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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A message from: Helen Henderson
Chief Executive, St Columb’s Park House

How we make decisions is vital to how we function as a society. When important decisions are being made, it is vital that all opinions and concerns are taken into account, especially those who may be in a minority due to their background or beliefs.

St Columb’s Park House believe that consensus based decision making is a key tool in the toolbox of democracy and the practice of non-violence and inclusion. The tool provided here in this manual is called the Modified Borda Count and this provides a very clear and simple process.

“We discovered after publishing the Manual that the Modified Borda Count was initially developed in Northern Ireland in the 1980s by Peter Emerson, director of the de Borda Institute, based in Belfast. See Page 20 or just www.deborda.org for the history of the evolution of the method.

On publication of the manual we received an enthusiastic message from Phil Kearney of deBorda in Dublin saying:

‘Congratulations on the manual. It is a beautifully produced booklet which captures in simple language the key elements of this inclusive decision-making process and method. The case studies considerably enhance the theory and the procedural dimensions. It will be extremely useful as a resource to promote the MBC.’

We at St Columb’s are very happy to acknowledge the previous work, theoretical and practical, over many years by Peter and his colleagues and encourage readers to access the de Borda website and the many articles and books published by Peter which are listed there.

We invited Peter to write a brief account of the development of the Institute and it is now included on Page 20

In Western society we tend to rely on the ‘majority rules’ way of making decisions so a 51% majority can overrule a 49% minority. The Brexit vote is an example of when a decision is made on a majority vote but has a significant minority of people who feel disenfranchised. This can cause conflict, division and apathy.

We are committed to developing greater consensus in decision-making and providing a resource for communities and decision-makers to help them take more consensual decisions affecting, involving and led by civil society.

The pre-pilot testing of the materials was also invaluable and we would like to thank everyone who participated for their patience and encouragement including:

- DEPARTMENT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE, IRELAND
- RATHLIN DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
- DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL
- ARMAGH BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON BOROUGH COUNCIL
- CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL
- CORRymeela COMMUNITY FRIENDS OF THE EARTH
- CURRYNEIRIN COMMUNITY
- ASSOCIATION TULLYALLY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP
- HOLYWELL TRUST
- AND MANY, MANY OTHERS

This project would not have been possible without the support of the Reconciliation Fund. The support of the Fund has enabled us to explore and experiment with a tool to make decision making more inclusive and democratic. Northern Ireland is a society still coming out of conflict and coming to terms with how to take difficult decisions in a sometimes highly contested environment. Exploring constructive options to make the process of decision-making better is important and timely.

Helen Henderson Managing Director, St Columb’s Park House
“A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a moulder of consensus”

Martin Luther King Jr.
In a contested environment trust is built slowly but can evaporate in an instant. And in a contested environment where sensitive issues need voted upon, how a decision is taken can be as important as the decision itself.

It takes courage when you are in a majority to adopt a decision-making process that seeks consensus for the civic good; it takes courage when you are in a minority to adopt such a process and commit to the outcome.

This toolkit is an imaginative approach to support more consensual decision-making. It is a welcome addition to the options available to those taking tough decisions who want to explore beyond a traditional straight majority vote.

I want to especially commend those who used the consensual decision-making process during this pilot phase; these are people who embrace a genuinely civic not sectional approach to resolving issues.

I hope the manual proves useful to those within the public, voluntary and community, business and political sectors, who understand the importance of building trust and who have the courage to seek a better way of taking difficult decisions.

Cllr Maolíosa McHugh, Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council
“Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding”

*Albert Einstein*
Consensual decision-making is a process to arrive at a consensus often when considering sensitive or difficult issues. Beyond facilitating a dialogue, this manual explores using a vote to arrive at a decision when consensus cannot be reached through discussion, by using a modified Borda count vote.

The consensual decision making process using a modified Borda count is designed to achieve a number of outcomes. These include:

**BETTER DECISIONS** – through the discussion, exploration of options and taking account of all issues raised. Identifying options and answers that are most acceptable to all participants. There will always be a clear, positive result.

**BETTER IMPLEMENTATION** – because the process and outcome, by being more inclusive, has a better chance of getting buy-in from participants.

**BETTER RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION** – because the conversations should allow people to better understand where others are coming from, improve relationships and reduce contention.

**BETTER SKILLS AND COMMITMENT** – the process itself will develop skills and relational understanding, but participants may wish to reflect on how to further improve consensual skills.

