil servants in the Department of Finance especially and a shift in government language toward open government;
- Development of new, specific criteria by the Department of Finance for the adoption of open government commitments;
- Increased awareness of the benefits to government of openness and transparency;
- Delivery of three Community Conversation processes exploring parental preferences for education;
- Consideration by the Education Authority and Department of Education of maintaining Community Conversation processes as a tool for area based planning for local education;
- Piloting of initiatives with some local authorities with a specific focus on involving citizens in decision-making;
- Delivery of the first ever Citizens' Assembly in Northern Ireland with commitments from politicians locally, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at Westminster and the Northern Ireland Office to consider its future applicability on a statutory basis;
- Significantly increased numbers of people involved in events promoting participation, openness and deliberation;
- Establishment of Fact Check NI which has grown to have an international profile;
- Development of a Northern Ireland input to an EU-wide approach to how news is fact checked in schools;
- Piloting of the first formal participatory budgeting initiatives in Northern Ireland;
- Integration of the concept of participatory budgeting into the strategic planning of a major public body – the Police Service of Northern Ireland – as well as at least two councils, as one mechanism of community engagement;
- Sustaining the Imagine Festival which would not otherwise have continued to exist, and which stimulates large numbers of festival goers with new ideas about democracy and participation;
- Enhancement of the Rathlin island social enterprise at the Manor House through support in allocation of its community budget through a participatory budgeting process;
- Exploration of use of Place Standards by two major organisations in Belfast – Belfast City Council and Belfast Healthy Cities – as a result of engagement with one of the civic activism projects;
- Ongoing positive long-term impact reported by several civic activism projects about how they will deliver and develop their services in the future;
- Creation and utilisation of space for collaboration between Northern Ireland organisations, and between Northern Ireland and UK/EU organisations.

NI Open Government Network

Investment: **£240,736**

Achievements:

Successful campaign for NI Executive open government commitments; hundreds of network members; stimulated debate & action on openness, transparency & participation

Civic Activism Programme

Investment: **£666,854**

Online toolkit, awards support from Involve Society, international to 9 projects, learning & the Democratic learning

Research strand

Investment: **£110,520**

Achievements:

2 x VCSE Independence research reports by Ulster University; Beyond Voting report by Dr. Robin Wilson & Dr. Paul Nolan; Publication, dissemination and discussion via public events



Advice NI

Capturing the Impact of Welfare Reform

Using citizen report cards, digital mapping and personal stories to give voice to people affected by welfare changes and inform lobbying of decision-makers. Included online myth-busting around common misconceptions about welfare



Cedar Foundation

Insight Project

Using mystery shopping, forum theatre and pop-up democracy to enable older people to influence accessibility and adequacy of transport services. Training provided on mystery shopping to user groups and council staff in six districts for use in future service improvement



Community Places

Community Planning is Here: Get Involved!

Testing of five public engagement methods across three council districts around community planning; leading to focused engagement with young people in schools using participatory card games to explore importance of place



Corrymeela

Waste No Time / Big Dish Out

Street-based engagement across Causeway Coast & Glens district using pop-up cafes, drama and pavement map to inform Community Plan; leading to Big Dish Out participatory budgeting initiative with Council in Coleraine & Carnlough



Holywell Trust

North-West Civic Leadership Project

Public conversations on the future of Derry/L'derry city using pop-up discussions, study groups and citizen juries to explore investment, youth, debt & poverty. Results published online and shared with decision-makers



Imagine Belfast

Festival of Ideas & Politics

Annual festival that aims to engage people turned off by politics to debate and discuss the big issues of our times. Four festivals so far with over 15,000 people attending hundreds of events facing society. BCT's Democracy Day has been one key focus of activity, showcasing the best of international & local democratic innovations



Integrated Education Fund

Debate, Deliberate, Decide

Structured community conversations to engage parents, teachers & residents in deliberations around education planning in their area. Delivered in Kilkeel, Clogher Valley & Carnlough/Glenarm to date with Education Authority & other statutory agencies committed to using approach in future



NI Foundation

FactCheck NI

NI's only independent fact-checking platform, verifying claims made by public figures via website. Also provides training on fact-checking techniques and critical thinking methods to community groups and school students. Part of Global Fact-Checking Network



Rural Community Network

Re-Thinking NIMBYism

Used the 'public conversations project dialogue' method with rural communities to enable a more constructive and deliberative dialogue between those in favour of and opposed to renewable energy installations. Method later shared with officials in other sectors, including NI Housing Executive

Deliberative Democracy Grants

Investment: **£157,527** Co-designed during 2017 with VCSE sector reps, public servants, academics and activists; delivered collaboratively.



