

FbRN news

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2004

Tools for Regeneration Launched by Minister

The ODPM Regeneration Minister, Yvette Cooper, launched *Tools for Regeneration: A Holistic Approach for Faith Communities*, at the FbRN national conference on March 25th. Written by Rumman Ahmed, Doreen Finneron and Harmander Singh, it is based on the needs of practitioners of faith based regeneration, expressed in the conferences and workshops held by FbRN between 2002 and 2004. The authors also draw on their extensive experience in the field.

The Toolkit, as we are calling it, offers both a theoretical framework and practical tools, providing a holistic approach to understanding techniques, skills and responsibilities. The authors hope that it will facilitate a better way of undertaking community development and capacity building in the regeneration sector.

We hope that it will be useful for those just starting out, as well as those who are more established, so we have signposted the sections clearly, and included basic information as well as more complex ideas. As well as faith communities, practitioners from other sectors, who are seeking to work in partnership with faith groups, will find much that is useful in the Toolkit.

There are diagrams, check lists and step-by-step guides covering, the context of faith based regeneration, setting up and managing a community organisation, community development and capacity building in faith based organisations, evaluation and performance measurement, fundraising and resource mobilisation, and working in partnership.

Funding for FbRN

The Minister also announced that, as part of its support for the Voluntary and Community Sector, ODPM had agreed to fund FbRN with a grant of £80,000 per year for three years, from the Special Grants Programme.



photo: Steve Miller

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Working Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities, the

Home Office launch recommendations. Comment from Barney Leith, Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the UK, who was a member of the Home Office steering group.

Report of the FbRN national conference, including the keynote address from Yvette Cooper, and reports from the workshops.

Round the Regions: News and comment from the regions of the UK. In this issue: the North West and the West Midlands.

Regenerating Communities Through Faith: a report from the **FbRN conference in Preston**.

Letter from the Chair of FbRN.

How to order *Tools for Regeneration: A Holistic Approach for Faith Communities*.

Yvette Cooper and Rumman Ahmed launching FbRN's new "toolkit".

ROUND THE REGIONS

The North West

REGENERATING COMMUNITIES THROUGH FAITH

Conference organised with the Gujarat Hindu Society in Preston on 26th February.

A short report from **Vijayanti Chauhan, Chair of Preston Faith Forum**

These were some of the comments on the conference evaluation forms:

“
excellent conference
superb food
valuable handouts
very worthwhile
great hospitality
”

The speakers were excellent. Jim Carr welcomed us to Preston, England's newest city. John Devine, introduced *Faith in England's Northwest*, a large and comprehensive piece of research, in a stimulating way that engaged us, made us think, and helped us assimilate some of the information for our own use. The panel session and the workshops, gave the opportunity for participation, but it was the participants themselves that really brought the day alive, making it such a successful, enjoyable and rewarding event. The networking that went on in the breaks, particularly over the lunch tables created a real buzz, and left people energised and much better informed about what is happening in the region.

The Gujarat Hindu Society was very pleased to work in partnership with FbRN to put on this conference; we hope to continue to work together in the future.

A full report of the conference can be obtained from Charu Tandon, 01772 253912, email ghsenterprise@hotmail.com

Faith in England's Northwest

This is a survey, supported by the Northwest Development Agency and the Northwest Regional Assembly, of more than 2,300 faith communities across eight traditions. It powerfully demonstrates the important contribution that faith groups make to the region's economic and social life. The survey casts light on Faith's role in areas ranging from neighbourhood renewal to tourism.

More than 5,000 important projects were identified in the survey, with faith communities running or managing schemes to address homelessness, racism, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, health skills development, art, music and environmental improvements. It was particularly evident that faith communities are extensively involved in providing services for older people, children, and in the more deprived neighbourhoods of the region.

Faith groups are also involved in local regeneration schemes including the Single Regeneration Budget, Sure Start, Learn Direct and Local Strategic Partnerships.