**WHY?**

To help participating organisations arrive at better decisions. It may help to improve relationships in the process and, by achieving more buy-in to final decisions, it may help in the implementation of decisions.

As a result, in some circumstances, it may help participating organisations (including Councils) avoid reputational damage. It may help create a more positive image for participating organisations, seen to want to involve and embrace minority populations and their representatives; an organisation that encourages generosity between communities is an organisation providing civic leadership for all.

**WHAT?**

While the manual ultimately is aimed at addressing particularly sensitive and potentially contentious issues, it does not need to do so. In fact, it may be better if a consensual decision making process is run initially without the added attention and pressures of a sensitive issue. Participants may also wish to understand better the process before considering whether to use it on a sensitive issue.

**HOW?**

A selection of materials is outlined in this manual. Additional materials will be used by facilitators. Materials may vary depending on the issue being discussed, the amount of time facilitators are afforded and the context of the consideration.
“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world”

Anne Frank
PRINCIPLES

A consensual decision making process should be undertaken working to a number of key principles. These include:

1. **INCLUSIVE** – all participants are included in the process.
2. **PARTICIPATIVE** – participation is on an equal basis; all are asked to contribute; and all have the opportunity to suggest and amend options.
3. **COLLABORATIVE** – all participants are asked to listen, seek to understand others and try to find common ground.
4. **AGREEMENT PRIORITISED** – participants should understand that the first parts of the process especially are designed to get as much agreement as possible, without a vote.
5. **COOPERATIVE** – focused on the good of all participants.
6. **TRUST** – people need to examine their own attitudes, be open to new ideas, and be interested in understanding the needs of others.
7. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES** – people are different and may have different cultural and identity perspectives; a good working relationship will embrace these differences.
8. **RESPECTFUL** – listening genuinely is an important part of gaining peoples’ respect, and having it reciprocated. Difference is respected.
9. **CREATIVE** – all participants are in the business of seeking creative solutions.
10. **RESPONSIBILITY** – responsibility for finding consensual options and an agreed outcome is shared by all.
**PROCESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set the Context</th>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce process</td>
<td>Ensure understanding and commitment</td>
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<tr>
<th>Broad discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>General discussion, hearing diverse opinions</td>
<td>Opportunity to explore those views - show empathy</td>
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<tr>
<th>Common ground</th>
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<tr>
<td>Explore common ground</td>
<td>Discuss options and option alternatives</td>
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<tr>
<th>Identify different options (going to vote)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify options for a voting procedure if sufficient consensus cannot be reached</td>
<td>Identify pros and cons of each option</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Discuss the options</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore the pros and cons of each identified option</td>
<td>All participants listen genuinely exploring different viewpoints</td>
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<tr>
<th>The Vote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Options are put to the vote using a Modified Borda Count process is explained again</td>
<td>Ballot papers distributed and vote takes place</td>
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<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Communication messages already prepared are agreed</td>
<td>All sides of the debate share responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short discussion on what has worked well and less well</td>
<td>Report on the process and what can work better</td>
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</table>
HOW DOES THE VOTE WORK?

The table below explains the voting process. Voting can be done electronically but it may be best to use paper ballots to help people understand the process and to keep a paper trail of votes cast.

The vote can be a stand-alone session if options have already been identified or if it is only a vote that is required such as with funding decisions.

The Vote

If consensus cannot be achieved through the facilitated discussion that session should end by identifying a number of options, in consultation with participants.

In the final session a discussion should ideally occur on the merits and demerits of each option. This will not be about trying to find consensus on them – although if it happens all the better. It will be about participants explaining why they think each option has merit and why other participants may/should vote for it.

Participants will then vote for their preferences in order, using a consensual process such as Modified Borda Count (MBC). In the MBC if there are, for example, four options, points will be awarded to their preferences, but the points awarded will depend on the number of preferences expressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option B</td>
<td>Did not express a view</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option C</td>
<td>Did not express a view</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option D</td>
<td>Did not express a view</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option C</td>
<td>Did not express a view</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option D</td>
<td>Did not express a view</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The option with the highest score is the preferred option and wins the vote. Ballots are cast; they are secret and can be retained by the participating organisation to retain a paper trail.
“Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference’.

*Jane Goodall.*
Consensual decision making can be utilised for a wide variety of issues.

Consensual decision making is more than about tackling sensitive or contentious issues. However, the process may be helpful in dealing with those inevitable challenging and sensitive decisions that will need to be taken in years to come.