Led by Involve:

Topic: Adult social care, 80 randomly selected members of the public; deliberation over 2 weekends; recommendations to policy-makers



Led by Community Places:

Building awareness and capacity for PB across NI with focused support for PB processes with Rathlin Community Association; Newry, Mourne & Down Council; Parent Action CIC

Deliberative Engagement Training

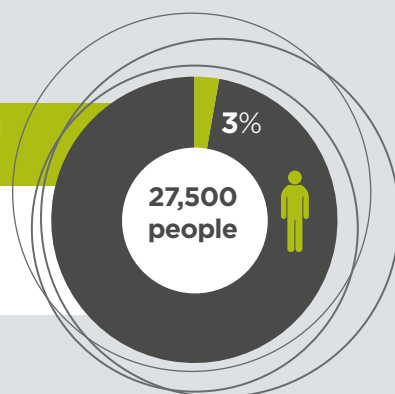
Led by Involve:

3 day training programme on deliberative engagement methods for 60 public officials and VCSE representatives

NEW PRACTITIONERS

During the Creative Space for Civic Thinking programme, we estimate that:

27,500 people (nearly 3% of the adult population of Northern Ireland) were directly involved in the Creative Space for Civic Thinking programme not including those engaging through mainstream and social media.



Without being exhaustive, and not being able to exactly identify numbers of people engaged in elements of the civic activism projects, overall participation included:

- 100 young people were facilitated to be more skilled in fact checking methodologies;
- The citizens' assembly initiative launched in 2017 and operational in 2018 will engage directly up to 100 people
- Up to 1,000 people will be involved in participatory budgeting activities in four separate areas in 2018;
- Delivered four new open government commitments that, when implemented, will involve 100 people directly and impact on an untold number afterwards;
- Involved over 300 people as members of the open government network, 500 participants in open government events and conferences, with more than 1,500 followers on social media;
- Helped two community organisations – Rathlin Development Community Association and Cross Glebe Community Association – potentially embed participatory budgeting in to their regular delivery;
- Involved 100 young people in exploring what changes they would make to their area through the My Place card game;
- Engaged 5,000 people in polling and Community Conversations for local education options, with many of them subsequently involved as volunteers with their schools and with local community organisations;
- Involved more than 600 people in the Causeway Coast & Glens area to help shape the Council's community planning process through a Waste No Time civic activism project;
- 4,700 people had attended the most recent Imagine Festival – only possible with Building Change Trust funding – and nearly 10,000 participated in the previous two festivals discussing ideas about strengthening democracy and better policy processes;
- 100 key figures from the VCSE sector had discussed the independence of the sector as part of the launch programme for the report, and many more had attended subsequent follow-up sessions.

The Building Change Trust helped set up the NI Open Government Network to address the need for more transparent, accountable and participatory government in Northern Ireland. With the valuable support of BCT, the NI Open Government Network successfully advocated for Executive endorsement of the first ever Northern Ireland specific commitments for the UK Open Government National Action Plan.

Colm Burns, Chairperson of the NI Open Government Network



Carmen Perez, US Civil Rights activist and national co-Chair of the Women's March on Washington, speaking at Democracy Day 2018

CASE STUDY// The Imagine Festival

The Imagine Festival is aimed at engaging people in political/cultural discussion and debate in the broadest sense. It also encourages participation from people not normally involved in politics. It is not aligned with any political party or particular interest group.

In 2018 the 4th Imagine Belfast festival included 124 events, 374 speakers & performers in 31 venues across the city during 12-18 March 2018 with a record attendance of 4,699 audience members (2% increase on the previous year). Of 340 returning feedback 98% felt the festival satisfied their expectations. There were 124 events during the week, 76 of which were free. It had an estimated media buy of over £67,000.

Overall 56% of audience members were attending a festival event for the first time and 45% of the sample had never been to a festival venue before, suggesting it was able to reach new audiences and introduce them to new venues and partners.

A number of commentators applauded the quality and diversity of the quirky, innovative range of events.

The Festival believes its unique selling point, as a civic participation festival in Belfast, was recognised in media coverage and its speakers and performers were very appreciative of the platform provided for them. The main type of event was a lecture, debate or talk (36% of total) and exhibition (15%). The demographic profile of attendees was evenly spread across all age ranges over 18 years of age (lowest 10% was 18-24 years of age - the highest 21% was 25-34 or 45-54 years of age).

The Imagine Festival has provided a significant platform for all of the Creative Space for Civic Thinking programme. It provided an opportunity to test ideas and methodologies, and engage with citizens to add value to their respective projects and activities.

Apart from testing existing methodologies and projects, new ideas were often generated through the Festival or new people recruited to participate in activities. It was due to a presentation at the Festival that Triangle Housing subsequently organised the first formal participatory budgeting activity in Northern Ireland.

The Festival provided a promotional base for the Open Government Network and allowed it to facilitate important conversations about open government commitments in the 2016 UK action plan.

The Festival introduced concepts explored in the UK and Europe, as well as North America, to local audiences to broaden horizons and knowledge about good practice elsewhere.

