
Marching Bands in Northern Ireland

A study carried out on behalf of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in partnership with the Confederation of Ulster Bands.

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Context and Background

The Minister of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) commissioned this research with a view to providing information and aiding future development of the marching bands sector in Northern Ireland. DCAL commissioned Business Consultancy Service to support the development of this document by:

- a) collation and analysis of baseline qualitative and quantitative information on the marching bands sector in Northern Ireland; and
- b) development of a guidance document for development.

(A more detailed specification for the work is included at Appendix 1)

Contributors:

Bernard Marr was engaged as an independent consultant from outside the UK who is recognised as a leading and highly regarded global authority on strategy and strategic development. Bernard's skills in facilitating diverse groups and extracting strategic thoughts were applied to direct a series of detailed interviews with key stakeholders.

Dr Jackie Witherow was engaged in this study in relation to her experience within the banding world through her doctoral research and consultative work with organisations such as Diversity Challenges. Jackie's knowledge of marching bands in Northern Ireland contributed to placing this work in context from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective.

The Confederation of Ulster Bands represent the largest section of the marching bands community, with membership from bands forums from across Ulster, emanating from the Protestant, Unionist or Loyalist tradition. A key consultative group was formed with six members representing the Confederation and their membership. The group provided extensive input and oversaw the development of a final document.

Purpose:

This document does not constitute Departmental or Arts Council policy. It was developed to inform policy makers, the wider statutory sector, participants in marching bands and the public. Use of the information and guidance by marching bands is entirely optional.

The scope of this relatively short study was not to provide indisputable figures or canvas all available opinions. Rather, it seeks to gather a reasonable quantity and quality of current verified and anecdotal evidence and to undertake some initial analysis of opportunities for development.

This document provides information to marching bands and band organisations who wish to understand the size and scope of the marching bands sector in Northern Ireland. It is also designed to contribute to a range of development opportunities including building capacity to attract funding and revenue streams to create sustainability; building the current educational offering; developing and achieving musical excellence; increasing and broadening audiences; and develop techniques for realising tourism potential.

Audience:

It is not intended that this document be exclusive to one grouping or another. A wide variety of stakeholders were interviewed to provide input from across the marching bands sector.

The sector in its entirety is very diverse, and therefore, the consultation for this research, by practical necessity, tended to focus on the larger sections from within the sector. The Confederation of Ulster Bands formed the key consultative group and naturally the document focuses on the contribution of the Confederation on representing the largest section of marching bands in Northern Ireland.

However, this document aims to be a useful reference point for all marching bands in Northern Ireland, regardless of background or how well developed they are, whether it be by genre, or by Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist or Catholic/Nationalist/Republican backgrounds.

Introduction

Internationally, marching bands have a large following. They provide many outlets for those involved, should this be learning to play a musical instrument, being with friends, being part of a community, or experiencing the excitement, enjoyment and satisfaction of public performing. Additionally, they provide further benefits for their wider communities and economies through events and revenue generation. They come in many styles and forms, and quite often perform to the very highest levels. A common thread however, is that they form a bond between people who are attracted by the experience of playing and being together. The motivation to form a band is often driven by social, economic, religious, political and/or cultural needs. For example, giving young people a constructive outlet, and unity of culture were regularly cited.

The approach taken was to interview and hold workshops with selected stakeholders. The list of stakeholders is by no means exhaustive, but aimed to represent some of the larger stakeholder groups and organisations. The qualitative and anecdotal evidence was supported by quantitative evidence where it was available, and from an extensive PhD study of the sector carried out by Dr Jackie Witherow through Queen's University. Sources are cited where appropriate. It should also be noted that it is often difficult to separate quantitative data for *parades* and *bands*, and therefore both are used. (Parades usually include strong band participation and therefore, the number of parades can be indicative of band strengths).

Northern Ireland has a very active and vibrant marching band scene, and anecdotally, according to the Confederation of Ulster Bands (January 2011), band membership in all its genres ranges from 20 to 75+ people. They also estimate there are around well over 620 bands thus, using an average of 47 members in a band, gives over 29,000 people directly participating in regular musical practice, parading, social events and competitions. (In addition to families, friends, and other followers and supporters). (More quantitative data from other sources can also be seen in subsequent sections).

The band tradition in Northern Ireland has also served to put the country "on the map". It has led to a number high level successes and international recognition. For example, the world-renowned flute player Sir James Galway has his roots in marching bands and Northern Ireland has a history of world champion pipe bands – four currently, as well as two world champion drum majors. (The evidence of this tradition is also cited by the British Army school of music later in this paper). Other genres, e.g. accordion orchestras and melody flute, can claim world, UK and all-Ireland champions. On the few occasions where blood and thunder bands have competed outside Northern Ireland, they have had success in competitions e.g., Kilcluney Volunteers Flute Band in Limerick in 2003).

Bands have also been successful in reaching out to traditionally difficult demographic groups such as male teenagers – a group that is usually hard to access and engage in regular cultural and musical practice. Family and community links are also a strong pull for many bands, and they can quite often be the main social outlet in many rural areas.

