

Claiming Our Future, RDS, Dublin, 30th October, 2010

Conference Report from Consensors

The event steering committee agreed to appoint four 'consensors' for the event, drawn from the different sectors and perspectives participating. The four were: Mike Allen, Oisín Coghlan, Brian Forbes and Ruth Lawlor.

The role of the consensors was to:

- oversee the voting process arising from the deliberation
- to review the results of the voting process from each session and report this back to the participants, through and agreed presenter
- to review the new ideas arising from the open field element of each session and report back patterns or trends in these which would be helpful to the participants
- to prepare a final report on the outcomes of the days deliberations.

The day was divided into 5 sessions. In Session 1, 2 and 3 tables were invited to prioritise a number of proposals (drawn from work prior to the event) and also indicate other proposals which had not been included in the list provided. This is referred to as the 'additional ideas' field. In Session 5 all input was through the 'additional ideas' field.

This report sets out the proposals which attracted the strongest consensus in each of the sessions and also provides an overview of ideas put forward in the 'additional idea' category in each session. It is only possible to give an overview in this report and the full list of ideas will be made available on the website.

Session 1

There was a strong consensus around the priority to be given to five values:

- Equality
- Environmental Sustainability
- Accountability
- Participation
- Solidarity

Most tables used the opportunity to suggest other 'values' which had not been on the original list or to indicate a particular perspective on one of those on the list. In particular a number of tables reflected on 'enterprise', putting it in a collective or sustainable context. Fifteen tables proposed the value 'honesty' or 'integrity'.

Session 2a Making the Economy work for the People – Economy and environment.

The two policy themes which attracted the highest support were:

- Change the current development model and define and measure progress in a

balanced way that stresses economic security and social and environmental sustainability.

- Regulate banking to change the culture from one of speculative banking to one where currently state-owned banks and new local banking models focus on guaranteeing credit to local enterprises and communities.

A number of tables used the ‘additional ideas’ field to highlight their view that equality and/or sustainability needed to inform any of these policy choices.

Session 2b Making the Economy work for the People – Income, Wealth and Work.

The two policy themes which attracted the highest support were:

- Achieve greater income equality and reduce poverty through wage, tax and income policies that support maximum and minimum income thresholds.
- Prioritise high levels of decent employment with a stimulus package to maximize job creation in a green/social economy.

Some tables commented that the ideas were not ‘radical enough’ while others commented that they were too ‘aspirational’. Several tables used the ‘extra idea’ field to indicate that tax changes should not fall on those on low incomes.

Session 3a Reforming our State to work for the People – Governance.

The two policy themes which attracted the highest support were:

- Reform representative political institutions to enhance accountability, equality, capacity, and efficiency of national and local decision makers.
- Develop participatory/deliberative forms of citizens’ engagement in public governance and enhance democratic participation by fostering the advocacy role of civil society orgs, civics/ethics education in all school levels and a diverse media

A number of tables remarked on the complexity of the language used in this section in particular. Several tables also commented on the importance of local and grassroots structures.

Session 3b: Reforming our State to work for the People – Access to Services and Public Sector Renewal.

The two policy themes which attracted the highest support were:

- Provide universal access to quality healthcare, childcare and services for older people.
- Invest in equality in access to and participation in all levels of education (preschool to university).

A number of tables raised problems with shared understandings of the meanings of a

number of terms used in the policy choices. In this session the second choice received a similar level of support the third highest choice:

- Make efficiency, integration, and equality the goals of public service reform

With a significant number of tables raising reservations about how the term ‘efficiency’ should be understood in this context.

Session 4

Session 4 was a ‘card vote’, in which each participant was invited to display green, amber or red cards depending upon their perception of how the day was proceeding. The overwhelming vote was green, with a smaller number of amber cards and around 15 red votes.

Session 5

A total of 474 separate ‘proposals’ were submitted by the 99 tables active during this session. These varied enormously from very specific policy themes which we should organize around to general strategic approaches.

In order to give a sense of which ideas were coming up most frequently the consensors agreed to analyse the proposals into general headings. It soon emerged that several proposals contained several ideas and so fell into more than one category. (For instance “link up with local youth organisations” was considered as a proposal both for ‘linking up with other organisations’ and ‘engage in local organisation’). As a result the total number of ideas registered exceeds 474.