The Imagine Festival organisers are clear that the Festival would not exist without the support and encouragement from Building Change Trust.

IMAGINE!
Festival of Ideas & Politics

LEARNING AND LEGACY

The Creative Space for Civic Thinking programme has helped to strengthen democracy in Northern Ireland given its impact on increased citizens' engagement, provision of tools to help more people get more involved in deliberative processes, and its linkage of those processes to elected representatives and government.

AWARENESS



In raising the profile of the issues and the initiative being delivered those who were most successful worked with other partners or co-operated with local organisations, used a variety of media including conferences and festivals. Their message was often direct and was clearly understood.

The Imagine Festival was a major opportunity for civic activism projects to collaborate and share learning with each other and the wider public interested in civic activism and deliberative democracy. Attendance at the Imagine Festival was consistently strong with a high quality of sessions, discussion and engagement.



Public engagement in Derry-Londonderry as part of Holywell Trust's NW Civic Leadership Project

There were some excellent examples of Awareness leading to action including:

An individual Board member of Triangle Housing was represented at the Imagine Festival. She subsequently championed a pilot participatory budgeting project in the housing association having witnessed it at the Imagine Festival. The pilot was very successful. The individual then got involved in other CSCT projects, principally the Open Government Network and with the Waste No Time partners.

When piloting deliberative polling/community conversations in their pilot areas the Integrated Education Fund worked with the schools and community based organisations in the area, and with the most popular newspapers to better engage with the local population.

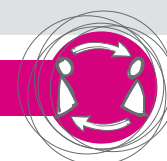
The civic activism project managed by Corrymeela - Waste No Time - along with several other partners, engaged over 600 citizens in Causeway Coast & Glens district through a series of pop-up consultations from the toolkit.

LEARNING

The three critical factors were:

1. Working with other partners or local agents increased participation and local engagement;
2. Simplifying the message to help develop understanding and awareness;
3. Utilising other media such as social media, conferences and festivals broadened engagement

SHARING



Civic activism projects valued aspects of the mentoring available to them and some made good use of it, such as the advice to the IEF on deliberative polling and to the deepening democracy workshops on participatory budgeting.

The central lessons for those that benefited most from sharing within the programme were that the more outside expertise was utilised the better for the project. As confidence and collaboration locally increased outside expertise as used less, and there have been some significant and successful local collaborations.

There were some excellent examples of Sharing leading to action including:

The Waste No Time project, enjoyed positive collaborative relationships with a range of organisations including Rural Community Network and Community Places, both of whom were already involved in the civic activism programme. As initiatives evolved collaboration was more often to happen with organisations that were local.

That has meant that the degree of co working on pilot participatory budgeting initiatives in 2018 was considerably enhanced through development of the Participatory Budgeting Works project.

The Imagine Festival provided a focus and opportunity for many projects not just to share their own activities and learning but create new collaborations as conversations took place and extended or new activities imagined.

Rural Community Network have shared the Public Conversations Dialogue method with staff of the NI Housing Executive, as well as a range of other public sector and VCSE organisations.

LEARNING

The three critical factors were:

1. Proactively using external expertise benefited initiatives;
2. As initiatives progressed there was less likelihood of bringing in outside help and a greater focus on local collaboration;
3. Where there was a range of partner organisations that respected each other, the initiative was more successful for it.

PARTICIPATION



Participation was most successful when delivery was energetic and stimulated those involved, using tools and materials that were easy to understand, and when the cause or goal motivated those taking part.

One aspect of the deepening democracy workshops was a renewed focus on participatory budgeting. Several pilots have been facilitated, one of which will certainly impact in the long-term on Rathlin Island. As a result there has been substantial interest from local government in Newry, Mourne & Down, Causeway Coast & Glens and Antrim & Newtownabbey, and a desire by the PSNI to incorporate it in to some of its planning with communities. The Big lottery Fund is also considering supporting PB processes through its existing funding mechanisms.

There were some excellent examples of Participation leading to action including:

The Rathlin Island process will probably become a theme for how the local group (Rathlin Development Community Association) distributes profits from its Manor House restaurant and hotel social enterprise. They anticipate participation in decision-making from most of the 140 islanders.

The participatory budgeting process in Harpur's Hill as part of the Big Dish Out supported by the Waste No Time project will likely shape how the local community group engages with local residents' for years to come and has led to new people joining the organisation. It was run in association with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council with a relatively small amount of financial assistance from the Council as a pump primer. They hope Council will continue the engagement and hope the local government umbrella body, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, may embrace participatory budgeting as a means to further reinforce local decision-making.

The panel of experts convened by Holywell Trust continue to meet to discuss regeneration issues in Derry/Londonderry.

LEARNING

The three critical factors were:

1. Leadership and energy within the delivering organisation;
2. Materials and tools that citizens understood and found easy to use;
3. A topic that motivated participants.