From the people interviewed and the information and data presented during the course of this consultation, it became evident there is a great deal of passion and commitment within the sector, and that it certainly means much more to many people than just parading and music. The types of band that comprise the sector also have, for example, greater aspirations for growth in participation

through more people becoming actively involved, growth in musicianship through improved playing, and growth in culture and traditions through bands becoming more recognised as representing culture and community.

Additionally, it is also clear that, whilst regular direct participation in band activities numbers well into the thousands, the sector has a significant wider economic impact in areas such as instrument purchase, uniform purchase, tourism, commerce and transport to name a few.

However, the sector has a number of negative issues. There is a perception of disorderly behaviour and paramilitary connections still attached to marching bands from both “traditions” in Northern Ireland. Whilst much of this could simply be public perception, there is still work required to improve this perception. This often makes the media, and, all too often it is a small minority of people who provide the headlines (a matter referred to by Roger Poole – outgoing chair of the Parades Commission in his introduction to the Parades Commission 2009 Annual Report and Financial Statements).

This negative and sectarian related perception can often be re-enforced by materials presented on some band websites, and can also be echoed by individuals on social networking sites. Many people involved in bands feel this is unfair and associated with a small minority, so consequently, recognition should also be given to bands and their representatives for the ongoing work being done to eliminate sectarian and paramilitary links, for example the use of internet band discussion forums as a tool to develop the marching band sector. Particularly in the view of the Parades Commission, there are nonetheless, clear issues that need to be directly and actively addressed in any efforts to develop the marching bands sector further. These issues are discussed later in this paper.

Another challenge facing the development of the sector is the lack of accurate and robust data around the impact the sector makes to the economy, tourism, or indeed even how many are directly and indirectly involved. No one group, or number of groups have been able to furnish robust and comprehensive data around these matters.¹ Indeed, data on similar issues supplied by different organisations or groups can occasionally appear contradictory. The difficulty with non robust data is that it can be used to exaggerate or promote a specific view or position.

In particular, lack of firm data around the social and economic impact of bands makes building support, attracting funding, developing business cases etc all the more difficult. For example, during the North West Pipe Band Championships in 2010, it was estimated by the RSPBA that some 20,000 spectators enjoyed the Championship over the course of the weekend of the event in Portrush. It was also cited to attract larger crowds than the North West 200 motorcycle races or the annual Portrush Airshow. However, these claims are unsubstantiated and questionable, and are also disputed by other consultees. Therefore, due to lack of robust evidence, they remain unsubstantiated and disputed, and are thus statistically unreliable. Lack of robust quantitative data was a recurrent theme throughout the consultation.

¹ The Parades Commission record the number of parades annually and who the sponsoring organisation is. Witherow also provides robust research based data, but it is taken at a point in time and therefore does not provide trends, and thus could not be used to track the impact of any developmental activities. Whilst the data available provides direct participation data, it does not provide any economic, tourism or spectator/supporter data.

Overview of Evidence

The evidence presented in this paper is a composite of stakeholder's views. Where it is relevant to state the source of a comment, this is mentioned.

No interpretation of the evidence has been made. However, comment has been made, where appropriate, on the implications of the evidence, or where the evidence leads to a clear conclusion being proposed by the collective stakeholders, such as a development need within the sector.

The term "marching band" does not always resonate well with all of those commonly thought of as being in the "sector". This is recognised. However, to avoid a lengthy debate on nomenclature or the views or preferences of different parts of the sector, for simplicity, the paper uses the phrases "marching bands" and "sector" to collectively describe all genres of marching bands.

Indeed, sensitivities around definitions and labels can be a particular complexity of the sector. It could be argued that the difficulties with "labels" only serves to illustrate the range and diversity of the sector.

Additionally, the phrase "Protestant Unionist Loyalist" (PUL) was commonly used by consultees to describe what is, by a significant margin, the largest grouping within marching bands.

Quantifying the Sector

Quantifying the marching bands sector has proven to be difficult, and the main source of participatory evidence comes from Witherow². Gathering data on marching bands on a regular basis is made more difficult due to a lack of robust data gathering across the sector by central or other governing bodies, and within the sector itself. This is further compounded by the fact that the sector consists of many genres and sub-genres, should they be types of band or from perceived cultural or religious affiliation. Geographical and rural/urban differences complicate this further. This equally applies to band numbers, attendance figures, economic impact, or tourism impact.

Additionally, a review of current tourism and attraction statistics shows that the tendency of statistical policy is towards numbers that are “countable”, i.e. visitor numbers to a museum or attending a ticketed festival or event. Thus the impact of marching bands on “cultural tourism” is undefined, as the measurement of participation and impact of the sector is not supported by official policy measurement.³

Thus, the data contained in this section is very much based on Witherow’s work and supported by anecdotal evidence supplied by the stakeholders consulted. However, what is clear is that the sector does have a very vibrant and passionate following, certainly involves significant numbers of people, and makes an economic contribution. Therefore, the data presented in this section, whilst not fully substantiated or up to date, gives a sense of scale.