The general ideas that emerged most strongly were:

Keep going/proposals on structures/governance of CoF	71
Develop a local organization/hold local events	66
Develop a web presence/social media/netroots activities	55
Ideas for publicizing CoF and its programme	49
Develop a clear CoF policy platform	46
Link with other organisations/interests	45
Organise some form of mobilization/ demonstration	34
Recruit new members	29

There were also 87 specific ideas, some of which proposed policy themes under which the campaign could organize around while others suggested ideas such as major campaigns on constitutional change.

Keep Going/Ideas for Governance of CoF

Contributions which included injunctions such as ‘keep together’ or ‘hold another event like this...’ were categorized under this heading. A number of contributions suggested particular approaches to keeping the organization going. These included proposals for a variety of working groups, a need for transparency on funding and governance and a need

to open up the leadership to new voices/people. Most other contributions clearly implied the continuation of the initiative if they were to occur but these were not categorized under this heading. This endorsement of the continuation of the initiative was the strongest message from Session 5 of the event.

Local Activity

The second strongest message from the event was that the participants required a strong local engagement in the process. Ideas here included holding similar deliberative events at a local level, establishing local co-coordinating groups, or linking with local groups.

Linking with other organisations

The need to link with other existing civic society organisations came strongly from the participants, with comments emphasising the need to engage different perspectives and to build upon existing networks and work. The most frequently mentioned interest that needed to be engaged was ‘youth’ while mention was also made of Trade unions, the environmental sector and local organizations.

Develop a programme

The development of a coherent and agreed policy platform (or charter) emerged as a priority from almost half the table participating. Some tables commented on the processes for drafting and endorsing this programme, while several comments under this heading, and more generally, noted the need for ‘plain English’ and ‘accessible language’.

Publicity

Contributions categorized under this heading included general proposals that we should seek more or better publicity through to specific ideas about approaches which were proposed as likely to be successful. Several contributions emphasized the importance of local publicity while others emphasized the importance of clear and ‘professional’ communication. A number of contributors pointed to the need to develop symbols which would be replicated on badges etc

‘Demonstrations/Mobilisation’ and ‘Arts/Creative’

There were a number of proposals for what might be seen as traditional public demonstrations (e.g. protest at the budget, occupy Farmleigh), though a number specified that such mobilizations should be ‘positive’ rather than ‘protest’ in nature. Others proposed innovative approaches such as ‘town square’ demonstrations across the country. It is worth noting that some of the proposals categorized under ‘arts/creative’ could also have been put under the ‘demonstrations’ heading – for instance ideas such as ‘alternative St Patricks day event’ or ‘alternative picnic’ share the notion that bringing large numbers of people into public places exercises a force for change, they differ only in the principle used for getting people there and the tone of the event. A significant number of proposals mentioned the need for ‘creative’ approaches to mobilization while some mentioned the role of art in promoting the message.

Political engagement

Proposals in this area were categorized under a number of different political strategies:

- An independent non-party political movement 13
- Seeking our own mandate through a new party or independents 11
- Influence existing political parties/lobby TDs 31

It is worth noting that several of the proposals which are categorized as ‘seeking our own mandate’ were conditional on such a move proving ‘necessary’. Several of those categorized as influencing existing political parties implied an effort to influence all parties while others referred to ‘those parties which support our position’.

Training and Skills

A quarter of the tables identified the importance of Claiming our Future being a resource of organizational and policy skills. These contributions emphasized the importance of building the internal skills and making them available at local and sectoral levels to build the organization and broad civic understanding of the issues we have identified. Several commented on the resource which the 100 facilitators represent to the movement.

Specific ideas

A large number of tables made proposals which are too specific to be categorized. Around half of these are properly policy proposals, but it can be assumed that the table considered them sufficiently potent as campaign issues to be potential mobilization points.

Proposals for further activities

- Specific events for Youth
- Questionnaire of public opinion
- Claiming our Future Day – alternative St Patrick’s Day, picnics, days of action, etc
- Link up with ‘Active Citizenship campaign’

Ideas around which to organise

- A Charter
- Constitutional campaign
- Establish ‘champions’
- Instill pride in communities
- Promote voices from outside Ireland
- Hold positive events
- Select ‘no cost’ solutions
- Ratify Aarhus agreement
- Expose corruption/nepotism
- Accessible guide to key ideas

A full list of the ideas proposed by all the tables will be available on the web-site shortly/

Ends