LEARNING AND LEGACY CONT'D

INFLUENCING



The programme has influenced government, local and central, in a variety of ways to date with potential to enhance that going forward.

At a strategic level this included presenting both oral and written evidence to the NI Assembly's Committee for Communities in 2016 and to the NI Affairs Committee at Westminster in 2018 as part of their Inquiry into the future of devolution and democracy in Northern Ireland.

The critical aspects relating to influencing government were to be clear on how government may also benefit, provide professional tools and delivery, and make critical contacts at high level within government.

There were some excellent examples of Influencing leading to action including:

The Integrated Education Fund ran their pilot deliberative polling/community conversation processes in local areas that impacted upon education area planning, and that may become a mainstream tool for the Education Authority and Department of Education. The pilot in Glenarm and Carnlough will influence local policy and contribute to a realignment of education provision within the primary school sector in those villages.

The Open Government Network secured the first open government commitments by the Northern Ireland Executive, with support from successive Ministers and the Open Government Partnership and Cabinet Office important allies in convincing the department to make the commitments.

The newly supported citizens' assembly – the first of its kind in Northern Ireland – might influence government by its very existence which is why particular care needs taken to ensure it works well. There has been a considerable amount of work to secure political backing or provide comfort to those that may be less inclined to support it. The citizens' assembly is not opposed by any political party and, indeed, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in its report in to the state of democracy in Northern Ireland in 2018 indicated it would "wait with interest" the outcome of the citizens' assembly.

The topic chosen for this first citizens' assembly is an exploration of social care. Officials in the Department of Health are supportive of the concept and topic chosen.

LEARNING

The three critical factors were:

- 1. Clarity on process and goals;**
- 2. Professional and quality delivery;**
- 3. Contact within government.**

RESOURCING



Where organisations have put high value to the civic activism initiative being undertaken there has been more likelihood of securing additional funding, skill or knowledge enhancements, to continue to delivery all or aspects of the initiative. Where organisations worked early and closely with possible funders or agencies to deliver outcomes for them, there was a greater chance of longer term resourcing.

As highlighted in previous impact reports it was important to find a home for the programmes and materials developed by the Trust, and somewhere that would sustain the campaigns. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has agreed to continue to support, albeit at a more limited level, the Trust's CSCT work, rebranded as 'civic innovation'. Together with the Building Change Trust it is actively seeking funds to enable this to happen from 2019 onwards.

The civic activism toolkit has been a well-used resource that continues to be available to participating organisations and others. Those using the toolkit found it of high quality, valuable and commit to continuing to utilise it in the core work of their organisations.

Those parts of the toolkit that have been valued especially include direct participation with citizens such as pop-up democracy, public conversations dialogue and participatory card games.

The extension of funding for civic activism projects was very helpful to a number in developing their products such as the IEF, and allowed the Open Government Network to pursue their open government commitments, albeit subsequently delayed through the collapse of the Executive.

There were some excellent examples of Resourcing leading to action including:

The Open Government Network has utilised support from its administration organisation, the Northern Ireland Environment Link, and has a valuable relationship with the Big lottery Fund and UK open government networks.

The IEF has produced its own deliberative polling/community conversation toolkit out of the civic activism project because of the success of its projects. The toolkit is consistent with and aids the overall work of the organisation, and has been supported by public agencies especially the Education Authority and the Department of Education.

FactCheck NI have been involved in a major EU-funded initiative, which is led by Stockholm University, with a particular focus on them working to educate young people in schools about a basic fact check process for news and current affairs. That aspect of their civic activism project evolved through contact with local schools and Full Fact UK. FactCheck NI will advise and develop toolkits for the delivery of fact check and misinformation awareness in schools.

LEARNING

The three critical factors were:

- 1. The activity was central to the work of the organisation;**
- 2. Recognition of skills and knowledge as sustainability factors;**
- 3. Importance of alignment to funder or/and agency outcomes.**

ASPIRE LEARNING



Overarching lessons from the CSCT Programme include:

1. Working with partners or local organisations helped to target participants and get more people involved;
2. When the issue or message was simplified it helped to broaden understanding and increase awareness;
3. When other media was utilised, such as social media, conferences and festivals, more people were involved generating interesting and alternative ideas;
4. Proactive use of external expertise brought benefit to initiatives;
5. However, the likelihood of bringing in outside help declined as projects developed with a greater focus on local collaboration;
6. Where there was a range of partner organisations that respected each other, the initiative was more successful for it;
7. Leadership and energy were crucial within the delivering organisation, demonstrating the importance of a few people to the success;
8. Materials and tools that citizens understand and found easy to use was a feature of the more successful initiatives;
9. When participants were motivated by the topic and issue there was more energy, it was easier to get people involved and there was greater local commitment;
10. Clarity of process and goals, and alignment of them to funders or public agencies, was a critical feature in those initiatives that proved most successful;
11. There was professional, quality delivery using the tools and by participants when initiatives were most successful;
12. Sustainability was enhanced when there was initial and ongoing contact with government, local and central;
13. When the activity supported was central to the work of the organisation, there was more focus provided to it;
14. Recognition of skills and knowledge was an important and longer term sustainability factor;
15. Alignment to funder or/and public agency outcomes was helpful in those relationships.