Many occupy important buildings that they maintain, conserve and make available for the wider use of the local community. They also provide support for the local community in times of crisis, for example, at the time of the Foot and Mouth disease crisis.

photo: Charu Tandon



Examples of key findings

- faith communities are strongest where social need is highest
- faith communities deliver social care; 5,140 non-worship projects were identified
- faith communities stimulate unprecedented levels of volunteering; there are over 45,000 volunteers in England's Northwest involved in activities in the community
- faith communities play a role in over 600 regeneration programmes
- findings reinforce the claim that faith communities are closer to groups that other agencies find hard to reach

The survey has led to plans for a future regional inter-faith forum which will help those in other sectors to engage effectively with faith communities.

Faith in England's Northwest is a vital resource for anyone working on faith issues in the region, but it is also an important tool for other regions. By demonstrating the depth and breadth of the faith role in regeneration, social inclusion and sustainable development in one region, it gives a powerful indication of the picture in other regions, and nationally.

For more information contact: Monsignor John Devine, Churches' Officer for the Northwest, c/o Northwest Development Agency, PO Box 37, Renaissance House, Centre Park, Warrington, WA1 1XB, Tel 01925 400 100, email john.devine@nwda.co.uk

A NEW PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE IN THE NORTH WEST

By Monsignor John Devine (Churches Officer for the North West)

Operation EDEN

Operation EDEN capitalises on the churches impressive cohort of volunteers. EDEN (Expanding the Diocesan Environmental Network) is a unique community environmental initiative in Liverpool that has received substantial government funding. The report *'Faith in England's Northwest'* identified considerable commitment to the environmental agenda.

Launched in April 2004, Operation EDEN is a £500k three-year project sponsored by the Church of England Diocese of Liverpool with funding principally from the Northwest Development Agency together with the Environment Agency and Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority. Two key voluntary sector partners are also involved – Groundwork and Sefton Council for Voluntary Service. The Northwest Development Agency have awarded a grant of £418,300 to the project. It will:

- develop good practice in faith communities so that they manage their resources in a more sustainable way by recognising their roles as social businesses and key agents for environmental action, micro-economic development and community regeneration.
- harness a major partner of the voluntary sector (with a proven track record in enabling, training, and involving volunteers) to share its insights and skills with key statutory agencies to develop in synergy, schemes for local economic and environmental sustainability.
- offer a range of practical examples of faith communities being engaged in micro economic, environmental and neighbourhood-based initiatives, which can be replicated elsewhere.
- build upon an enthusiasm and proven commitment in the Liverpool Diocese on regeneration at all levels particularly harnessing the fact that 45% of the Diocese covers areas identified by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

EDEN employs a Coordinator, Project Officer, and Office Administrator who are working to expand the existing network of over 120 parish environmental representatives into an ecumenical and interfaith network committed to the regeneration of local communities and the transformation of the local environment through micro-economic regeneration projects and training initiatives. This includes improving the way that communities understand and appreciate their environment. Local Groups will be helped to improve buildings that serve the community, develop local recycling schemes and reclaim and refurbish open space, in urban as well as rural areas.

The EDEN Project demonstrates how faith communities are good at reaching the 'hard to reach'. It is another example of how statutory and voluntary bodies can work in partnership with faith communities who are present in every neighbourhood in the region, urban and rural.

ROUND THE REGIONS

The West Midlands

WEST MIDLANDS FAITHS FORUM

An update from John Hall, Chair of West Midlands Faith Forum

The West Midlands Faiths Forum is a child born out of the gathering momentum taking us inexorably toward a regionalised Britain, for Government and Europe increasingly think and act on a regional basis. The West Midlands Regional Chamber, formed in 1999 evolved into today's Regional Assembly with its own corporate and legal powers and ever expanding responsibilities. A new Government Office has also been established and a Regional Development Agency set to work. Early on, a seat was made available on the Assembly for a Faith Member. A multi-faith Task Group set to work in 2001 to look at the feasibility of establishing a Faiths Forum which would reflect the cosmopolitan and culturally diverse character of a region with a population of over 7 million people, many more people than in the whole of Scotland!

Developmental Process

The Faiths Forum Task Group, took over 2 years to complete its task – time which was well spent. In 2002, the Task Group commissioned the Centre for Voluntary Action and Research at the University of Aston to assist, and their research study and extensive report produced in the summer of 2003 helpfully looked at the many tricky challenges facing anyone thinking of forming a regional faiths forum. The research process involved extensive consultations throughout the 6 sub-regions

including dialogue with existing multi-faith and inter-faith groups. How, for example, were we to deal with the question of representation? (In the event we have gone for a process which allows for people to be appointed to the forum who are reflective rather than wholly representative of the different faith communities and this seems to have proved both acceptable and works well in practice).