**WE HAVE IDENTIFIED FOUR THEMES:**

**CONSULTATION** – we piloted two processes with the Irish Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade and with Tullyally/Currynieran Community Associations

**PARTICIPATION** – we piloted two processes to name the new ferry on Rathlin Island and provide the voting process at the Holywell Stews

**PRIORITISING** – we piloted two processes with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and with the users of St Columb’s Park

**CAMPAIGNING** – we piloted two processes with environmental campaigners at Corrymeela and during Democracy Day in 2017.

It is so complex to work through funding priorities, so to be able to use a consensual vote added significant value to being able to see what had broader and less broad support.

*David Jackson, CEO Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council*
CASE STUDIES
The Reconciliation Fund of the Irish Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade invests millions of Euro in peace-building initiatives in Ireland, North and South. The Fund has made a remarkable contribution to developing reconciliation on the island including on both sides of the community in Northern Ireland.

The Fund engages with people and organisations working on-the-ground on a regular basis updating itself on needs in the region to continue building relationships and breaking down prejudice.

The Fund decided to use our consensual decision-making process at its annual conference with funded projects to identify priorities for the Fund for the next financial year. In total 130 people attending the conference voted on the ten possible priorities identified from previous engagement and consultation.

A clear priority emerged with well over 70% consensus, which will be reflected by the Reconciliation Fund in the programme during the next financial year.

―

"At our annual Reconciliation Networking Forum in October 2017, we had a practical demonstration of the Consensual Decision Making Model, through which Forum participants conducted a vote on key priorities for the sector. The process was simple and effective. In our view, CDMM is a valuable addition to the decision making toolkit, with great potential for dealing with sensitive and contentious issues in particular."

Reconciliation Fund, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Dublin.
Rathlin Island is located six miles off the coast of the island of Ireland, and is the only inhabited island as part of Northern Ireland.

The Department for Infrastructure decided to supply a long overdue new ferry for the island, but had asked that residents help name it.

Rathlin Development Community Association (RDCA) asked for nominations for the name of the new ferry, and short-listed those down to ten possible names. All names included the word “Rathlin”.

Islanders attended a celebratory event that combined future planning for RDCA and also vote to name the new ferry.

The consensual decision making project undertook the voting process involving 70 of the island’s near 100 adult population.

The winner, Spirit of Rathlin, achieved a 67% level of consensus with a score of 363 and the runner-up Oilean Rachrai achieved a 61% level of consensus with a score of 334.

The new ferry is now fully working and taking passengers and vehicles to and from the island. The Spirit of Rathlin is part of island life of the island’s 100 or so adult population.
Holywell Trust supports a number of community development and peace building initiatives in Northern Ireland. Based in Derry/Londonderry Holywell Trust works closely with many other community-based initiatives.

The Holywell Trust organised a number of events, to support new and small initiatives in the city that might make a practical difference to issues and peoples’ lives.

These events, called Holywell Stews, brought together 60-100 people, each paying an entrance fee for food and to hear pitches from four people and small organisations. A consensual vote was taken after the pitches and the winner left the meeting with the proceeds raised at the door. They won over £600 as reward for a three minute pitch.

A consensual vote was taken as part of the event. After the pitches, those attending were issued with ballot papers and voted by lodging the ballots in a ballot box in a polling booth.

The use of the consensual vote meant that the winning pitch wasn’t just the one that got most first preference votes, but the pitch that got a lot of first and second preferences and very few lower ranking votes.

The overall most popular pitch won – always with a consensus of around 70%.

Gerard Deane, Holywell Trust
St Columb’s Park is an urban park located in the waterside area of the city and since the construction of the peace bridge it has seen a huge increase in people using this public space for sport and leisure. The park is also adjacent to the Ebrington site, currently owned by the Executive Office and is one of the key economic development sites for the city and district. However, there has been an increase in the amount of alcohol consumption in the area and recently the top of the park has witnessed the potential risk of becoming an interface flashpoint for sectarian violence. One of the key issues is the lack of ‘ownership’ of the park by the local community so consulting local people in terms of what they thought were the main issues but also their ideas and priorities was a logical next step.

A two-stage process was developed and the initial consultation was very simple with 2 key questions:

1. What are the main issues affecting the park and park users at the minute?
2. What developments would you like to see in your park?

This initial survey informed the ballot for the Modified Borda Count and 10 options were printed onto a ballot sheet and this was used to prioritise what is most needed in St Columb’s Park.

