

**CONSULTATIVE CIVIC FORUM: SYNOPSIS OF SUBMISSIONS BY
ASSEMBLY PARTIES, VOLUNTARY/ COMMUNITY SECTOR,
BUSINESS INTERESTS, TRADE UNIONS, ETC**

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| UUP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keen on the business community being represented, but conscious that however worthy, bodies such as the Institute of Directors do not fully represent the business community. Keen on Chambers of Commerce and Chambers of Trade having a nominating role. |
| SDLP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to achieve a gender balance. • Needs to achieve representation from the most vulnerable eg the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed and young people. |
| DUP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government should be represented through the National Association of Councillors. • Should not have a "House of Lords role" and should not sit in Parliament Buildings. • The final list of appointees should be brought before the Assembly for approval, it should have the 'imprimatur' of the Assembly. • The Forum should not be entitled to freelance or self-initiate. • Must ensure that it does not become the great monster quango. • An outside body with a wider remit than the Assembly is certainly not going to lead to good government in Northern Ireland. |
| Sinn Féin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will be the opposite to the undemocratic quangos. • There should be open and public debate to ensure transparency, inclusively, broad representation, democratic participation. • The Assembly should move to set up a Civic Forum Committee with a remit to examine available models and set in place terms of reference for roles, remit composition, selection and location. • The Forum should be complementary to the Assembly. |

- Should not become an establishment of professional elites who are already well placed within current government structures.
- Should be structural on a bottom-up basis, consulting of marginalised groups (victims, prisoners, ethnic minorities etc).
- The South African model of “issue forms” should be consulted.
- Membership should not be restricted; initially it should be an evolving body with membership co-opted as needed.

PUP

- Have engaged a consultant to develop a positional paper in discussion with a number of key people in the community sector.
- Should be a manifestation of the whole of civic society and not just professionals.
- Those working with children should be represented.
- Should be a standing conference, with its membership changing to reflect the issues under discussion.

Northern Ireland Women's Coalition

- Opposed to representation from local government.
- The process of nomination etc should be consultative and transparent.
- We propose that the First Minister and Deputy First Minister initiate a full public debate and consultation exercise on the nature of the Civic Forum before any binding decision is taken on its future shape.
- All activities of the Forum should be based on openness, transparency, accessibility and accountability.
- Suggested mission statement:

“The Civic Forum will work alongside the Assembly to implement the Belfast Agreement in its entirety. It will seek to promote reconciliation and dedicates itself to ensuring that the voices of those most disadvantaged and marginalised are heard. The Civic Forum will work through participative democratic processes and strive to create a more inclusive, socially just society by harnessing the creative energy of our communities.”

- Favour election via electoral panels to maximise the representative nature of the Forum and to guard against any suggestion of a self-selected elite. We favour the involvement of more than the 3 sectors cited in the Agreement. We suggest the following panels:
 - Cultural and educational panel
 - Youth Affairs panel
 - Industrial and commercial panel
 - Labour panel
 - Community representation panel
 - Administrative and social concern panel.
- Would be opposed to the creation of a 'giant quango' with members selected by Government.
- Term of office should mirror the Assembly with no more than one third of the membership continuing for a second term.
- The members of the Forum will elect a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. The Chair should rotate between the sectors every 2 years to spread responsibility and consensus decision-making.
- The Forum should develop its own rules and standing orders.
- Every effort should be made to reach consensus, but where this is not possible a threshold of 66% of those present and voting must be achieved.
- Should have its main facilities at Stormont to encourage mutual interchange with the Assembly. A regular cycle of seminars/meetings must be held throughout NI to ensure geographical equality.
- Should actively develop the proposal to establish a North-South Consultative Forum, and develop relationships with equivalent bodies under the British-Irish dimension.
- Should review its own functioning annually.

Alliance

- Important that it reflects all of society and not just the great and the good.
- Could play a useful role in complementing, rather than supplanting, the institutions of representative democracy.
- Recommend the establishment of a Steering Committee of Assembly members to work with the First and Deputy First Ministers on the mechanics of establishing the Forum.
- There should be co-ordination with the Assembly and have a strong working relationship with the Assembly Committees.
- A body of 50 persons would provide a compact working body.
- Should meet in different venues throughout Northern Ireland. The old Senate Chamber would not be appropriate.
- A consultative process should be initiated with organisations and groups and ratified by the Assembly.