Learning visit to the World Forum for Democracy organised by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, November 2016



CASE STUDY// Integrated Education Fund

Schooling in Northern Ireland is a complex and sensitive policy issue. There are a number of models that operate within a still quite segregated community environment. Within the context of a segregated system that includes a State system, a Catholic maintained system and an integrated school system, there are familial preferences, contention around ongoing provision of grammar post-primary education, and a range of rural and urban as well as budgetary issues.

School provision operates within the Department of Education's Sustainable Schools policy and the area planning process – which the IEF terms community conversations – facilitated by the Education Authority which looks at long-term estate and service provision.

The Integrated Education Fund worked with Building Change Trust to organise a process inspired by the deliberative polling methodology (later described as community conversations) in Kilkeel in south Down. Kilkeel is a demographically diverse town and hinterland.

The first process was so successful that they ran two more in Clogher Valley and, supported again by Building Change Trust, for the 4,000 residents of two villages in East Antrim – Carnlough and Glenarm.

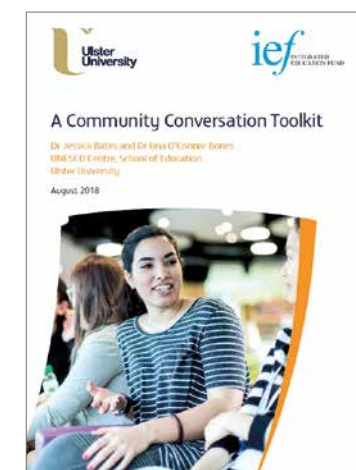
A fourth process is to be progressed in a very diverse and politically sensitive area in South Belfast coming out of those supported by Building Change Trust.

The final formal report on the deliberative polling/ community conversations in Carnlough and Glenarm stated: "It is essential that, as the statutory process progresses, the Education Authority maintains a consistent practice of community engagement with teachers, governors, parents and the wider communities of both villages and surrounding area. Communication on the statutory process should be accessible, reciprocal, transparent and timely to offset any perceptions of partisan decision-making."

(School of Education, Ulster University, Carnlough and Glenarm community conversation: Gathering views on local primary school provision, December 2017, p55)

The process in Carnlough/Glenarm represented significant progress in the IEF's overarching aim of having an independent community consultation mechanism embedded within area-based-planning.

As a result of these processes both the Education Authority and the Department of Education are actively exploring how to mainstream the community conversations methodology in their development of area plans.



ief
INTEGRATED
EDUCATION FUND

FUTURE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The eight key recommendations from the Creative Space for Civic Thinking legacy assessment focus around its role in strengthening democracy in Northern Ireland.

The recommendations pick up on the timely nature of the Creative Space for Civic Thinking programme given the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive in 2017, an increasingly clear political vacuum and clear weakness in how civil society is able to contribute to a healthy democratic process that involves them.

When the political institutions collapsed it became more clear that an over-focus on the institutions and an under-focus on civil society processes, people and structures had weakened democracy in Northern Ireland.

As the civil society response develops, greatly assisted by Building Change Trust, it is critical to Northern Ireland that there is no regression in recent progress made, and that expectation created is fulfilled. However, these are long term processes that need ongoing investment.

The three factors that have helped strengthen democracy include:

- a** Provision of professional tools to engage citizens on issues of relevance in policy, how elections and politics work, and decision-making;
- b** Citizen engagement in policy and local decision-making;
- c** Relational development leading to enhanced trust between citizens and elected representatives or/and decision-makers in both local and central government;

The eight key recommendations relate to those themes and should be considered by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) having helped establish the Building Change Trust along with other partners in the VCSE sector following a procurement exercise by Big Lottery Fund. CFNI therefore has a responsibility for its legacy, along with the Big Lottery Fund.