The results of the consensual vote was to identify priorities for more events and activities, better toileting and seated areas, and more imaginative space for young people.
During the Imagine festival in 2017, we ran a consensual vote with the 100 and more people present to find out what form of democracy they wanted in Northern Ireland.

The results were clear. They did not want Direct Rule or a return to the recently collapsed Executive on its own. On a consensual vote 93% of people favoured an Assembly Plus model of a representative Assembly supported by deliberative democracy tools such as participatory budgeting and a Citizens Assembly similar to the one operating successfully in Ireland.

The results gained significant attention in the media and social media and have helped Building Change Trust develop its programme for creative space for civic thinking programme widening creative space.

“Democracy Day was a huge success with so many good ideas and challenging yet imaginative conversations. The consensual vote was a real addition to the festival and showed demand for a more innovative and inclusive deliberative democracy with participative tools that complement and add value to a representative Assembly”

Paul Braithwaite, Building Change Trust
Obviously, in a society of thousands, you cannot identify a collective will by asking a question which is open: “What do you want the constitutional status to be?” But instead of asking a two-option question – “Are you British or Irish?” – maybe a multi-option choice would be better. At least, then, some compromise options might also be ‘on the table’ and not only the stark dichotomy.

So in 1978, I published That Sons May Bury Their Fathers, and this included a section on multi-option voting. Next, I became involved in another conflict based on a closed question: the Cold War, “Are you communist or capitalist?” Now crossing the peace-line in Belfast was easy, but to go across the Iron Curtain required a little preparation, and in 1983 I started to learn Russian.

Then it all got terribly exciting. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev took over in Moscow and, as a direct result – the UK decided that NI was no longer of any strategic importance – the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed later that same year. So Ian Paisley shouted to a crowd of 100,000 outside Belfast City Hall, “Ulster says ‘NO!’” One week later, six of us stood at the same venue, in silence, with a banner which read, “We have got to say ‘yes’ to something.”

It was time to demonstrate multi-option voting. And largely due to the many cross-community contacts of the late Dr John Robb, in 1986, eight years before the cease-fire, the New Ireland Group held a public meeting of over 200, with SF, UUP and even the UDA think tank, the UPRG, plus every-one else in between – all but the DUP – and preferential voting was put to the test; it worked. There were 10 constitutional proposals on the table, and the option which received the highest overall support was for NI to have power-sharing and devolution in a tripartite Belfast-Dublin-London arrangement: a mini Belfast Agreement, 12 years ahead of its time. In 1991, the experiment was repeated with electronic voting. It too was successful. Heavens, this is all so easy, why has it not been done before? I wondered. “Do some research,” said my colleague, Phil Kearney.

And this voting methodology had already been invented in 1884 by one Charles Dodgson (alias Lewis Carroll), who did not know of the writings one century earlier of Jean-Charles de Borda – and hence the name of this procedure, the Modified Borda Count or MBC – who in turn was unaware of the words of Nicholas Cusanus in 1435, who like the others knew not of the voting theories of Ramón Llull, published in 1199.

Phil suggested an institute should be established, in order to demonstrate that these ideas on consensus voting were not the thoughts of just one individual but the result of considerable expertise spread over many centuries and continents. So in 1997, the de Borda Institute was formally established, with patrons from NI like the late Professor Elizabeth Meehan; from Ireland, Professor John Baker; from England, the late Professor Sir Michael Dummett, who invented the Quota Borda System, QBS, for use in elections (because the MBC itself is not proportional); from France of course, for M de Borda was French, Professor Maurice Salles; from Moscow where the MBC was put to the test in 1989, Irina Bazileva; and most recently from China, yet another personal friend, Professor Yang Long, where again the MBC was demonstrated, as too the matrix vote.

Since then, the Institute has published not only 10 books on voting, the three most recent coming from Springer in Heidelberg, but also 20 articles in over 10 peer-reviewed journals in half-a-dozen countries, including China. We have demonstrated the MBC, QBS and the matrix vote on numerous occasions both at home and abroad, not least in conflict zones as in the Balkans and the Caucasus. And all, 21 years of endeavor from just a handful of enthusiasts, on a total budget of under £10,000.
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”

Margaret Mead
Here is a scenario that explains why a consensual vote may be useful to a campaign when activists are divided about the best way forward. Some of the options significantly divide opinion while one enjoys broad support.