*John Woods, Acting Director,
New Agenda (a network of
organisations and individuals
drawn from 'civil society';
business; trade unions;
churches; universities and
colleges; voluntary
organisations and community
groups)*

New Agenda issued 2,000 copies of a substantive consultation paper on the Civic Forum as part of a consultation exercise they facilitated during August and September 1998. A submission has been made outlining the key issues raised during the consultation exercise; a meeting has been requested with the First and Deputy First Ministers and New Agenda are willing to undertake a more extensive consultation exercise under the auspices of the First and Deputy First Ministers if this was considered useful. The key points in the submissions are:

- The Forum must avoid becoming a self-perpetuating elite. It must become widely owned by the society which it serves.
- It should address the so called "wicked" problems, ie the complex policy challenges which cut across departmental boundaries. Such an approach would complement the more departmentally focussed work of the Assembly committees while avoiding unnecessary duplication.
- Could be particularly useful in dealing with divisive issues, which elected representatives are often, understandably, reluctant to tackle.
- Regional economies succeed through innovation, hence the Forum should nurture innovation by 'thinking the unthinkable' and by using its ability to act on its own initiative to good effect.
- It can be a body which exists to complement the work of elected representatives; to reinforce the democratic legitimacy of the Assembly; and to bring other experience and expertise to bear in tackling the many and complex social and economic challenges which face all modern governments.
- The primary route for individual citizens to influence Government must be through their elected representatives.
- The Civic Forum will seek to complement the work of the Assembly, requiring a close working relationship with the Assembly and the Executive.
- The Forum should receive formal responses from ministries to its recommendations including reasons for rejecting any aspects of an opinion which are not accepted.

- The Agreement states that the Civic Forum ' will comprise representatives of the business, trade union and voluntary sectors, and such other sectors as agreed by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister'. Clearly the intention is that the Forum should be non-party political.
- The aim should be cross-sectoral unity rather than inter-sectoral rivalry.
- The interests of those traditionally excluded from decision-making, should be safeguarded.
- Two sectors, rural and religious interests, not named in the Agreement need to be included. The main farming organisations should be represented in the business sector while other rural interests should be reflected through the voluntary sector. Representation from the 'faith communities' should be on a rather smaller scale than that of the 3 sectors names in the Agreement.
- A proportion of Forum members should be aged under 25. It has been suggested that a parallel Youth Forum be established.
- Co-option onto Forum committees or working groups should be considered. Co-options should include skilled individuals and representatives of appropriate interest groups.
- A Forum with a core of around 50, drawing membership from a limited number of sectors, is likely to be the optimum size – small enough to meet effectively in plenary and large enough to be able to form sub-committees or working groups.
- Members should be free to operate as individuals chosen for their broader qualities and capacities to articulate the 'interests of the greater good', rather than just their respective sectors.
- Selection must ensure the highest quality of member is recruited to the Forum. The Forum should seek to field the 'first division' in representation from civil society who are able to bring energy and ability to the task in hand. The use of personal specifications could assist this.
- Each sector should nominate its own representatives based on merit using common guidelines to achieve a balance of religious belief, gender (at least 40% of either gender), age, socio-

economic background and geographical spread across NI. This could be achieved by:

- a. each sector being required to achieve the above balances from their set of nominations;
 - b. each sector nominating more individuals than there are places available, who would then be interviewed by a selection panel. This panel could be made up of two representatives of each sector nominated in the Agreement;
 - c. each sector nominates as (a) above while a number of places are reserved for an overarching selection panel to recruit individuals to fill 'gaps'. This could be done by public advertisement.
- The position of chair should be full-time while that of the vice-chairs is likely to require a commitment of at least 2 days a week.
 - To facilitate participation a daily allowance, compensation for loss of earnings or compensation to employers should be made available as appropriate.
 - Training should be provided to Forum members to enable them to fulfil their role to the highest standards.
 - The secretariat should be a mixed group of knowledgeable civil servants, individuals with experience in one or other sector and others who are simply 'policy innovators'. A secretariat of 10 should be appointed, and this should be sanctioned by the Assembly.
 - It would be better for the Forum to be located close to the Assembly on the Stormont Estate.
 - A clear communications, public relations and media strategy should be pursued in order to keep the public informed of the work of the Forum and to provide information on how to influence its work.
 - Public hearings and accessible meetings of the Forum and its committees and working groups could be held in different parts of NI.