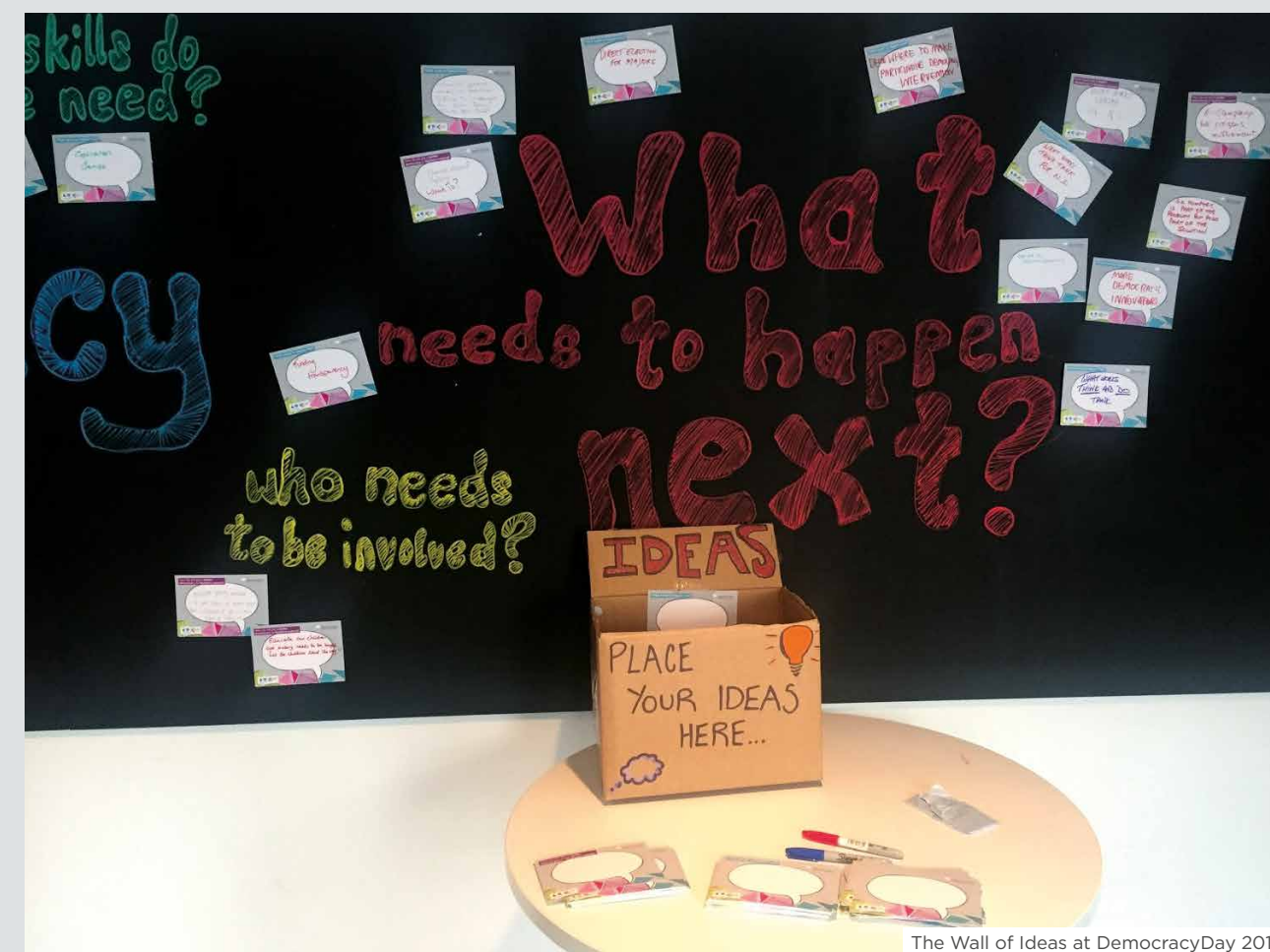
Recommendations

Toolkit

1. CFNI needs to continue to make the toolkit available to support citizen engagement beyond the BCT programme ensuring it continues to offer professional support, is updated and promoted for use by the VCSE sector especially.
2. CFNI should consider providing a separate promotional resource for the toolkit. It may not need much actual funding but a separate social media presence, and identification of it as a legacy of the BCT and the CSCT programme specifically, would deserve a focus over the next three to five years.

Citizen Engagement

3. A number of the CSCT initiatives had clear goals and have the potential for significant policy impact. This includes the nascent citizens' assembly, the community conversations toolkit by the Integrated Education Fund, the Open Government Network, and the participatory budgeting project. The three streams for strengthening democracy that have been core to the programme are present in each initiative. CFNI should maintain a relationship with those promoting each of the initiatives and provide whatever support it can.
4. The CSCT programme brought a different perspective and a systemic approach to participatory budgeting. Therefore while not over-complicating the concept or over-selling its value as innovation, CFNI may wish to continue to embrace the concept as having the right values for VCSE sector engagement in managing budgets and decision-makers in involving citizens.



The Wall of Ideas at DemocracyDay 2017

5. The citizens' assembly is a new concept to Northern Ireland building on successful operation elsewhere on the island and in different parts of the UK and Europe. One of the key needs following the operation of a well-organised and meaningful citizens' assembly pilot is to further increase awareness of the concept and how successful the pilot has been. This includes providing means for its supporters to have their voice heard.
6. A second key need for the citizens' assembly is to find a "home" for the concept within government, preferably within central government presumably in The Executive Office, Northern Ireland Office, or Department for Communities. The next iteration of a citizens' assembly will be the most important and should focus on a touchstone issue in Northern Ireland.
7. The participatory budgeting initiative will have more traction within local government where decision-making can be, inevitably, more local and involve smaller budgets and with less impact for precedent. It has a greater potential to be relevant to local community needs. An umbrella body like NILGA may be a vehicle to advance the concept further with the VCSE sector within the next three to five years.
8. CFNI may wish to consider how the VCSE sector not yet engaged with the toolkit can benefit from it through awareness and training sessions. The Independence of the Sector report touches on some issues that relate to the relationship between citizens and the VCSE sector, and the VCSE sector with government. The toolkit can be a vehicle for thinking through some of the consequences.

