

## Recurring issues for the Space & Place Programme

Capital projects are especially challenging as groups are dealing with developing and managing assets that require a different set of skills in comparison to revenue funding or project based work. There are a number of recurring issues that have been identified in the programme:

**Governance-** Organisational governance & management are of concern at application and grantee stage. Community organisations have had to adopt their constitution and governance procedures recently to continue to operate and manage their committee, members and projects under new Charity Law in N.I. This is a challenging exercise to get right, not least in the context of having to review their management procedures and legal responsibilities due to the specific development nature of their Space & Place capital project. Acquiring assets, managing capital building works and running the projects require new skills and a clear understanding of the roles, skills and shared responsibilities of committee members, staff and volunteers.

**Consultations & evidencing need-** Lack of community engagement & buy-in with beneficiaries, fear of raising expectations and a fundamental lack of evidencing the particular need that the Space & Place project will address, are only some of the issues surrounding poor community consultation. There is a huge lack of clarity with most groups that need and consultation are interlinked. A successful consultation relevant to the funding programme provides a greater opportunity for a successful application. The historical over-reliance on statistical information to evidence need is something that has been instilled by funders in N.I, but face-to-face engagement & consultation is increasingly being recognised and encouraged as a much more effective way of evidencing need.

**Partnerships-** There is distinct 'inward' culture in N.I and the competitive funding environment often stifles partnership working. This drive towards localism focuses on competition rather than collaboration and co-operation. With local Community Plans now taking shape in the new Super Councils, groups will have to work together in innovative ways to obtain council support and funding. Neighbourhood renewal and similar programmes in some areas have left a 'top down' perception and can cause communities to disengage further regarding partnerships.

**Financial sustainability & project legacy-** Forecasting long term economic sustainability of the project such as maintenance, running costs etc. is a fundamentally weak area of applications and grantee capacity to plan for the future. Groups need to consider accessibility to their project against affordability when it comes to income generation. Additional mentoring or funding support on sustainability is vital. A sound sustainability plan and extra contingency for long term running would help project legacy and sustain impact.

**Developing a capital project-** Developing a capital project is very different from a revenue project, requiring different skills and planning. Dealing with the legalities of land or property acquisition, setting up partnership agreements and general co-ordination of a capital project (such as planning permissions etc.) often takes longer than initially agreed. This can often impact on timescales for match funding and spend. A limited 12 week development phase between stage 1 and stage 2 is a tight window for some groups to resolve land or assets issues that arise. Asset Transfer could eventually make property acquisition a more efficient process in N.I once developed.