



## From the Chair...

### Dear Friends remembered

Since our last Update we have received a grant from the Columbanus Community Trust for a new computer and printer in the office. Already, Meryl and Paul are more relaxed! We have also received a grant of £350 from Belfast City Council to help us fund our one-day conference on Saturday 21st March. Sadly I have to report on the deaths of two long-term NIMMA supporters, Kathleen Davy and Rev John Morrow. Kathleen died a week before Christmas. Many in NIMMA will remember her quiet presence at Corrymeela and her labour of love in making a garden despite the sea breezes. I can well remember, with embarrassment, a NIMMA conference where our celebrant asked the children before Mass to consider what offering they would bring with the bread and wine. To my surprise and horror the children arrived for the procession

with their chosen objects – flowers picked from the hard-won garden. The celebrant calmly threaded the stems through the Celtic cross and the children were delighted. Kathleen, thankfully, never commented on her sadly denuded garden. John Morrow, who died on New Year's day, was a true champion of NIMMA. He told anyone who would listen of our great work and how we should be funded and encouraged. He saw us as an outworking of his work in reconciliation and wished to make mixed marriage both acceptable and normative. I often met John on his walks in Botanic Gardens and the conversations ranged from the state of the Churches to the state of agriculture – all discussed with forthright views. Not for John the traditional route. We have lost two very good friends and we send our condolences to their families.

**Ken**

#### Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association

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Office Hours Mon-Thurs 9.30 - 12.30  
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To confirm attendance at one-day conference, please e-mail [nimma@nireland.com](mailto:nimma@nireland.com) or telephone Belfast 90 235 444

Email- [nimma@nireland.com](mailto:nimma@nireland.com)  
[www.nimma.org.uk](http://www.nimma.org.uk)



February 2009

## Everybody needs Good Neighbours

### Success of shared housing scheme

NIMMA has been one of the architects of the success of the “Shared Neighbourhood Programme”, according to Housing Executive Head of Community Cohesion, Jennifer Hawthorne.



Shared reality: Springfarm Estate in Antrim.

Speaking to NIMMA News she said: “ NIMMA has brought experience and knowledge to the table that have helped ensure that this programme for shared living is already off to a very successful start.

“Its determined lobbying has paid dividends and we can rely on its continued support and advice as we roll-out our programme across the Province.”

One of the first five of its kind, Springfarm, a housing estate on the outskirts of Antrim, is an example of the kind of “shared neighbourhood”

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### The Right Mix

The ‘Shared Neighbourhood Programme’, costing almost £1 million and majority funded by the International Fund for Ireland, is working with existing communities to develop 30 shared neighbourhoods across the Province over a three year period. The Programme provides grants to enable community organisations to celebrate diversity and bring together people. Training and practical support are available from a dedicated team of Housing Executive Cohesion Advisors.

**“People choose to live with others regardless of religion or race”**

that NIMMA would like to see set up throughout Northern Ireland.

It featured in a pilot scheme launched last August and, with a diverse population of 40 per cent Protestant, 40 per cent Catholic and 20 per cent from an ethnic background, its Community Association, established more than 10 years ago, is working tirelessly, with support from a Housing Executive field worker, to promote ownership and inclusion of all within the area.

The Antrim estate is “one of five beacons of good practice”, says Jennifer.

She said: “This programme is all about developing neighbourhoods where people choose to live with others, regardless of religion or race, in an area that is safe and welcoming to all, and threatening to no-one.

“ Our first five estates have proved

tremendously successful and are a great example to other areas of what can be achieved in a shared environment where people are confident in their community and committed to improving the quality of its life.”

Over the years, NIMMA has shared the often heart-breaking incidences where mixed couples have suffered intimidation in areas of social housing.

Its advice and practical help alleviated some of the distress of many men and women and left the Association determined to pursue the “shared” approach to social housing.

Information available at [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)

**NIMMA**  
**Day Conference**  
**2009**  
**Guest Speaker:**  
**Fr Tom Layden SJ**  
 &  
**AGM**  
**Saturday 21st March**  
**at 10.30am**  
**St John’s Church, Malone**

Report.....Report.....Report.....Report.....Report.....Report.....

**Local couples are opting for a modern solution to a traditional problem.**

NIMMA’s website is now the first port of call for mixed-marriage and baptism enquiries and has recorded more than 200,000 hits since it went live three years ago.

NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn described the site’s success, with an average of 12 visits a day, as “a very significant sign of the times”.

He said: “The web is the new way in which we receive enquiries and an open door for advice and support to couples contemplating mixed marriage right across these islands.

“It guarantees speed, confidentiality and a direct approach that appeals to

**“Dot.com” first choice for mixed-marriage couples seeking info**

many young couples who can access our help, download leaflets and arrange one-to-one contacts from the privacy of their own homes.

“It also demonstrates that, as an information provider and mutual help organisation, we are keeping pace with the latest developments in technology and using them to the best advantage of the people who really need them.

“The term mixed marriage remains firmly fixed in the Northern Ireland vocabulary and our research shows that it is, by far, the number one phrase on all search engines seeking our site”.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reaching Out</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.12.08 Paul attended Ark lecture on identity at NI Council for Voluntary Action</li> <li>• 18.12.08 Paul attended regional meeting of Communication Workers Union</li> <li>• 8.01.09 Paul met with Jennifer Hawthorne, Head of Cohesion at NIHE</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Accord Courses</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Interchurch Marriage Preparation Programme</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">22nd &amp; 24th February 2009                  22nd &amp; 24th March 2009</p> <p style="text-align: center;">venue                  Comfort Hotel, Antrim</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Contact accord at 028 90233002                  e-mail <a href="mailto:MPC@accordni.com">MPC@accordni.com</a></p>
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