Denis Rooney, Institute of Directors

- Citizens' Juries could be convened on particular issues and specific mechanisms for dialogue with schools could be established.
- The Civic Forum should link into the proposed North-South consultative forum, the North-South Ministerial Council, the British-Irish Council and equivalent bodies which fall within the British-Irish dimension.
- A continuous process of monitoring and review will be critical to the successful functioning of the Forum.
- Can assist the Assembly particularly in its difficult formative years and could provide a bank of expertise to assist the Assembly in various policy areas.
- Should assist rather than confuse the policy formulation and legislative process. The key to effectiveness lies in its structure, terms of reference and in particular membership.
- It is important that the body is genuinely complementary to the Assembly and does not overlap functionally with it.
- Papers prepared by the Forum should be debated by the Assembly as a matter of procedure.
- Members of the Forum should be determined by the selection of representative organisations who would be invited by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to provide nominees. Any proposed nominee should only be rejected by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on very exceptional grounds.
- Nominees appointed for 3 years and serve a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- Wealth creation is a vital task to the new Northern Ireland and thus the Forum needs a strong business representation. It is equally important that our society addresses the problems of economic marginalisation.
- Use 'umbrella' organisations to guarantee the widest representation. As a failsafe, however, we would propose that some additional seats are set aside for direct nominations by the First and Deputy First Ministers.

- It is important to have a direct link to the Assembly by having one representative from each political Party in the Assembly also nominated to the Forum. Ideally there should be elected Assembly members but political party nominees would be acceptable.

- Membership

Business	CBI	4
	IOD	4
	Chamber of Commerce	4
Trade Unions	NIC/ICTU	4
Community	NICVA	4
Youth	Youth Forum	2
Education		2
Health		2
Political Parties		8
Central Government and Local Authorities (Assessors with no voting powers)		8
Unspecified		<u>4</u>
		46

- The Forum should elect its own Executive Committee.
- The primary function would be to provide an effective and expert support structure for the Assembly. A key aspect of its work will be the preparation of reports on selected subjects which when completed must be debated by the Assembly.
- Legislation drafted by the Assembly should be circulated to the Forum for comment at an appropriate stage.
- Should be reviewed after a period of 3-6 years.

*Seamus McAleavey, Director,
Northern Ireland Council for
Voluntary Action (NICVA)*

NICVA conducted a major consultation exercise with the voluntary/community sector throughout the summer. This included the mailing of a discussion paper to 5,000 organisations, 14 seminars across NI and a conference in Belfast on 7 September.

- The Civic Forum should be a complementary and consultative body to the Assembly but it should not be viewed as either a second chamber nor a rubber stamp.
- Farmers should be represented within the business sector and rural interests should be represented in the voluntary/community sector.
- The Civic Forum should place issues on the agenda and be truly cross-cutting in its way of doing business.
- Should deal with themes rather than issues.
- Important to have an effective secretariat, which could include members from a business, trade union and voluntary/community sector background.
- Should comprise of around 50-60 members.
- Would support selection (as opposed to election or appointment) as the optimum method of establishing the Forum:
 - clear guidelines for the role of members
 - clear guidelines for selection
 - a selection process that is transparent
 - a job description.
- The NICVA experience of nominating over 200 people to the EU District Partnership is highlighted as is the Nolan principles and PAFT guidelines.
- Four year tenure, rotating on the alternate 2-year cycle.
- Training for Forum members and potential Forum members.
- Need to examine ways in which young people can be involved.
- Should be a proximity between the Forum, its secretariat and the Assembly, however, the Forum should use meeting facilities throughout Northern Ireland.
- The Forum should be seen as something which is growing and developing and should be reviewed in order that new experiences and learning can be built on.

*Mr Tom Gillen, Northern
Ireland Committee, Irish
Congress of Trade Unions
(NIC/ICTU)*

Wrote in October enclosing a short paper outlining the key principles in relation to the establishment of the Civic Forum based upon an extensive consultation exercise through its affiliated organisations representing some 200,000 trade union members in NI. Suggested a follow-up meeting and cross referenced their paper to the joint paper submitted by the Concordia Group (see below).

