

COMMUNITY SAFETY ISSUES IN CREGGAN

At a recent CNP management team meeting, I was tasked with researching a community safety project for Creggan. I contacted a number of people involved with community safety projects in their own areas, including CNP staff in the Corn Beef Tin who frequently patrolled the area at night and kept the Centre and nearby synthetic pitch open late in an effort to curb anti-social behaviour in the estate. A similar project is running in the Waterside Top of the Hill area with volunteers opening the local school at night and persuading young people to use the facilities for general youth club activities rather than creating problems for residents on the streets. This scheme is organised and run entirely on a voluntary basis, with local people freely giving up their

time in an effort to curb anti-social behaviour in their area.

Another scheme I investigated was run by the University of Ulster – in partnership with Derry City Council, the NIE and the PSNI – using wardens to patrol the area around the university in an attempt to curtail student party houses and late-night noise. The scheme was successful mainly because the university had measures to discipline students or expel repeat offenders. This scheme was to close for the summer as most of the students would have gone home, but Rosemount Resource Centre staff successfully negotiated an extension of the project to be run in the Rosemount area over the period. There was general approval for the warden scheme, although with

some problems and hiccups. People living alone, and elderly residents especially, were glad of a presence on the streets at night.

The Glen Development Initiative asked for the wardens to extend their patrols into the Glen, which they did, albeit reluctantly because they were being asked to cover a much larger area but using the same resources. When I asked if they had any power to stop, arrest, or hold suspects I was told that they didn't. Instead, they relied on their physical presence to deal with any problems that arose as well as maintaining radio contact with the police in the event of an emergency.

Hugh O'Donnell, Co-ordinator
Creggan Neighbourhood Partnership





Martina O'Neill, Finance & Administration Manager, CNP, and Hugh O'Donnell. Both have been in post since July 2007.

MASTER PLAN

There are a number of proposals for development projects in and around Creggan. Some development projects near to Creggan will also impact on the estate. It is important to have an impact study to determine the effects of all developments, not only on Creggan, but also on the surrounding districts.

A **Master Plan** is key to such a study in order to factor in all the consequences of all of the development projects. At the moment, development projects are piecemeal and planned independently of one another, so it's hard to see the overall picture.

It's important to gauge the increase in traffic to allow for proper traffic management. The proposed housing development by Vico of the Bligh's Lane factory site will increase traffic along Bligh's Lane, Elmwood Terrace and the Lone Moor Road as will the Derry City FC

development which will also affect Foyle Road, Brandywell Avenue and the Lecky Road. When St Cecilia's school is built, this will generate even more traffic along with traffic to other schools to the chapel.

The Western Health Board plans to build a major health facility in the Glen will also impact on surrounding areas like Creggan and Rosemount and again will almost certainly generate increased traffic.

Flooding in parts of the Bogside and Brandywell could be exacerbated in wet weather if proper drainage isn't planned for as part of all of these developments. It is important to plan these developments as part of a cohesive 'whole' and not simply hope that somehow these problems won't arise.

During his visit to Creggan, DRD Minister Connor Murphy advised on the need for a Master Plan. I think it's time we took his advice.

SUPPLY & DEMAND

People are prepared to stay on NIHE waiting lists for years in order to get a house in Creggan. A lot of the housing stock in Creggan is no longer in Housing Executive hands, having been bought by residents. There is no room to build any more houses in Creggan unless you are prepared to build on every available green space in the estate, which is a bad idea because it deprives children of any play areas.

The land shortage in Creggan is compounded by the fact that the green-belt boundary corrals Creggan on two sides, cutting off any expansion beyond Glassagh Road. This effectively means that any new build projects promised by the DSD Minister Margaret Ritchie will by-pass Creggan altogether and leave a growing demand for houses unfulfilled.

The solution to this problem is patently obvious and can be solved at the stroke of a civil servant's pen: the green belt boundary needs to be moved and the land beyond vested to build houses on.

The argument against this proposal is that quite a lot of land is already zoned for housing: the Skeoge land and land on both sides of the Buncrana Road beyond Whitehouse and Woodbrook. The problem with this zoning is that the demand for houses is not in these areas but it exists in Creggan. The green-belt boundary allows for development in almost all other areas of Derry except Creggan.

It's time that common sense was applied to this problem to allow Creggan to get its fair share of new housing developments and meet the demand for houses in Creggan. If people want houses in Creggan, why build elsewhere? Why force people to live almost at Bridgend when they are prepared to wait for years to get a house in Creggan?