This is a fictional case study. Any similarity to actual people, areas or businesses is entirely coincidental.

**Scenario: Ballygoforwards is under attack!**

A multinational company from another continent that packages shell fish called **Sell Shells and Fish, or SelFish Inc** for short, is diversifying into the gas business. It has received planning permission from the Minister for the Environment to drill in the hills above Ballygoforwards, a local area of natural beauty. It will drill for natural resources (gold, oil, gas, or anything else that it finds that could be profitable).

The local community is mainly against the drilling although the Councillors of the same party as the Environment Minister are divided. Various groups have developed to express opposition to SelFish Inc. ravaging their local area by drilling.

These groups include ‘Many Against Drilling’ or MAD for short, Save our Forest and Trees (SoFT), Smash the Mash, and Boot the Root. However, the local police have formed a unit in Special Branch to monitor and maybe arrest those groups opposed to the demolition of the forest. It’s headed by Sergeant Vine who has roots locally, but most believe his bark is worse than his bite.

There are many concerned individual residents opposed to the drilling who have not aligned with any grouping; while local Councillors are also vocal (elections are being held next year!). The Councillors from the party of the Environment Minister have been called the Dr Dolittle’s as they resemble a Push Me Pull You, saying completely different things, often at the same time.

Local faith leaders are also opposed to the drilling as access to the site is through the graveyard which serves all sides of the community. Graves would have to be disturbed and possibly moved to allow drilling to go ahead. They are led by Father Burke and Rev Hare on a cross community basis and their group is called Ministers Against Grave Incursion – locally they are known as the Magi.

Additionally, regional environmental groups are opposed to the drilling though they don’t have any local members. These include Friends of the Planet, Green Action and Save our Planet.

There is no agreed way forward. SelFish Inc. assures locals that there will be no environmental impact caused by the drilling; but the community is not convinced especially since 10-tonne trucks have moved in to the area and are parked on the beach. Local people feel there was no consultation with the local community before initial planning applications to drill were lodged.

A few meetings have been held in the local community centre but these have been heated, frustrating and no agreed way forward has been reached.

Time is running out.

In growing despair, one local resident has suggested that they try and reach a decision by a process called consensus based decision making. All groups and residents are open to this process as a potential means of moving forward and identifying agreed priorities for action.
THE IDEAS IDENTIFIED SO FAR ARE:

A. Take direct action immediately and set up a camp (human barrier) across access to the site
B. Lodge legal action to planning office and courts who gave original permission and wait for outcome of this lengthy and expensive legal process
C. Leave it with the elected representatives to achieve a political outcome (and there is another election happening next year!)
D. Support a united clergy initiative, the Magi, to lead a protest since interference with the graveyard affects all families in the community
E. Launch a massive PR campaign targeting MLAs and the media to get public opinion on your side

Time is running out – can you agree a way forward. You can’t do them all – which would be your priorities?

ACTIVISTS VOTE ON PRIORITISING SUPPORT

The worked voting example below shows activists voting on the five options. For the sake of brevity we have used just nine activists votes. Here are the results:

HERE IS HOW THEY VOTED FROM 1 TO 5 IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Activist A</th>
<th>Activist B</th>
<th>Activist C</th>
<th>Activist D</th>
<th>Activist E</th>
<th>Activist F</th>
<th>Activist G</th>
<th>Activist H</th>
<th>Activist I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct action</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal action</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>United clergy</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SO WHO WOULD WIN?

In a straight vote using majority rule: Direct Action
In a vote using proportional representation: Direct Action
On a modified Borda count: PR campaign

Direct Action would win on a straight vote with five votes out of nine. But while five opt for Direct Action as their first preference the other four have it last or next to last. Many people really don’t like it.

However, the PR campaign is liked by everyone, getting two first preference votes, six second preference votes and one third preference vote. It is high up everyone’s options and no one actively dislikes it.

The PR campaign would win a consensual vote.
'The very first step in non-violence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving kindness’

*Gandhi*
The process has two stages. The first stage seeks consensual agreement or consent without a vote being taken. If that is not possible, the second stage will be a vote using a Modified Borda Count.

**THERE ARE A NUMBER OF CONDITIONS THAT WILL HELP EFFORTS TO REACH AGREEMENT OR CONSENSUS. THESE INCLUDE:**
- An understanding that decisions affect everyone and a desire to incorporate the concerns and needs of others in the overall decision.
- Clarity in the process and in the expectations placed on participants.
- Good relationships and a reasonable degree of trust between participants.
- Participants understand that the needs of the overall participating organisation may lead to an outcome that may not be their first preferred outcome.
- Participants are able and willing to give up the required time to participate fully.
- There is skilful and knowledgeable facilitation.