- The Civic Forum should be purely advisory, hold no executive powers, and should function as a mechanism to support the work of the Assembly.
- Should not only respond to requests from the Assembly but should also have the opportunity to raise and research issues of its own volition.
- The business, trade unions and voluntary sectors should be the main pillars in the Civic Forum and have equal representation. Each of these groups should be allowed to nominate their own representatives. The trade union representation should be sought through the Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU only.
- Additional sectors should include the farming community, rural interests and the most marginalised.
- The overall membership of the Forum should take account of the Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) guidelines.
- The Forum should not include elected representatives.

*Nigel Smyth, Director,
Confederation of British
Industry Northern Ireland*

Conducted an extensive consultation exercise with CBI membership.

- The Forum should adopt a “think the unthinkable” approach and nurture a change mentality.
- Issues referred to the Forum should be depoliticised before referral.
- A core of no more than 50 but bringing in expertise and other groups are required.
- Limit the core to social partners.
- Capacity and capability to contribute are the key factors – real need for innovative thinkers.
- There is a danger that excessive efforts to ensure broad representation may fail to attract the right

calibre of individual. Those that participate should be *“servants of wider society rather than guardians of sectional interests”*.

- Nomination by recognised bodies putting forward a panel of nominees. Selection on merit.
- It should definitely not be elected.
- Tenure should not exceed 4 years with a quarter retiring each year.
- Need a full-time chairman with two vice-chairmen. Period of chair should last 2 years.
- The Forum should be located close to the Forum but have a number of meetings throughout NI.
- Should work alongside existing bodies and duplication must be avoided eg the Northern Ireland Economic Council.
- A proactive role is needed – it should not just be consultative.
- Clearly needs a close relationship with the Assembly. It must not second guess the Assembly.
- Should be complementary to the Assembly and has the potential to broaden and deepen the sense of ownership of the spirit and ethos of the Agreement.
- Can identify long-term social, economic and cultural issues and draw out strategic policy options for consideration by the Assembly.
- An all-Party Sub-Committee of the Assembly might be set up to liaise with the Civic Forum.
- The Forum should receive formal responses to its consultative reports from Ministers, including reasons for the rejection of any recommendations not accepted.
- Should consist of 54 members.
- The NIVT supports the non-party political nature of the Civic Forum.
- The following sectors should be included:

*Avila Kilmurray, Director,
Northern Ireland Voluntary
Trust (NIVT)*

- Community Groups
 - Women's Groups
 - Youth Groups
 - Ethnic Minority Groups
 - Groups representing the elderly
 - Groups representing people with disabilities
 - Environmental Groups
 - Agricultural Industry Groups
- Its composition must be informed by the ability to bring to bear sectoral expertise on relevant social, economic and cultural issues.
 - There should be an open nomination system for membership of the Civic Forum, with nominations being made by groups/organisations within each of the designated sectors. Agreed criteria for selection should be established, with a Selection Panel being made up of two representatives from the Trade Unions, Business and Voluntary Sectors.
 - Proceedings of the Forum should be public and transparent. This will require a clear communications strategy.
 - The secretariat should be drawn from the civil service, but with a proactive policy of secondment from all sectors that comprise the Forum.
 - Should be sufficiently resourced to undertake broader consultation around specific issues or to undertake relevant research.
 - The Forum should be committed to Targeting Social Need, tackling social exclusion and dealing with cultural and equality issues.
 - It should not be a rubber stamp for the Assembly, it should initiate debate, consider issues and come to its own conclusions.
 - Should have power to establish Citizens Juries to examine issues and prepare reports on all issues of importance to the Forum.
 - Should be properly resourced and staffed. It should have its own secretariat and administration, a research department and press and public relations office.
 - Should have the authority to commission expertise in relevant fields. It should provide training for

*Mr Desi Murray, Secretary,
Belfast and District Trades'
Union Council*

members.

- The socially excluded must be included.
- The trade union movement must ensure that its Civic Forum representation is a balance of the movement as a whole (officials, lay officials and members).
- The membership should be elected by way of each nominating sector organising elections.
- Membership should be for a 4-year period, with one quarter of the membership retiring each year.
- The Forum should comprise of 90+ members.
- Should have its main facilities at Castle Buildings, thus providing greater public awareness and credibility.
- It should meet regularly outside Belfast and be open to the public.
- Should be reviewed within 2 years.
- Should have the powers to summon Ministers.