Quantitative Data

Since the troubles began in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s, the number of Protestant bands and associated parades has steadily increased. This continual rise has resulted in parading becoming primarily associated with Ulster Protestantism. Table 1 and Graph 1 illustrate this dominance and steady growth of Protestant parades since official police statistics were recorded from 1985.

² Witherow J. (unpublished PhD Thesis) “Protestant Flute Bands in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland. Witherow J. (Unpublished) Parading Bands in Northern Ireland. Diversity Challenges and the Institute of Irish Studies, Queens University Belfast.

³ Draft statistics supplied by DCAL Statistics Branch. Tourism Ireland Facts and Figures 2009. Northern Ireland Tourism - Working Paper 2009

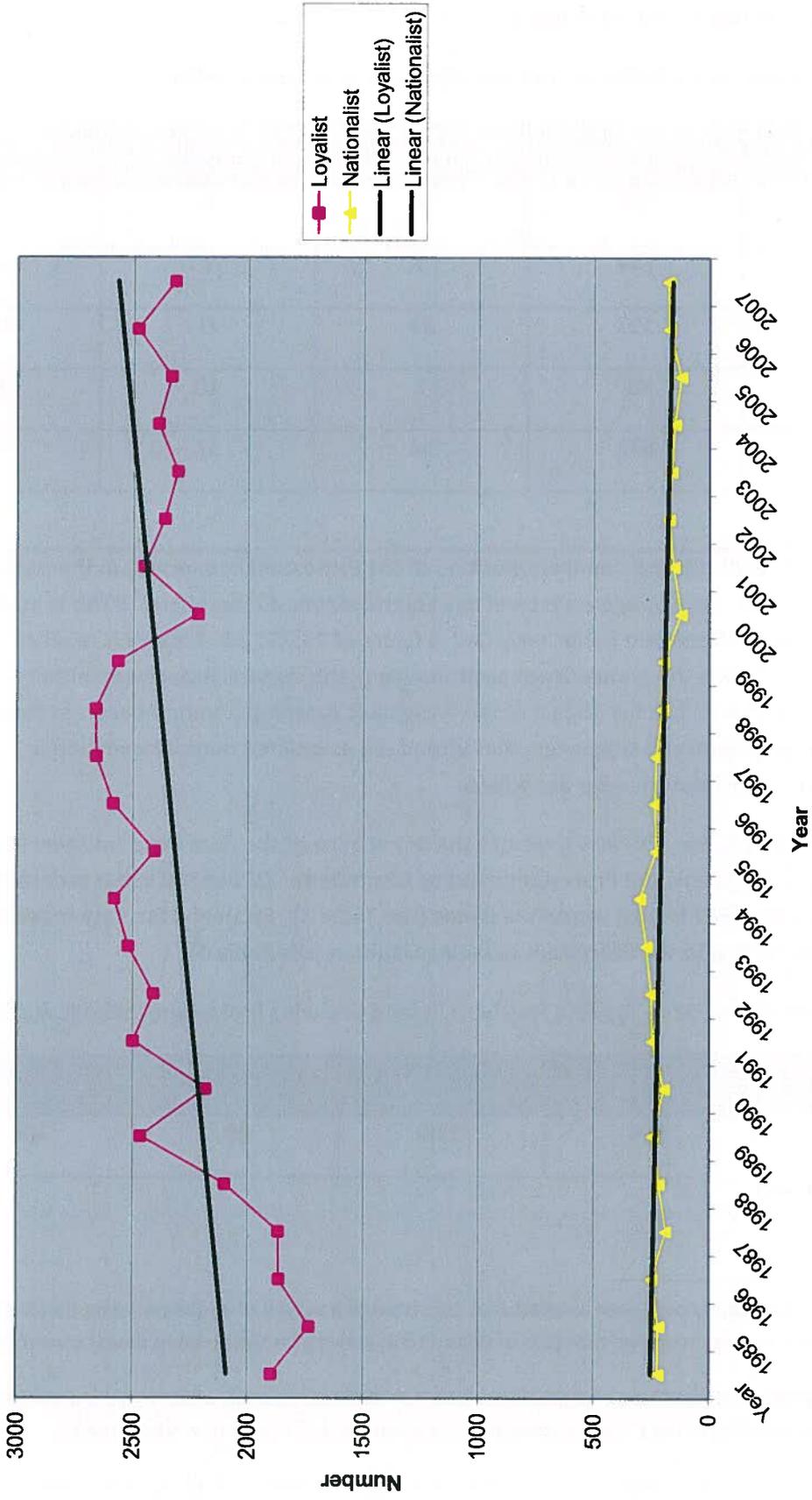
Table 1: Breakdown of Protestant and Catholic parades from 1985 – 2008

Year	Loyalist	Nationalist	Total
1985	1897	223	2120
1986	1731	219	1950
1987	1863	249	2112
1988	1865	190	2055
1989	2099	218	2317
1990	2467	246	2713
1991	2183	196	2379
1992	2498	246	2744
1993	2411	251	2662
1994	2520	272	2792
1995	2581	302	2883
1996	2405	230	3162
1997	2586	236	3326
1998	2659	229	3430
1999	2661	204	3390
2000	2565	200	3309
2001	2218	123	2722
2002	2453	155	3085
2003	2364	176	2989
2004	2307	165	2935
2005	2391	150	3062
2006	2336	123	2459
2007	2480	174	2654
2008	2318	179	2497