The study also revealed that faith communities wanted to be involved in shaping regional policy, not just delivering what government called upon them to do. It was felt that the Faiths Forum might address two particular areas – community cohesion and regeneration. The Forum was perceived as a means for the

voice of the faiths to be heard and for them to play their part in shaping regional economic and other policies and strategies. It was evident that, though never formally mapped, the faith communities played a highly significant role in the region, especially at the local level.

Forum Launch

On 17th June 2003, the West Midlands Faiths Forum was formally launched in Birmingham at the Campanile Conference Centre where the hall was packed. The Regional Strategic Engagement Fund agreed to provide an initial 3 years funding (£54,000 p.a.) to provide the much-needed capacity building and to help meet the administrative, secretarial and other costs in getting the Faiths Forum launched



Launch of WMFF in Birmingham on 17th June 2003,
Revds Jemima Prasad and John Hall

The task group of the WMFF that set to work to address Guns and Drugs in 2004.
From left to right: Chaudry Rashid, Harbans Singh, Mark Fisher, Joe Aldread, Ali Mohammed



and established. The new database with some 700 people on it already would need to be developed into a more comprehensive membership base. The Faiths Forum's Executive met for the first time in October 2003, its membership drawn from all the major faith groups.

Early Work

One of the problems for a new regional body is to establish its identity quickly. Local faith communities made it quite clear they wanted to see actual benefits and not just another 'talking shop' put in place. The Executive Committee therefore, responded quickly to begin a process of regional faith mapping and have had some support from other partners and have recently been successful in attracting a small sum of funding from the Government's Infrastructure 'Early Spend' purse to get this under way.

The Executive have also engaged actively in helping shape the regional tourism strategy, which now clearly includes the faiths at various points. The Chair of the Faiths Forum has been invited to Chair one of the Regional Tourism Theme Groups, and will hopefully be able to both promote the community cohesion aspects that faith tourism offers, as well as seek improvements and better resourcing of faith buildings as visitor destinations. Visitors to faith buildings state the creation

and maintenance of sacred space is the most important attribute of these sites, these enhance quality of life, and are part of our common faiths concern and agenda.

The Forum have also initiated a Faiths Forum response to the drugs and guns problems faced by many urban areas, and at the time of the recent local government elections, a response to the threat of far right politics. Inevitably much of the Executive's early efforts are also directed toward putting in place working structures, appropriate core values and terms of reference, as well as establishing effective Task, Standing and other committees.

One particular Standing Group which has already proved useful has been the creation of the Standing Interfaith Group (SING) which has been bringing together, for the first time, the many sub-regional inter-faith and multi-faith groups across the region. There is much valuable experience here and this is now being shared. We have some of the longest established groups in the country as well as some of the newest.

Though the main work of the Forum is undertaken by the Executive Committee, an Advisory Panel has now been formed, drawing its members, mainly faiths leaders, from a wide pool of different faiths. They have just had their first meeting.

Where next?

The West Midlands Faiths Forum is a newly born baby. It needs to meet with other infants and grow alongside them, learning from what is happening in the other regions and finding ways to thrive with them. Presently no arrangements are in place to facilitate this and it is much needed. Faced with a huge agenda, it also suffers from under-capacity. The Home Office's recently published report *'Growing Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities'* calls for consultation to take place between government and faith communities as a matter of course, potentially increasing further the demands on the Faiths Forum. These new opportunities for faith communities to work together and with others to help shape communities we all want to live in, present us with a real challenge which must be met.

TOOLS FOR REGENERATION conference

A Report of the FbRN National Conference held at the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, West London on 25th March 2004.

SUMMARY OF THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY YVETTE COOPER, MINISTER FOR REGENERATION IN THE OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER.

Introduction: Faith communities and the local community

I'm very pleased to be here today for this second national conference of the Faith Based Regeneration Network. The venue is a real example of what can be achieved through faith based regeneration. At the heart of the building is a place of worship and study – a place the local Muslim community can feel proud of and which helps others to understand better what Muslim tradition and culture is about.