Messrs Cradden & McAdams

- Offer insights based upon their membership of the Consultative Forum associated with the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.
- Should be inclusive.
- Should have a clearly understood relationship with the Assembly.
- Should have the necessary expertise and resources to enable the Forum to carry out its agreed functions.
- Concerned that the established social partners may be too centralised in their thinking and not give appropriate priority to the more remote areas.
- Do not rush into setting up the Forum without first seeking agreement from the extended group of social partners.

Community Relations Council

- Must be equipped to recognise and deal with the effects of sectarian/communal division. Should have within its membership those who have professional expertise in the community relations,

cultural diversity and reconciliation work, ie people who are skilled in working across the divide.

Tony Smyth, Irish League of Credit Unions

An expression of interest that the Irish League of Credit Unions be included in the Civic Forum.

May Blood, Fair Play for Women

- Would wish to ensure that the Civic Forum is fully representative of women and groups representing their interests.
- The membership of the Forum should be carefully constituted to ensure that the levels of under-representation of women in other bodies is not replicated.

Mr Patrick Yu, Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities

- Would be willing to offer advice on how fair representation of women's issues might be secured
- Three key elements should govern the operation of the Forum: inclusive; consensual and influential.
- Should stimulate public debate in a non-partisan manner.
- Should produce an annual report for consideration by the Assembly.
- Membership must be inclusive, particularly of minority rights groups.
- Each sector should have the right to nominate their own representatives.
- Secondments to the secretariat, all posts openly advertised.

Neill Johnston, Assembly Liaison Officer of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Wrote in September enclosing a set of proposals.

- The RSPB has over 10,000 members in NI.
- Views the Forum as a vehicle for making the process of government more accessible, transparent and accountable. It will only achieve this and it will only be credible if it does not seek to rival the Assembly in any fashion.
- Must be influential and effective so that it attracts high calibre members who are prepared to devote time and energy to its affairs, however, the absolute primacy of the Assembly in the exercise of power must be unchallenged.

- Tenure of office must be long enough for individuals to play an effective part without mirroring the tenure of elected Assembly members.
- A membership of about 50 is compatible with the need to be effective.
- Bodies of all sizes and descriptions could apply to be 'recognised' by the Assembly. The Assembly could sift through these and agree which it wishes to recognise using the usual formulas (ie cross community support). It would then be up to the bodies to decide how to select their representatives.
- Suggests the establishment of a Central Forum from which people could be selected at random. The Forum would have the right to co-opt up to 25 members on an issue by issue basis. For example, an enquiry into education matters would consist of the 50 'Central' members and 25 'General' members with a specific interest.
- The Forum would elect its own chair and chairs of committees.
- The Forum should examine matters on a cross-departmental fashion. This would contribute greatly to the good governance of NI. The overriding remit of the Forum should be the consideration of 'the bigger picture' in a way that ignores political and electoral cycles.
- The Institute has more than 1300 members in the region representing private and public sector.
- I would urge you to ensure that the Institute is represented on the Forum. We have important views on training, management standards and skills that will be required. We also bring considerable practical experience and cross county representation.
- The Institute is a charitable foundation. Many of its members are regularly active in the community.
- We have four branches, two in Belfast, one in Craigavon and one in Derry.

*Mike McKimm, Regional
Manager, The Institute of
Management, NI Region*

Church Initiative Group
*Mr David Porter, Director of
 Evangelical Contribution in
 Northern Ireland (ECONI)*

Wrote on 10 September on behalf of the Church Initiative Group. This is an ad hoc group of individuals in the main church and parachurch structures with responsibility for comment on social and political affairs. It seeks to reflect perspectives from both Protestant and Catholic traditions and Ecumenical and Evangelical streams. A paper, titled "The Civic Forum: Involving the Churches" was attached.

- All religious traditions in Northern Ireland should have the opportunity to participate in the Forum, and not just the Christian churches.
- Any process of appointment should involve consultation with the main churches, interchurch bodies (eg the Irish Council of Churches and the Evangelical Alliance) and with representatives of smaller Protestant denominations who do not consider themselves represented by such bodies.

*Dr David Stevens, Joint
 Secretary of the Irish Inter-
 Church Meeting*

Wrote in September. This body has representation from 11 churches, and is strongly of the view that the Churches should seek participation in the Civic Forum. The letter included an offer to facilitate a consultation process on the process of selection from Churches.