Source - Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) Chief Constable's Annual Report from 1985 to 2000. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Chief Constable's Annual Report from 2001-2008. The police statistics use the term Loyalist to indicate Protestant parades and Nationalist to indicate Catholic parades.⁴

⁴ The RUC/PSNI define 'Loyalist' parades as "those organised by the Orange Order, the Royal Black Preceptory and the Apprentice Boys as well as band parades/contests or protest marches involving the loyalist community." In terms of 'Nationalist' parades the RUC/PSNI define them as "parades organised by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Irish National Foresters as well as band parades/contests or protest marches involving the nationalist community" (Jarman and Bryan 1996: 36).

Graph 1 - Loyalist and Nationalist Parade Trends 1985-2008



Witherow's study⁵ data revealed that of the 700 bands in Northern Ireland, the vast majority (633), 90% were Protestant in contrast to (54) 8% Catholic, with a remaining (13) 2% of bands describing themselves as non-denominational (see Table 2).⁶

Table 2: Denominational breakdown of Parading Bands in Northern Ireland

BAND TYPE	PROTESTANT	CATHOLIC	NONE	TOTAL
Flute	327	20	0	347
Pipe	144	9	3	156
Accordion	117	22	0	139
Silver / Brass	45	3	10	58
	633	54	13	700

Source - Witherow

This clearly demonstrates the dominant position of the Protestant community in the parading scene of Northern Ireland. On average each band has approximately 47 members;⁷ if this is multiplied by 633, the number of Protestant bands recorded, a figure of 29,751 participants is reached. Such figures clearly illustrate the popularity of participating in this cultural movement within the Protestant community. The full impact of the Protestant parading tradition becomes clear when the thousands of spectators and supporters that attend the associated outdoor and indoor performances throughout the year are added.

From a genre perspective, this also indicates the dominance of the flute band tradition in Northern Ireland, particularly within the Protestant banding community. Of the 700 bands recorded, approximately half (347 bands) were flute bands (see Table 3). Secondly, the data reveals that 327 of these bands belong to the Protestant parading tradition (see Table 4).

Table 3: Breakdown of Band Types in Northern Ireland (includes Protestant/Catholic and Other)

FLUTE	PIPE	ACCORDION	SILVER/BRASS	TOTAL
347	156	138	58	700

Source - Witherow

⁵ Part of Witherow's study produced a report that consisted of a survey of all the parading bands existing in Northern Ireland in order to gauge the scale of this cultural activity for future band development work.

⁶ It should be understood that some bands claim to be non-denominational, which may be a tactical decision in order to be perceived as being a cross-community organisation as a means to attract funding.

⁷ This figure is an average estimate as some Protestant bands in Northern Ireland have memberships that can range from twelve up to more than one hundred members.

Table 4: Breakdown of Protestant Band Types by County

PROTESTANT BANDS					
COUNTY	FLUTE	PIPE	ACCORDION	SILVER / BRASS	TOTAL
Antrim	115	17	32	9	173
Armagh	26	14	15	5	60
Down	81	22	19	14	136
Fermanagh	14	20	14	8	56
Londonderry	61	19	21	1	102
Tyrone	30	52	16	8	106
Total	327	144	117	45	633

Source - Witherow

To summarise the geographical and denominational spread of marching bands in Northern Ireland, Map 1 at Appendix 2.

Indeed, the influence of the marching band culture can also be beyond the borders of Northern Ireland. Table 5 overleaf, shows a breakdown of PUL derived bands known to exist not just in Northern Ireland, but further afield.⁸ Whilst Table 4 and Table 5 are from different sources, it can be seen they are broadly in line.

⁸ Figures supplied from CUB research.

Table 5: Breakdown of Protestant Band Types by Country and Northern Ireland County

County	Band Type								Grand Total
	Accordion	Brass	Concertina	Flute	Pipe	Silver Band	Grand Total		
Australia				1				1	
Canada	3			10				13	
England	7		6	14	2			29	
Republic of Ireland	10			4	10			24	
Scotland (Ayrshire)	2			15		1		18	
Scotland (Central)	1			28		1		30	
Scotland (East)				17				17	
Belfast	6			41	1	2		50	
Co Antrim	27			78	12	6		123	
Co Armagh	21			23	17	8		69	
Co Down	20			61	25	13		119	
Co Fermanagh	13	1		15	19	9		57	
Co Londonderry	19			55	17	1		92	
Co Tyrone	15			26	46	9		96	
Grand Total	149	1	6	422	149	51		778	

Such statistical information illustrates the dominance of the Protestant parading tradition and particularly the flute band tradition within it. What these tables fail to reveal is the diversity of flute band types that exist within the flute band genre, such as blood and thunder, melody and part-music flute bands. However, a breakdown of the statistics (see Table 6 below) reveal that the blood and thunder flute band (231) tradition clearly dominates the Protestant parading scene. The second most popular flute band type is melody (65), with only a small number belonging to part-music flute bands (31).