But it's a working, community building too. A place where anyone can access important local services such as employment training. I understand that during its first couple of years more people who were not Muslims used the Centre's Careers Advice and Guidance Service than Muslims. That speaks for itself as a sign of what it means for a faith group to be of service to the whole community.

This sense of 'being there' for everyone is one of the basic values in all faith communities. Your working out of what faith means in terms of service to others – to people who don't necessarily share the same beliefs – can make a practical difference to creating neighbourhoods where people feel safe, where the local environment is valued and cared for.

Diversity and inclusion

Mainstream churches have been working in this way at the local level for generations. Communities, urban communities especially, are now infinitely more diverse than they were just 50 years ago. And there is no way we can realise the full potential of diversity without getting all faith communities on board.

Having a national framework to support the local has been crucial. Since it was set up in 1992 the Inner Cities Religious Council has helped to develop good practice for public agencies working in partnership with faith communities.

The publication of *'Faith and Community'* by the Local Government Association in 2002 was a milestone. For the first time local authorities had a clear signal from their own umbrella organisation about the importance of engaging with their local faith groups. The Inter Faith Network's recent survey of local interfaith activity showed that there are now almost 140 local faith based forums, 43% of which have come into existence since 2000.

There's no doubt that this helps raise the profile of faith groups and builds their capacity to take part in public life. But a further, and more challenging, step has to be taken on the basis of this activity: realising the potential across the whole spectrum of our diverse faith communities to deliver more in neighbourhood regeneration and renewal. It's these

practical outcomes for local people that I want to focus on.

Neighbourhood Renewal and Regeneration policies

The government, as you'll know, has been putting in place policies to drive up standards in public services, but with a focus on those who've been missing out. Society can't work if large sections of it are disadvantaged because of where they happen to live or because of their ethnic origin.

And it's no good trying to tackle inequalities with quick fixes. We're determined to bring about lasting, sustainable change. Changes that will mean a decent quality of life for everyone, wherever they live and whatever their background. This is impossible without the involvement of local people. Policies for inclusion and equality won't deliver unless they capture the imagination of local people and inspire them to take part. It might be through a group like the 'friends' of the local park – or through helping to run a community centre. For participation to help bring about lasting change, it has to reflect the diversity of the local community. This is not just about being on the receiving end – but about the different voices being heard and influencing what happens. Diversity is about empowerment.

And that's why faith communities are so important. You are there for the long term – that's fundamental to who you are. When it was developing the Neighbourhood Renewal

Strategy, the Social Exclusion Unit found that in many deprived areas it was faith communities that survived as the main form of local association, when others had been eroded.

Faith communities can bring key resources into the public arena, such as: local networks, buildings – often with potential for much greater community use, volunteers, skills and knowledge – from how to organise meetings or manage finances, through to leadership skills.

But underpinning all these are values about the importance of continuity, of being there for the long term.

Sustainable communities are much more than bricks and mortar. It is of course critically important that what we build should be of real quality and maintained to a high standard. But sustainable communities depend on qualities that are much more difficult to measure – things like respect and trust. Public policy can support these, but it can't manufacture them. Nobody can do that except local people, through becoming engaged in their communities.

Lozells community clean up

Let me give you an example – a project by the Black Majority Churches in Lozells in Birmingham. They decided to get the community involved in tackling the rubbish and graffiti that messed up their streets. Supported by ENCAMS (the national environmental agency) and the local authority, they spent a weekend running a 'community clean up'.

The picture 'before and after' was carefully documented by an external organisation. It showed that the change was not just in how things looked, but how people felt:

Supporting this across the country

The Lozell's project was made possible by a grant from the Special Grants Programme of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The same programme – the SGP – has supported today's conference and the development of the Network's '*Tools for Regeneration*'. This toolkit – which I'll be launching in a few minutes – offers practical guidance about building capacity and skills in faith communities. I want to see this used to mobilise faith communities – to enable more faith groups across the country to translate the words into action.

