



# Holywell Trust

10-12 Bishop Street, Derry BT48 6PW  
Tel: (028) 71261941 Fax: (028) 71269332

## Re Review of the Civic Forum

Holywell Trust is a Local Charitable organisation located in the Heart of the Walled City of Derry Londonderry and has been in existence for 20 years. During this time the Trust has and continues to engage(d) with the citizens of the N.W. cross-border region on many issues from dealing with the effects of the past conflict, community development, urban regeneration, poverty, social wellbeing, education & learning and the environment. Issues regarding participation in decision making and local & national governance has been a particular characteristic underpinning the Trust's work.

With regards to the NI Civic Forum the Trust acknowledges that the initial Civic Forum as established following the Good Friday Agreement had a problematic experience, and was not well understood nor supported by the wider public of N.I. therefore states that the past experience should not be repeated.

Holywell Trust does recognise that the current administration has led to many in the sector witnessing that whilst some groups have the resources and ability to interact positively within these complex political structures there are many who feel that they have become more distant and even feel excluded by them. With this mind The Trust believes that there is a role for an effective and adequately resourced intersectoral social partnership forum that has a clear remit in engaging with the N.I. Assembly in difficult and sensitive issues that require research, debate and clarification. This Forum must have wholehearted all party support, and a clear relationship with the office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Any newly established Forum should not duplicate the work of other bodies (e.g. on consultation roles), and must be, and be seen by the public to be adding value to the governance of N.I. It should not become a lobbying body. It should act as a conduit between government and civil society in areas where further research, information & experiences and tough choices are required. The Trust sees this as an imperative mechanism in a representative democracy. There are existing effective models of social partnerships throughout Europe.

Membership of the Forum should be limited to an effective, representative yet manageable number that reflect the diverse spectrum of interests within the multicultural society that N.I. has become. A gender balance and equality issues must also be taken into account.

Eamonn Deane  
Director



*Trustees: Eamonn Baker, Tony Carlin, Terry Doherty, John Donaghy, Una Gallagher, Diane Greer, Maureen Hetherington, Geraldine O'Doherty, Willie O'Donnell, Bridget O'Toole, Aileen Nicholl*  
*Director: Eamonn Deane*