Table 6: Breakdown of Protestant Flute Band Types

BLOOD AND THUNDER	MELODY	PART-MUSIC	TOTAL
231	65	31	327

Source - Witherow

In terms of the geographical spread of bands, in her research, Witherow was able to produce a map of Northern Ireland illustrating the location of bands by type. This revealed, for example that blood and thunder flute bands were largely located in urban areas. This is not to say that blood and thunder bands do not exist in rural locations; they do, but not to the same extent as in urban locations such as Belfast, Londonderry, Ballymena and Coleraine. This can be explained by the fact that blood and thunder flute bands are strongly associated with the Protestant working class communities⁹ which are more densely distributed in urban areas. Melody flute bands are also located in both urban and rural settings, whilst the majority of part-music bands are rurally based. It is also interesting to note that the rural areas have managed to conserve the musical diversity of parading bands, as there is a mixture of various types of flute, accordion, pipe, silver and brass bands.

While these figures clearly illustrate the importance of the flute band tradition across Northern Ireland, particularly in the Protestant tradition, they also demonstrate the possible decline of accordion, pipe and silver/brass bands. This may result in a social, musical and cultural loss for the younger generations in Northern Ireland.

Anecdotally, it is estimated by the Arts Council for Northern Ireland (ACNI) that some 8000 people per week are regularly involved in music making within the marching band sector across the year. (This figure is disputed by the CUB, who estimate 13,000 per week minimum based on the number of bands, members, and normal activity patterns, peaking at 28,000 in the summer months). Although most bands are now active all year round, this naturally peaks in the summer months where parades and competitions are much more prevalent. However, the ACNI also advise that numbers are dwindling on what would be perceived as Nationalist marching bands, but growing on the PUL side. (This would be supported by the quantitative research.)

The Parades Commission, in their annual report, show that the actual number of parades recorded has dropped to 3,801 in the last years from a peak of 3,911 in 06/07. However, as stated previously, the number of parades is not necessarily a measure of band participation, and these figures also

⁹ Fraser, T. (ed) (2000) *The Irish Parading Tradition: Following the Drum*. Macmillan Press Ltd.

include charities, churches, residents and community groups, schools, car clubs and other non band related organisations. (See Figure 2 in Appendix 3). Figure 3 in Appendix 3 shows that 50% of loyalist parades were organised by the Orange Order and only 18% by bands themselves. Although bands usually participate in Orange Order parades, they do not necessarily have any influence over other participants or attendees. Bands also arrange their own parades in addition to other events such as indoor concerts.

Breaking the sector down is not a precise science. The Confederation of Ulster Bands (CUB), through their member associations estimate they represent around 400 bands from what is often described as the "Protestant Ulster Loyalist" (PUL) grouping. Again on their estimation, the full PUL grouping numbers over 620 bands involving some 28,000 band members. This estimate was substantiated by their own research, and is broadly consistent with Witherow.

When the bands outside this grouping are included it can be seen that it is a well supported sector, even before economic, tourism and wider band supporters are considered. For example, the Royal Scots Pipe Bands Association (RSPBA) report that they have a membership of 92 pipe bands, although the RSPBA do not represent all pipe bands. Included in the Parades Commission reporting figures, are organisations that also host parades, e.g. Church affiliations such as Girl Guides, and Boys' Brigade, and community festivals. Therefore, total membership is difficult to measure.

Within the sector, particularly in the PUL grouping, local band forums have been formed to coordinate better and represent the interests at a local level. For example, the Armagh Band's Forum has a membership of 40-42 bands, and there are now 9-10 forums in existence.

The Confederation of Ulster bands has also been formed particularly as a response to the lack of coordination across the sector, and also to bring more structure and formality to the PUL sector. Thus they have been created from the local forums' membership to coordinate across these forums and ultimately act as the advisory group to the whole PUL sector regardless of genre.

Within the PUL grouping, a particularly strong genre is the blood and thunder band. The style adopted by this type of band tends to be more than just the music. Darach MacDonald, in his book, "Blood and Thunder" describes the style as "It is loud, in your face, and stridently unapologetic. Familiar Orange traditional music is wrapped in a raw, basic rhythm, delivered in an aggressive and relentless torrent of percussion".¹⁰ The CUB estimate that some 300 bands fall into this category, but Witherow's research records 231 (See Table 5). (However Witherow's research is 5 yrs old and may not reflect the creation of new Blood & Thunder bands)

As well as the participation and tourism impact, economic impact is difficult to measure or gather robust data on. At the highest level, large parades, competitions and gatherings do attract significant numbers of people. The North West Pipe band Championship undoubtedly draws significant crowds. On the Coleraine Borough Council website, they estimate numbers of between 20,000 to 45,000 in Portrush over the weekend on different years. These figures were disputed by other commentators, and the statistical range of this estimate would certainly raise questions about statistical validity.