In the last 3 or 4 years ODPM has supported a number of faith based regeneration projects through its Special Grants Programme. In a variety of ways these have demonstrated how powerfully faith groups can make a difference in their local settings. I'm pleased to announce today the Special Grants Programme for 2004-05; £2.25 million will go to voluntary and community groups across the country to try out different ways of involving people in delivering renewal and regeneration. One of the grants will go to the Faith Based Regeneration Network for a 3 year work programme.

Where do we go from here?

Today's conference comes at a time

when there's a real focus across government on faith communities.

Many of you will know that the government committed itself to reviewing its overall relations with faith communities in the 2001 Manifesto. I've been a member of the Steering Group which has been taking this forward. It has been chaired by my Home Office colleague, Fiona Mactaggart and has included other Ministers and senior faith community representatives. I'm pleased to say that our Review has been completed and the Home Secretary will be launching the Review Report on Monday. The real prize has to be more faith communities really working together on practical projects. At present there's only a handful of examples of local interfaith or multi-faith projects. This is a challenge for the Faith Based Regeneration Network – and for all of you, its members or potential members.

This would also make a huge contribution to community cohesion. Like sustainability, community cohesion is something government can't dish up on a plate. Of course what government does matters, but community cohesion will stand or fall by the actions of local people – in all their diversity.

So let me end by encouraging you to read the toolkits you'll receive today – but not to let them gather dust on the shelf like so much good practice guidance. Get involved and put the tools to work for all the people in your local neighbourhoods.

TOOLS FOR REGENERATION conference

SUMMARY OF REPORTS FROM WORKSHOPS

A full version will be found on the FbRN website, www.fbrn.org.uk

Starting up in Regeneration

Workshop leader: Saif Ahmad;
FaithRegen UK

- 1 Know your community
 - Problems
 - Aspiration
 - Potential
- 2 Know your environment
 - Education
 - Crime
 - Health
 - Employment
- 3 Identify gaps
 - Barriers preventing inclusion/participation
 - Cultural needs
 - Skills shortages
 - Access to services
- 4 Identify ways to address gaps
 - Initiate three way partnership between:
 - Central and local government
 - Community groups and the voluntary sector
 - Faith institutions
 - Identify sustainable regeneration programmes at grass roots level to take the agenda forward

The Participation of Young People in Regeneration

Workshop leaders: Heather O'Neil and Fidelma Meehan; Swindon Youth Empowerment Project

Main Points

- Difficulty in making links/ communicating initially
- Possibility of using a questionnaire to gather their views
- They want action to result from their opinions and views
- Between the ages of 20 and 30 there is no aid, there can be feelings of isolation
- Faith communities must focus on the wide aspect of life
- In the early teens (12-14+) young people are easily diverted to a material focus, fed by the media
- Young people need to be aware of political agendas and to participate in many forums
- Young people need help in seeing religion as distinct from their parents, and tradition, and to see it as part of their own identity.

Working in Partnership

Workshop leader: Vijayanti Chauchan; Chair of Preston Faith Forum

Consider the need for partnership working within the context of community strategies and the cohesion, inclusion and regeneration agendas.

- Sharing of resources
- Recognition of the faith sector
- Maintain identity
- Community belonging
- Partnership is a good thing
- Certain organisations have money and can attract funding
- Community building, eg through SRB, different groups came together

Issues in partnership

- Others not looking at a holistic view of regeneration
- Need to develop ideas, models and frameworks for engagement
- Need to develop ways of partnership for faith groups and local authorities
- Sometimes depends on personalities
- Faith communities are an asset, they can deliver
- BUT they are not allowed to bring spiritual values into partnership
- Inequalities in partnership, sometimes it is a partnership only on paper
- Experience of being exploited
- BUT some good examples like the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre where there was an equal partnership with the local authority



photo: Steve Miller

- Local authorities setting the agenda
- Cynicism: 'been here before' 'nothing changes' despite money being spent 'it's just a numbers game'
- Need to disseminate information to the community

Identifying and disseminating good practice

- Disseminate good practice – build hope
- Building of connections between different faiths
- Challenge the Agencies
- We should challenge ourselves as well as politicians
- We need to regenerate people, but not just as individuals – that does not improve the area.
- Engage with local authorities and make them realise the power of this sector – faith groups are *very humble*.
- Build social capital
- We need to network

Funding and Evaluation

Workshop leader: Jane Gallagher; Connecting Faith Communities, Birmingham

Experience shared by participants included:

A long established church in Nottingham seeking to develop a Community Centre within a 'regeneration area'. Plenty of activity locally, but finding it particularly difficult to identify who to go to for help with funding and development needs.