Relational Between Civil Society and Government



Waste No Time Coordinator Karin Eyben with the 'Happy Hookers' crocheting group - one of the Big Dish Out winners in Harpur's Hill, Coleraine

CASE STUDY// The Waste No Time Project

Corrymeela managed a project supporting Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to better engage with local citizens as part of its community planning process. The Waste No Time project and so many citizens being engaged in the community planning process would not have happened without this work and the support from Building Change Trust.

The partnership included Rural Community Network, Beyond Skin and Building Communities Resource Centre. More than 600 people were involved in a series of events including pop-up consultations, work with schools, and enrolling citizens in a participatory (forum) theatre production which, amongst other places, was performed for Councillors at the Council head-quarters.

After the success of the consultation for their community plan, Causeway Coast and Council Borough Council agreed to allocate a small budget toward a participatory budgeting project - the Big Dish Out - which was organised by the Waste No Time partnership as part of its BCT legacy funding. Additional voluntary contributions were also received from a number of the partnership members.

The Big Dish Out participatory budgeting project is a collaboration between Corrymeela, Triangle Housing Association, Beyond Skin, Rural Community Network and Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council.

The total funds available were £6,000 to be divided equally between two areas - Coleraine and Carnlough - with the decision on allocating funding made by local people through a participative democratic process. It took place between January and March 2018 and community members proposed local projects worth up to £300 and were then asked to vote for their top five. The process was particularly impactful in Harper's Hill, a neighbourhood in Coleraine, involving Cross Glebe Community Association.

The success was not just about the allocation of the funding but it also engaged more local people than another process might have, and helped develop the confidence of those people pitching their projects and receiving community support. New people have become involved with local community groups and a new energy is being reported.



corrymeela

PROGRESS INDICATORS

Arising from the recommendations coming out of the previous impact reports and this final report we wish to report the following progress in relation to actions against ASPIRE indicators:

- Achieved
- Partially Achieved
- Not Achieved

| ASPIRE MODEL | |
|------------------|--|
| 0 red lights. | All ASPIRE indicators achieved or partially achieved |
| 1 amber light. | Vox pop activities with participants was not undertaken but the views and comments of participants were acquired in other ways |
| 31 green lights. | All other ASPIRE indicators were fully achieved over the three years of the programme |

| Action | Delivery | Comment | Traffic Light |
|---|--|---|--------------------|
| Civic Activism Fund resource to support new and creative local or regional initiatives | Eight projects supported initially, with six of them supported on a legacy basis through co-creation of the second phase delivery plan. | There is few other potential funding or mentoring/support providers that would take risks with supporting innovation in this way. | Achieved |
| Structured learning gathering and sharing civic thinking and participation experience | Around 27,500 people have been engaged by the programme, the equivalent of c.3% of the adult population of Northern Ireland. Through showcase events like the Imagine Festival or hundreds of workshops and dialogues. A strong strand of international learning through the engagement of individual experts and participation in the World Forum for Democracy has also been a key feature. | The wide variety and volume of activities has had an impact, sometimes without participants appreciating the funding from BCT or BIG Lottery Fund. Learning was not always structured but much of it was structured through training and workshops. | Achieved |
| Longer-Term Funding identifying and helping secure longer-term sources of funding for civic participation work | Aside from the activities of the civic activism projects which were achievements of the programme on its own, within two years of relatively small scale funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One project is reporting the likelihood that their work will be mainstreamed by public agencies on one of the most sensitive and complex issues touching on segregation; a number of others are working positively in partnership with statutory agencies with a similar objective At least two projects have secured follow on funding for their initiatives from other funders; additional funding from 3 other funders was secured for the Citizens' Assembly project Several projects are reporting changes to how they will do business within their organisation. | Some of the initiatives have secured substantial additional funding for particular initiatives. Of course, sustainability is not just about funding. Skills have been developed to carry on initiatives and some activity may be mainstreamed. The strengthening of democracy through the strengthening of civil society role is fundamentally important in a segregated Northern Ireland with a concerning political vacuum. The change needs to be built upon or progress may be lost and an expectation created but not sustained may be more problematic again. | Partially Achieved |

PROGRESS INDICATORS CONT'D

Progress against the nine actions anticipated at the start of the programme are summarised below using the traffic light system.