*The Standing Committee of the
 General Synod of the Church
 of Ireland*

"We would value the opportunity to be involved in your consultation for the setting up of the Forum. Also, if representation on the Forum is sought from 'the religious community' as part of the voluntary sector, we would wish consideration to be given to Church of Ireland participation."

*Iain Deboys, Chairman, Ulster
 Humanist Association*

- The Ulster Humanist Association is best placed to represent the views of those who wish for a more secular society in NI.
- There may be as many as 160,000 people in NI (according to the last Census) who do not subscribe to a religion. Humanism is recognised as a quite distinct set of values which can act as a counterweight to the views of religious institutions.
- Their experience could prove invaluable in leading debates on sensitive issues, consulting with minority groups and preparing well thought out and non dogmatic advice for the Assembly.
- Would seek to use a seat on the Forum to promote humanist values.
- Would welcome an opportunity to have a meeting.

*Mr David Guilfoyle, Director
of the Youth Council for
Northern Ireland*

Submitted a paper "Reflections by Youth Service Policy Makers and Practitioners" on the Civic Forum. The letter suggested a meeting with the First and Deputy First Ministers.

- Suggest that a consultative document be issued seeking the views of as wide a cross-section as possible on the establishment of the Civic Forum.
- Would welcome a clear definition of the exact role of the Forum, how it will interface with the community and how the views of the Forum will be adopted or adapted by the Assembly.
- Suggests various roles for the Forum.
- A significant number (not less than 10%) of people under 25 should be included in the membership of the Civic Forum (those under 25 constitute over 40% of the population).
- The secretariat should perhaps include a secondeed from the youth service.
- The representatives from young people should span trade unions, business and voluntary sectors.
- Would want to see youth service practitioners and policy makers on the Civic Forum, including public sector contributors.
- Would support a Committee system in the Forum and suggests a Child and Youth Issues Committee. Civic Forum committee representatives could attend their counterpart Assembly Committee.
- Members of the Civic Forum should be obliged to consult and report back to the existing structures in their respective sectors.
- Suggests that potential Civic Forum members are nominated by key organisations and selected using the Nolan principles.
- Nominations should not be made by political parties.
- Realistic expenses and recompense for loss of earnings will be essential. Suggests absence from work for Civic Forum duties to be a statutory right, along the lines of Jury Service.
- To acknowledge the geographic spread of

members; suggests that the Forum uses rotating venues which will prevent it from being a Belfast-based venture.

Mr Conal McFeely, Manager of the Northern Ireland Co-operative Development Agency (NICDA); Social Economy Agency

Submitted a paper in September and sought a follow-up meeting. The submission sets out a set of principles (eg inclusiveness, accountability, transparency, equality of opportunity, respect for diversity) and a number of development aims (eg advise the Assembly on the key social, economic development priorities; promote community-led development; to promote partnerships; to promote partnership with the Assembly, the British-Irish Inter-Government Conference, private sector, quasi-government bodies, non government bodies and other social parties. NICDA suggests that membership should comprise representatives of the business, trade union, voluntary and social economy sectors.

Ms Patricia Bray, Co-ordinator of Northern Ireland Forum of People with Disabilities

Wrote in September enclosing a paper on the Civic Forum.

- In Northern Ireland, 17.4% of the population have a disability, therefore, 17.4% of the Civic Forum must be people with disabilities.
- Each sector should select candidates. A selection committee should be established in the voluntary/community sectors representing all groups (large and small) to enable this to happen.
- The Civic Forum should not have a fixed abode at a single or central location.
- One of its main roles will be to give a voice to those who have previously been unheard ie marginalised groups.
- Civic Forum should not be another 'QUANGO' – if society at large feel that it is their Civic Forum then it will have achieved its aims to be representative and independent.

Mr Sean Lawless, Director, Focus on Children

Submitted a paper in September as a contribution to the debate on the establishment of the Civic Forum.

- It is critically important to ensure the significant representation of younger people. (NI has the youngest population of all regions of the UK; 27% of the population under the age of 18.)
- Proposed that additional weighting be given to those organisations nominating young people under the age of 26 and also to those nominated being able to speak

with authority on issues affecting and involving children.

- Unlike the departmentalised format of government the Civic Forum should be able to take a unified and integrated look at issues as they affect the end user.
- Welcomes the possibility of establishing a consultative forum to work alongside the North/South Ministerial Council (Focus on Children is an all-Ireland body.)