¹⁰ Blood and Thunder. Darach MacDonald. Mercier Press 2010

The RSPBA also estimate that £1.3m was spent in the local economy during the recent European Pipe Band Championships at Stormont attended by 123 bands and 47 competing drum majors. The championship ran from Friday to Sunday, and was attended by 77 bands from outside Northern Ireland. The £1.3m was calculated on the basis that when an average band membership of 20 people, plus parents, family and other supporters are included, it amounts to a significant number of hotel stays. To this should be added food and transport costs. However, they were unable to provide validated data to support the economic impact figure. The RSPBA are of course by no means unique in reporting a significant impact on the economy. Other band groups report having similar economic impact, but as with the RSPBA, are unable to provide reliable data.

The CUB also makes a comparison that the community role and involvement of bands most closely corresponds to that of the GAA in Northern Ireland. Additionally, to quote Darach MacDonald again “Throughout Loyalist Ulster, the bands bind their local communities through a common cultural focus while instilling discipline, teamwork and the skill in their young recruits, Just like GAA clubs, the life of the Blood and Thunder marching band revolves around proclaiming local identity and pride, and proving it in competition.”

To follow MacDonald’s comparison, the GAA in Northern Ireland has around 256 clubs with an estimated average membership of 300 each, giving a total membership of around 76,800 members.¹¹ It should be recognised however, that this figure includes playing and non playing members such as stewards, management, local/regional organisers, and supporters, whose membership may be for spectating or fundraising reasons. The GAA is also an over-arching formalised body with a professional administration. However, the band figures only report playing members.

Economically, the marching bands sector is largely self funding. ACNI provide funding annually for the purchase of instruments. Total funding has amounted to £4.2million since 1995. This can be applied for by any band requiring instrument replacement, and is not constrained to any particular grouping. Applications are judged on the quality of the business case submitted, and like all public funding it is backed by meeting specific criteria.

The CUB see this funding as “token” as only a small number of bands benefit annually. However, they are also pragmatic in realising that in the current economic climate, limited public funding is also likely to remain a constraint.

The funding programme started in 1995 when there was no upper limit. A limit per application was subsequently introduced as a result of comparison with funds allocated to other art form sectors. The maximum threshold is currently £5,000 per band. The reduction to £5,000 was as a result of consultation with the sector by ACNI where there was collective agreement to reduce the funding per band so that more bands would receive it. There is currently an exclusion on applications from bands which have received funding in the previous six years. This was also agreed in consultation with the sector in order to ensure that funds were not allocated to the same bands who can make a 'strong' business case but in order to ensure that funding is spread to a wider spectrum of bands. There are typically 80 applicants, a number of these being ineligible due to the standard of

¹¹ Ulster Council GAA

documentation provided, with some 40-45 being considered fundable within the resources available. Consequently, as a development need, some bands would benefit from help with documentation and business case development.

Like many publically funded sectors, bands would like to see enhanced public funding to support their future development.

In a written submission to a question tabled in the Northern Ireland Assembly (AQW 2339/10), Nelson McCausland, the Minister for Culture Arts and leisure presented the following response:

“Funding for bands for the five years from 2005/06 to 2009/10 is summarised in the table below. Individual awards also listed in the attached document. Details of the Arts Council’s grants are available on the Arts Council’s website at [www.artscouncil-ni.org/funding/recent awards.](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/funding/recent%20awards)”

SCHEME	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	Total
Musical Instruments for Bands	-	141,915	155,002	149,311	104,822	551,050
Small Grants /Awards for All	67,540	29,920	42,565	16,020	18,750	174,795
Equipment	153,104	-	-	-	-	153,104
Total	220,644	171,835	197,567	165,331	123,572	878,949

Thus funding for bands is currently largely from voluntary subscription, street collections and fundraising events. Most bands host their own events and take responsibility for their own fundraising. The CUB estimate in the PUL grouping, annual expenditure is around £9-11K to cover travel, uniform maintenance and instruments. Replacing uniforms can cost up to £40K per band, but typically £20K is spent per band. As a result, many bands have been priced out of uniforms. Bands spend typically £1-2k per year on instrument maintenance and replacement, usually with Northern Ireland companies. However, and again due to the costs, they are extending the life of instruments.

Economic benefits extend from direct spend on uniforms, banners, flags and instruments to coach hire for transport to events. Indirect benefits include local trade spend, hotel spend, and transport spend from supporters and tourists coming to see the parade or event. Whilst it has been difficult to quantify full financial impact, most consultees typically state that marching bands “put millions back into the economy” However, given that government policy does not tend to measure this type of statistic, and bands do not either, then it remains unquantified and wholly unsubstantiated.

Social Identity and Role in Society

The consultees interviewed who are involved in marching bands, all display, and state, there is a tremendous depth of feeling in the sector. In particular, with those from the Loyalist tradition, strong and emotive language was often used to describe their role in society.

They describe themselves as being "woven into the fabric of society", in many towns they "are the only show in town", "It's who and what you are", and "so much of what they do is in their DNA". Indeed, particularly in rural areas, band membership is often made up from two or three generations from the same family. Thus, tradition and culture is inextricably linked to many marching bands. Therefore, bands see themselves as being more than just music making. They believe they have a very important social function.