| Action | Delivery | Comment | Traffic Light |
|---|---|--|---------------|
| Engaging with local/regional government demonstrating mutual benefit or participatory processes | Momentum building for participatory budgeting processes with local government, and a citizens' assembly will take place for the first time in Northern Ireland. Initiatives have made in-roads with the Department for Finance, Department of Education, the Education Authority, the NI Assembly, elected representatives (MLAs & MPs) and a number of public agencies such as the PSNI and PHA. | The programme has made available the tools, projects and VCSE organisations willing to engage with public agencies and government, local and central. There has been positive response from some departments and agencies. There has also been some engagement in a limited way from local government. Government needs further persuaded to embrace the concept of more deliberation as a means of strengthening democracy. | ● |
| Open Government Partnership advocating for the implementation of the OGP in Northern Ireland | Established the Open Government Network; achieved four commitments from the Northern Ireland Executive plus a fifth from the Minister for Finance; and entered the first locally agreed commitments in the UK Action Plan. | Progress has been made but a lack of a Northern Ireland Executive has meant regression with the five commitments achieved to date. However, relationships with civil servants and the Department for Finance continue to improve and a further stream of open government ideas has been crowdsourced for the next UK Open Government Action Plan. | ● |
| Northern Ireland Democracy health check research on the health of participatory democracy in Northern Ireland | Report on Beyond Voting and a series of engagements involving political parties, elected representatives and the VCSE sector. Led to the latest suite of Deliberative Democracy projects. | Many issues identified. Given a focus toward the end of the overall 10 year programme there continues to be challenges about how to enhance participatory and deliberative processes. These are long-term processes and progress has been made but it needs ongoing investment. | ● |
| Research and monitoring on VCSE independence testing approaches that address challenges to independence | A report in the Independence of the Sector produced followed by consultation with the sector on its conclusions. Learning shared by others in the programme. | Conceptually challenging issues that require further engagement of key VCSE organisations in delivering change. | ● |
| Debate and dialogue within the sector and beyond seeking consensus and supporting response | Increasing public profile of the initiatives of the programme but more significantly about the role of civil society within the context of a political vacuum at a regional level, and the need for a healthy civil society feeding in to a healthy democracy. | Further discussion is important but there needs to be continued and renewed focus on change, renewal and reform. How that is facilitated post-BCT will be critical. | ● |
| Flagship Initiative- Creating the infrastructure for ongoing research, monitoring and challenge | The deliberative democracy process and projects modelled a different, more creative and collaborative way of developing a series of initiatives that hold potential for significant impact across the region. The Trust and CFNI are also working hard to secure resources for a legacy 'Civic Innovation' programme that could continue to resource and progress this area of work in future. A number of funders are actively considering making a contribution to such a programme before the end of 2018. | Promoting civic activism and deepening democracy is a long-term objective and the impact and learning from the Trust's work will be undermined if other funders do not fill this void beyond 2018. | ● |

Appendix A // Consultations and Consultees

- Consultations:**
- Focus groups with the OGN Steering Committee
 - Participation in Democracy Days over three years
 - Facilitation of Building Change Trust workshops
 - CSCT survey to participants

Interviews:

| Surname | First Name | Organisation |
|-------------|------------|-----------------------------------|
| Bell | Jonathan | NIEL |
| Bradley | Colm | Community Places |
| Braithwaite | Paul | Building Change Trust |
| Burns | Colm | Chair, Open Government Network |
| Campbell | Aidan | Rural Community Network |
| Dean | Gerard | Holywell Trust |
| Dunlop | Jennie | ABC Council |
| Eyben | Karin | Corrymeela |
| Fitzsimmons | Sam | Integrated Education Fund |
| Garbutt | Nick | Scope |
| Higgins | Kevin | Advice NI |
| Hughes | Tim | Involve |
| Jackson | Raymond | Confederation of Community Groups |
| Keenan | Alison | Antrim & Newtownabbey Council |
| Keys | Libby | RCN, BCT |
| Leonard | Allan | NI Foundation, FactCheck NI |
| Markey | Michelle | ABC Council |
| McAuley | Rhona | Cedar Foundation |
| McBurney | David | NIEL/Open Government Network |
| McCabe | Rebakah | Involve |
| McCallan | Derek | NILGA |
| Meban | Alan | FactCheck NI |
| Nolan | Paul | Independent |
| O'Hagan | Roisin | Holywell Trust |
| O'Kane | Louise | Community Places |
| O'Neill | Pete | Imagine Festival |
| Oliver | Quintin | Stratagem |
| Pelan | Kevin | NI Assembly |
| Pow | Jamie | QUB |
| Quinney Mee | David | RDCA |
| Smyth | Anne | Cedar Foundation |
| Thornbury | Andrea | NICVA |
| Yasin | Arfawn | Advice NI |
| Woods | Anne | Cedar Foundation |
| Young | Orla | FactCheck NI |



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