A project in Nottingham where services provided by the faith sector are being mapped to provide valuable baseline information. The key issues arising include, gaining access to resources and accessing funding without giving up 'who we are'.

In Sunderland a small but growing, black and minority ethnic community is developing in an area with a predominately white population (98%). There are emerging needs

for the BME community, including establishing a temple, and the voluntary sector structures necessary to 'legitimise' applications for funding. The need for support 'on the ground' was highlighted. FbRN UK was seen as helping to meet this need.

There are 64 synagogues across the Home Counties largely working within a self – funding framework, with a Community Development Department. There is an urgent need to upgrade buildings (particularly to comply with the Disability Act).

The employment of a Faith Communities Development Worker in Cambridge was an example of good practice that participants would like to see replicated elsewhere. This resource enabled strategic dialogue to take place with City planners and provided a catalyst to the development of inter-faith activities.

Key Issues raised

- Accessing regeneration funding can bring with it the need to deliver prescribed 'outputs and outcomes'. It's difficult to 'translate' community work and community work principles into this framework.
- Lack of experience in accessing public funds.
- Funding is available for regeneration (secular) project work, whilst very little funding is available to maintain the physical infrastructure of faith organisations.
- Concern about the capacity of smaller groups, which do not have the resources required to develop organisational structures and procedures to the levels now required by major funders. ►



photo: Steve Miller

- Funders need to be satisfied on 'best value'; evaluation tools are necessary to gauge impact. Participants stressed the need for cross faith work to find the language and concepts of impact.
- Gaps clearly exist in the use of language. We learn the language of regeneration agencies and funders; they also need to learn the language that applies to faith based regeneration.
- When the regeneration funding 'stagecoach' arrives, the same 'bandits' leap out and grab it. Often the decisions are made long before we hear about the funding. FbRN UK could inform us about funding available; a website with 'frequently asked questions' would be useful.
- We should be able to draw on funding specialists as a resource, rather than attempt to all become experts ourselves.

Using Faith Buildings

Workshop leaders: Leonie Lewis and Neville Goldschneider; United Synagogue

The United Synagogue

The session presented the philosophy behind the work of the United Synagogue in relation to its synagogue communities. The three key components of synagogue community life are that it is a, place of study, place of worship, and place of meeting.

The United Synagogue, an organisation comprising 64 communities across the London and Greater London area, is over 130 years old. Buildings were designed to model the Church of England style and are commonly known as 'Cathedral' style synagogues. Many of these buildings remain unchanged and therefore, find it very hard to deliver the philosophical framework as described above. In addition, a large number of current synagogue communities would be unable to comply with Government legislation and guidance is sought in order to help with this situation.

It was noted that people have emotional attachment to buildings and

this meant it was difficult to close non-viable synagogues and use the asset to invest in growth areas. This was described as the 'edifice complex'.

Group Discussion

The purpose of any faith building is to house activities in a manner which encourages human potential. Unfortunately, many buildings do not provide the support necessary for these programmes. The inappropriateness of a building to its use carries not only a financial cost, but also an equally significant additional cost in the human currency of motivation, achievement and spiritual enhancement. The challenge is to provide a facility that promotes activity and maximises both past and future investment in bricks and mortar.

Equality legislation should also mean provision of worship facilities in hospitals, etc. and these should not just be the sole remit of the C. of E. The model of the faith building at Canary Wharf, which is constructed around the idea of 'time-sharing' space, could have practical application.

Flexibility of space is of key importance. The members of the C. of E. agreed that fixed seating is increasingly problematic as space is required for communal activity.

It was recognised that there would always be tension between buildings that serve the community and the community that services the building.



WORKING TOGETHER

The new Home Office report on Government relations with faith communities

An important Home Office report launched on 29th March 2004, sets out the terms on which the Government wishes to work with the UK's faith communities in the future. *Working Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities* is the outcome of hard work by representatives of the nine major faiths, a panel of advisers and Ministers and officials from No. 10 and from seven government departments.