Mr Paul Coote

Self-employed businessman, living in Aughnacloy, a member of the local Development Association, superintendent of the local Sunday School. Wrote on 24 August to nominate himself as a candidate.

Ms Margaret McCloskey,
Regional Manager, National
Federation of Retail
Newsagents

Wrote on 4 September, following a meeting with the Secretary of State who suggested that the Federation should seek representation on the Civic Forum.

*Mr Peter Doran, Co-ordinator,
Foyle Basin Council*

Wrote to Lord Dubs on 28 August to suggest that the Civic Forum presents an excellent opportunity to ensure that 'sustainable development' should inform the work of all government departments and constituencies.

*Ms Eithne McNulty, Ms Marie
Crawley and Ms Judy Seymour*

Wrote in September as a follow-up to their attendance at the Vital Voices Conference. A Civic Forum workshop at the Vital Voices conference made the following suggestions:

1. That there be a minimum of 50% women members on the Civic Forum.
2. That the Civic Forum will have real influence on the workings of the Assembly.
3. That the Civic Forum be an effective channel between the Assembly and local communities and that in its working methods it seeks to engage local community participation in shaping a shared future for Northern Ireland.
4. That the Civic Forum demonstrate transparency in all its working methods and should now publish a timetable to allow for a thorough consultation process.

*Ms Sharon O'Connor,
President of Network Ireland*

The Organisation for Women in Business, wrote in October asking to be kept informed on the development of the Civic Forum.

The Concordia Group (CBI, NIC/ICTU, UFU, NICVA, NIAPA)

Wrote in October to outline some of the working practices and approaches by the Concordia Group which may be informative as to how the Civic Forum may operate. The Group suggested a meeting.

Ms Mary McKee, Executive Director of Groundwork Northern Ireland
(An Environmental Regeneration Agency)

Submitted a paper in October on the role of the Civic Forum and the North-South Ministerial Council.

- The work of the Forum should be holistic and integrated.
- The 3 sectoral bodies should be the nominating bodies and be given guidance on how to select their nominees (ie CBI, NIC/ICTU and NICVA).
- Should have 54 members (half the size of the Assembly).
- Important that environmental issues are given a priority.
- Should be a lively, dynamic body that uses imaginative ways of communicating with people.
- Should focus on 3-4 priorities each year.
- Secretariat of about 10 people, plus a Chair and 2 Vice-Chairs.

Mr Peter O'Neill, Manager of the National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland

Wrote in September seeking views on the potential role of representatives from the NUS/USI on the Civic Forum.

Mr Glyn Roberts (FAIT)

Wrote in September on behalf of *Families Against Intimidation and Terror (FAIT)* to suggest that the needs and concerns of Victims and for Victims Groups to be given representation on the Civic Forum.

Mr Séamus Heaney, Development Officer of the North-West Community Network

Submitted a paper in September and sought a follow-up meeting. The paper is based on a consultation seminar hosted by the North-West Community Network in August.

- The Forum should be complementary to the political process.
- A range of alternative models should be explored.
- Should not be a 'giant QUANGO' nor allow itself to become a 'top down' decision-making or problem-solving body.
- A key determinant will be the need to guarantee

the participation of those excluded from influence and power

- The forum is about process as well as structure – need to explore new ways of involving people eg “Issue Forums” in South Africa.
- The Forum should be allowed to evolve rather than be set-in-stone from day one.
- Should not have less than 50 members.
- Should consist of a substructure of interest forums and regional forums feeding into a co-ordinating body.
- Each sector should be free to determine its own method of selecting its representatives.
- The Forum should be viewed as a ‘moveable feast’ and should neither be Belfast based nor located within Parliament Buildings.

Mrs Gladys Copeland, Co-ordinator of the Ulster Federation of Credit Unions

An umbrella organisation representing 61 credit unions, “mainly in protestant working class areas”. Wrote in October to register the Federation’s interest in becoming involved in the Civic Forum.

Sloan Bell, Co-Chairperson of Protestant and Catholic Encounter (PACE)

Wrote in September – very keen to ensure that those who have been involved in the work of peace and reconciliation over a long period should be represented on the Civic Forum.

Miss Elaine McClure, The Ulster Society

Wrote in July to express an interest on behalf of The Ulster Society (for the promotion of Ulster-British Heritage and Culture) in the Civic Forum and to state that the Ulster Society could have much to contribute to the work and deliberations of the Forum.