As an example, a play, "The Pride" was recently written by Londonderry based play-right Jonathon Burgess to illustrate the linkages between being in a band and how much membership and community are intertwined. The cast of 24 was made up of a range of professional actors, local amateurs & Band members, and funding was received from Arts Council (£10,000) & Community Relations Council (£2000). The idea for the play was conceived by Pride of the Orange & Blue Flute Band, Newbuildings who applied for the funding and commissioned Jonathon to write it.

The Londonderry Sentinel described it thus¹²;

"The play was commissioned by The Pride of The Orange And Blue Flute Band in Newbuildings and it looks at the community that builds up around flute bands and the band culture. Although based on research through The Pride Of The Orange And Blue, the play tells a story which will be familiar to all those who have been a band member or from the band community throughout Northern Ireland.

It is set in the character Robbie's house, which all the members of the band treat as an unofficial drop-in centre for all band activities and events, much to the exasperation of his long-suffering wife Amanda and the continual annoyance of his father-in-law, Dessie. The production, both humorous and touching, is seeking to show the positive side to life as a bandsman and the benefit which such organisations bring to their communities."

This "in the blood" perception was supported by one of the consultees. A band instructor from the Army School of Music in Catterick was interviewed in the course of the consultation. Within the School, it is widely recognised that soldiers with a Northern Ireland marching band background make much more competent bandsmen, who learn very quickly. Typically they qualify 1-2 years quicker than their English peers. The phrase "musical excellence" was one he used to illustrate how their background lends itself to the qualities required to play at top level public events such as Trooping the Colour. He also stated that the top four flute players in the Army came from a marching band background, and in the Irish Guards Corps of Drums, out of 24 drummers, 20 are from marching bands. Interestingly, he also added that one of their top drummers was from a Northern Ireland Catholic background with no previous marching band links. Despite this, he also demonstrated the

¹² Londonderry Sentinel 10 June 2010

characteristics that other bandsmen from Northern Ireland would have. The suggestion being, that regardless of religious background, exposure to a marching band culture stays “in the blood”.

Marching bands are often able to reach out to the youth in society, which can be a difficult demographic to attract. They often give young people purpose, a skill, direction and discipline and a sense of belonging, through an interest in music, social events, and even sporting competitions. Much effort is often put into preparation for competitions – “there is a lot of commitment to the music - it is getting young people involved in a skill.”

Quite often the band “scene” becomes the centre of their social life – somewhere to go to meet not only their own friends, but also wider groups when band followers are included in the mix. Anecdotally, one reason behind this is that it often includes members of the opposite sex. Thus, particularly on the Loyalist side, places where bands meet and practice e.g. Orange halls, are often the defacto community centre, or social “scene”.

Conversely, it was clear that consultees believe that cultural backgrounds should not be ignored. They believe cultural backgrounds need to be integrated together very carefully, and that this will open the door for “opportunities for more conciliation”. Consultees recognise that there is a need to celebrate culture more, and to develop tourism. They are also keen that this is balanced with the need to “remember victims and deliverance”, which, again, are sensitive issues for many bands and their supporters. (The relevance and importance of remembrance, and the loss of band members as a direct result of the Troubles are well described by Darach MacDonald in his book). However, the Parades Commission reports that in their opinion a small number of bands from both traditions need to work more to move away from “confrontation and triumphalism”, which can hold back the celebration of culture and cultural diversity.

The link between marching bands, culture and cultural tourism has become stronger in the last number of years. There is certainly a growing view that, to use the words of ACNI, there is a “reimaging programme required, to make the contribution of marching bands more cultural and artistic”. The concept being developed by the Orange Order to rebrand the “Twelfth” as “Orangefest”, (certainly in Belfast) as a much more inclusive, festival orientated event, is a result of changing thinking.

The “festival” approach is one that is being adopted more and more. Belfast’s first “PipeUp” Festival first took place in 2010 between Saturday 31st July and Friday 6th August, and the Newsletter Festival of Marching Bands is in its second year at the Ulster Hall on 23rd November 2010 (now two nights instead of one due to demand).

Many consultees believe the marching bands sector has not been engaged with (by government and the wider public sector) for many years in the way that it should - “Marching bands are a huge area that has lacked engagement”. This manifests itself in a number of ways. It creates a real sense of frustration and disenfranchisement because it is perceived that others do not share or recognise the importance and the cultural significance of participation to band members. Consultees regularly use the word “politicised”, and, for example, cite that other public events attract anti social elements but are not vilified or criticised in the way they feel they are.

One consultee, Valerie Thom, described (the Loyalist) sector as being “demonised” by some. Her real concern is with the long term effect this might have on the younger members of bands, who, by doing something they enjoy as part of their community are vilified by others who do not share the same values. The church based community outreach work she is starting, as part of the Church Army in Armagh, is very much aimed at the youth who may not fully understand or appreciate the “politics” of being in marching bands. In the longer term, her concern is that they inadvertently become part of the “bad politics” that Northern Ireland has been subject to in the past.

Part of this frustration is also due to the lack of recognition marching bands receive for the benefits they bring. For example, consultees regularly refer to the amount of charity work bands do. Valerie estimates that fundraising events and band festivals regularly raise sums in the order of £20k. She referenced the annual Garvagh parade as one example that gives strong support to cancer research.

