

TITLE/ORGANISATION	Racial Equality Subgroup - Single Item Agenda Meeting on Moygashel bonfire
VENUE:	MS Teams
DATE/TIME:	10 th July 2025, 12.30pm
List of Attendees:	<p><u>Subgroup & Working Group Members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Russam (Chair) - (GEMS NI) • Paul Noonan – Equality Commission Northern Ireland (ECNI) • Nisha Tandon - ArtsEkta • Ivy Goddard - Inter Ethnic Forum • Ann Marie White - British Red Cross • Julia Buchanan – Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIppriHRC) • Suleiman Abdulahi - Horn of Africa People’s Aid Northern Ireland (HAPANI) • Deirdre McAliskey – STEP NI • Shannon Doherty – North West Migrants Forum (NWMF) • Sarah Stack – Black and Minority Ethnic Women’s Network (BMEWN) • Justin Kouame – Migrant Centre NI <p><u>TEO</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Naylor – Head of Race Relations Development & Delivery • TEO Officials <p><u>Apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katy Radford - Belfast Jewish Community • Jill Robinson - Flourish NI
<p>1. <u>Welcome and Apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair welcomed everyone, noting the short notice in order to precede the PSNI meeting later this evening. • The Chair advised the meeting was called by Ann Marie of British Red Cross to discuss the potential of a cohesive stance by the Subgroup against the effigy that is displayed on top of the Moygashel bonfire at the aforementioned PSNI meeting. • The Chair noted an apology from Katy Radford and her wish to state that the Jewish community find the effigy abhorrent. • The meeting was opened to the members. 	

2. Open Discussion

- Anne Marie White (AMW) stated her particular worry was the lack of communication about the effigy from MEARS and from PSNI despite her contacting both.
- Paul Noonan (PN) highlighted the work of the Equality Commission and calling for greater regulation on displays.
- Sarah Stack (SS) offered to share with the group the work that Women's Resource and Development Agency is compiling to challenge and change the current narrative and misrepresentations of EAWG. **[AP1]**
- Paul Naylor (PNa) updates group on the recent Ministerial roundtable meeting, confirming that the multiagency approach is continuing. He will ask Migration and Inclusion Policy (TEO) to check in with MEARS, stating though the decision of whether a hate crime has occurred lies with PSNI and DoJ. **[AP2]**
- Suleiman Abdulahi (SA) enquired whether there is a dedicated strategy in place to tackle Islamophobia here. PNa responds that there isn't a standalone strategy in place for Islamophobia but will be considered under the banner of racism and discrimination in the new approach to racial equality. Tackling misinformation and miscommunication in majority communities is a key part of this.
- Ivy Goddard (IG) requests the group write to the council and PSNI, and request that the effigy be removed. IG is concerned that if it gets live streamed it could fuel tensions again in Ballymena, and currently they have nowhere to take families – no relatives, no safe spaces and no access to immediate funding.
- AMW highlighted concerns over short term funding to address long term issues.
- Deirdre McAliskey (DMcA) asked that, without minimising the unacceptable targeting of asylum seekers and the clearly racist nature of the Moygashel bonfire display, it be noted that this group of bonfire-builders annually seek to grab headlines by focusing on what might be considered controversial issues by the media. Local knowledge suggests that it is unrelated to organised far-right, racist activity in other areas, and a public narrative which does link them, could have unintended consequences. A number of political representatives have reported the bonfire to police and are assured it will be investigated as a hate incident. STEP is open throughout the July holidays to provide advice and support. To date, we have had no reports of connected attacks or concerns for safety.
- PNa responds to IG concerns on funding highlighting a piece of work that is in discussion on how to better allocate funding in the community and voluntary sector. Housing issues will still fall under civil contingencies. PNa to share update following PSNI meeting later this evening **[AP3]**.

3. Summarising action points discussed

- Letter to go to the PSNI for clarification on hate crime, impact of bonfires and effigies and community engagement **[AP4]**
- Explore the potential for a specific pot of funding to be sourced to act as a resource for organisations to offer practical support to families at these times – a crisis fund for those that have been displaced and have no other access to financial interim support. **[AP5]**
- Chair to write a statement on behalf of the subgroup for a designated member to read at PSNI meeting on behalf of the group **[AP6]**

ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:

- **AP1** – Sarah Stack to share work as discussed.
- **AP2** – TEO to check in with MEARS via Migration and Inclusion Policy.
- **AP3** – PNa to share update following PSNI meeting later this evening.
- **AP4** – Chair to draft and issue letter to PSNI in advance of meeting.
- **AP5** – TEO to look into specific fund as discussed.
- **AP6** – Chair to write statement to be read out by member at PSNI meeting.

Minutes written by:
TEO Secretariat

Date:
16 July 2025