**HOWEVER, ULTIMATELY THE SUCCESS OF THE PILOT AND OF THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSENSUAL DECISION-MAKING IN A PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION WILL DEPEND ON PARTICIPANTS AND WHETHER:**
- There is motivation to find different and potentially creative solutions that are more inclusive.
- Trust and respect between participants is sufficient to take on board the views of people from different backgrounds and perspectives.
- There is adequate and strong leadership to support the outcome and take responsibility for its implementation.
LOTS OF TACTICS, ATTITUDES AND PROBLEMS CAN GET IN THE WAY OF EFFECTIVE CONSENSUAL DECISION MAKING. THESE INCLUDE:

- **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS** – participants engage in the process ineffectively.
- **LARGER GROUP INTERESTS** – a number of people don’t trust the process which negatively impacts on the quality of engagement.
- **PERSONAL BIASES** – prejudice, sectarianism, racism are all issues in this society and may still impact on the nature of the debate.
- **LACK OF EMPATHY FOR INTERDEPENDENCE** – people who are tied to getting their way regardless of the views of others and in doing so don’t want to explore or try to understand other perspectives.
- **UNEQUAL PARTICIPATION** – every participant has equal rights and responsibilities in the process, and the process needs to ensure all people are empowered and participate equally.
- **INDIVIDUALS ATTEND WHO ARE INTENT ON BLOCKING** – some individuals may not want the process to work, and be deliberately obstructive.
- **MINOR CONCERNS CAN CREATE MAJOR BLOCKAGES** – seemingly small issues may harbour larger worries and concerns which if left unaddressed may divert the process.
Evaluation is important – but after the completion of the overall process there should be a very quick evaluation lasting 5-10 minutes. It could be carried out verbally with participants seeking to explore what parts of the process worked well and less well. A fuller written evaluation feedback sheet or survey may be carried out later.

**EVALUATION IN THIS WAY WILL PROVIDE LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE. IT SHOULD:**

• Explore how the process can be improved.
• Help participants reflect on the process and how their contribution may have been better.
• Identify behaviours that were unhelpful to the process and that may not be helpful in the general work of the participating organisation.
• Help in the understanding of cultural backgrounds.
• Reflect on the goals and expectations from the start of the process.
• Provide closure to the process.
We hope consensual decision making will gather more support and will be used increasingly when decisions need taken across all sectors.

We hope it will make a major contribution to how sensitive issues are managed by civil society, local and central government, public agencies and the VCSE sector.

This is the start of a journey from which we will learn and further develop the resources and the process itself.

Anyone with an interest and wants to keep up to date with the pilot and the outcomes can do so through St Columb's Park House:

Helen Henderson
Tel: 028 71 34 3080
E-mail: helen@stcolumbsparkhouse.org

or Rubicon:
Peter Osborne
Tel: 028 90 760 460
E-mail: peter@rubiconconsulting.net

The De Borda Institute:
Peter Emerson
Tel: 0044(0)7837717979
E-mail: pemerson@deborda.org
APPENDICES

Materials
### PROS AND CONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Pros – Positives</th>
<th>Cons – Negatives</th>
<th>Your views?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
<td>Summary of discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option</td>
<td>Name of Option</td>
<td>Your Preference</td>
<td>Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Option A - description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Option B - description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Option C - description</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Option D - description</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Option E - description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Option F - description</td>
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</table>
The statistics provided give an indication of the matrix who may have after a vote of 100 people with six options available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>% Consensus</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>1st</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>3rd</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL SCORE** is the total points gained by each option after adding all ballots where scores after the vote range from 6 points for those voted 1st to 1 point for those voted 6th.

**AVERAGE** is the total points for each option divided by the total number of ballots.

**% CONSENSUS** is the level of consensus. If 100 ballots are cast with all six options voted on, the maximum score any option can get is 600: 100x6 = 600. If one of the options scored 450 they would have achieved 75% consensus.

**RANK** is the order of preference of each option depending on the level of consensus from highest to lowest.

In this case Option A is the consensual winner with a high level of consensus at 75%.

If you were looking to prioritise, for example, three funding applications or development possibilities Options A, F and E would be the three clear priorities.