'It was a challenging process, but the Review will enable Government and faith communities to work together more effectively,' said Home Office Minister Fiona Mactaggart, who chaired the steering group.

There were times when it seemed to some of the steering group members, as though the review process would fall apart. But the positive nature of relationships between the faiths helped the Review steering group to hang together and to complete its work satisfactorily.

The report highlights how Government departments can identify key policy areas which would benefit from faith communities' experience and how both can work more effectively together when national policy is being formed.

The report includes measures to ensure Government consultations included relevant input from faith communities. It also addresses deficiencies in the extent to which faith communities benefit from Government funding programmes.

It also shows how the different faith communities can be involved in national celebrations in a way that reflects the diversity of the UK.

'Faith communities have a long tradition of working to build active communities and foster development and civil renewal,' commented Home Secretary David Blunkett. 'Places of worship and faith based organizations are engaged in a huge range of voluntary activities which benefit the wider community. This report will help the Government and faith groups to work more closely together in delivering services on the ground.'

Chapter Five is of particular interest to FbRN members. The chapter focuses on arrangements for local and regional consultations by central government and looks at recent activities by central government to promote good practice in consultation of local faith communities by local authorities.

It highlights the increasingly important role played by local and regional interfaith bodies working in partnership with local government. It also acknowledges the difficulties that some faith communities have in maintaining a regional presence and considers the need for funding, particularly for capacity-building work.

FbRN members should certainly obtain a copy of the report and read it. It is a very positive marker in the development of good working relationships between Government and faith communities. It does not ignore the challenges, but gives a clear indication of the Government's acknowledgement of the vital role that faith communities and faith based organizations and individuals play in 21st century Britain.

The report can be downloaded from:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/workingtog_faith040329.pdf

Barney Leith, *Member of the Steering Group for the Home Office Report, also on the FbRN Steering Group.*



CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

We hope you like our logo and new look newsletter. There is a section reporting on our very successful national conference on March 25th. The Regeneration Minister, Yvette Cooper, who was the keynote speaker, also gave us the welcome news of a grant to FbRN for the next three years from the Special Grants Programme of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Like all grants from SGP, it has to be matched from other sources. Thanks to the Church Urban Fund, we already have some of this matched funding, and we are working hard to secure the rest of what we need.

The conference launched our Toolkit for practitioners. It is based on what you have told us is needed. We have tried to put into it basic tools, as well as more complex concepts and reflections, so that it will be useful, whether you are just starting out, or have been in the field for a long time. To order a copy, use the enclosed form. If you need more copies of the order form for other people, let us know and we will send them to you.

At our conferences and events, you have told us that you want to find out about what is happening at a regional level, so this edition of the newsletter includes the first of a series of informative regional articles. Over the next editions, we will try to cover the whole of the country – but some of this depends on you writing in to tell us what is happening in your region.

A quick word about the website. It is now up and running, but still fairly basic. I hope you find it useful. In the coming months we will aim to add interactive functions, possibly a discussion board. Let us know what you think.

As we secure more of the matching funding, we will be able to appoint a permanent staff team and build our capacity, to respond to your needs. We will be planning events for the autumn and will give you details in the next newsletter.

With good wishes,
Rumman Ahmed,
Chair of FbRN



How to order

Tools for Regeneration: A Holistic Approach for Faith Communities

is priced at £9.95 plus £1.90 for postage and packing (discount for bulk orders). To order a copy, fill in the enclosed order form and send it with a cheque to:

FbRN, 9 Lambton Road, Raynes Park, London SW20 0LW

Or download an order form from the website: www.FbRN.org.uk or phone 020 8947 6160

Mapping Multi-Faith Partnerships

The Inter Faith Network is putting together a handbook of local inter faith bodies and wants to include partnerships from the regeneration context. If you have a listing you would like to be considered for inclusion, please contact:

harriet.crabtree@interfaith.org.uk or ring her on 020 7931 7766.

The deadline date for inclusion in the handbook is 9th June.

FbRN UK is funded through the Special Grants Programme of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and by the Church Urban Fund.

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