Other examples provided by the CUB. Highlights are £70,000 from the Royal Black Preceptory to Diabetes research in 2009, Castlederg Flute Band sponsored cycle has raised over £15,000 in the last seven years, and Pride of the Raven Flute Band estimate they have donated over £85,000 to charity since their formation in east Belfast in 1968.

There are also social benefits to band membership. Bands work hard with members in areas such as child protection, zero tolerance to drugs, trying to be a controlling influence on alcohol, and the generation of civic pride. They also see themselves as bringing a wider sense of community through mixed bands – male, female, age or class. However, they do recognise there is much work yet to do in this area.

One current development to bring more co-ordination and structure to marching bands, (specifically Loyalist) is the establishment of local band forums. Often, band forums have come out of community development needs. In Armagh, there are 40-42 bands represented by the Armagh Band Forum. The ABF grew out of a need to address bands’ concerns such as engagement with the police, funding, training and development, and legal issues (child protection, charity collecting). The forum is funded through community safety partnership and the council. They have an AGM and proper elections, and try to fully represent all bands and facets, such as accordion, flute, brass and silver bands on the Protestant side. However they do recognise they are underskilled in business issues, community relations, fundraising etc, and, with this recognition comes a willingness to do something to address the issues.

The forum report that they have delivered training to over 800 band members in a wide range of subjects, from child protection, good relations, risks assessment, health and safety, events management, conflict management and charity issues. They believe they are becoming more proficient in lobbying and networking, with organisations such as the local council and PSNI. For example, they have an “end of season review” with the PSNI so that lessons can be learnt that help inform planning for any future events, and have also successfully lobbied the Local Council to provide portable toilets and additional bins at parades.

The ABF model is now being tested in other areas such as Banbridge, and the Forum is also mentoring other forums such as Lisburn. Forums are seen by many as “the way to go”. However, they do recognise there is cynicism (on their merits) particularly in some urban areas.

The natural progression for forums is a further overarching coordinating body covering the whole of Northern Ireland. This has recently been established in the Confederation of Ulster Bands (CUB), and is a further attempt to bring more coordination, structure and self responsibility to a large part of the marching bands sector.

The Confederation of Ulster Bands describes itself as “an umbrella body comprised of bands forums from across Ulster, emanating from the Protestant, Unionist or Loyalist traditions.”

Formed in May 2009, the main purpose and aims of the Confederation are to:-

- Provide easy methods of sharing information within the band community;
- Showcase bands positively and creatively;
- Secure resources for the entire band community through lobbying;
- Shape the future through consultation within the community itself; and
- Provide a credible and united voice for the band community.

There is agreement amongst consultees that responsibility for bringing discipline and structure to the sector must come from through the forums and the CUB. It cannot be forced from outside. It should start at “grass roots” level and should not become dependent on community workers and funders.

The Confederation of Ulster Bands are particularly passionate about their work, and have provided a synopsis of the *“Relevance of Parading as an Expression of Faith and Culture in Northern Ireland”*. Whilst presented entirely in their own words, and thus untested, it does however, show the links they make with their history. This can be seen in Appendix 4.

The CUB are also keen to have their views on wider social and societal issues expressed as part of this paper. These views are replicated verbatim in Appendix 5, and Appendix 6. However, they are the submitted views of the CUB and thus remain untested.

Musical Types, Quality, Application, Tuition and Appeal

Bands fall into a number of major categories, for example, pipes, silver and brass, flute, and accordion. Additionally, each category can also be sub divided. For example, there would be different types of accordions such a button and piano. Flutes include fifes, Bb flutes, piccolos and concert flutes to name a few.

Specifically, within the Protestant community (the largest grouping within marching bands) flute bands can be classified into three different types; blood and thunder bands, melody bands and part-music bands. Blood and thunder bands are now the most widespread and well-known flute band type in Northern Ireland. As the name suggests, blood and thunder refers to the thundering sound of the large bass drums, often heard at long distances, while the blood is due to the drums being hit so hard that the skins sometimes end up smeared in blood (from skinned knuckles). The melody bands show links to the British military bands - this can be noted in the styles of uniforms adopted, through the repertoire performed, to the types of flutes they play. The part-music bands use a wide range of flutes and play a classically based, quasi-orchestral repertoire.

Musically, pipe and brass/silver bands would be regarded by some as the most accomplished types of marching bands. Many of their members come from a “formal” musical background – commonly perceived to be based on achieving increasing level of graded examinations regulated by a formal examining board. This means they can often read music and would have a wider potential repertoire. These groupings are likely to be more orientated towards formal competitions based on musical ability, uniform and “set-piece” performances. (It has been suggested that some of the reasons behind this may emanate from perceived differences in class demographics and/or educational background between brass/silver/pipe and flute bands.)

Whilst work is underway to bring more co-ordination to the largest (PUL) sector by the CUB, one section of the pipe band fraternity already has a high level of governance through the Royal Scots Pipe Band Association (although not for every pipe band). In Northern Ireland, they have a full time development officer. The RSPBA is very clear in its role, where its website states:

“Welcome to The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association, the heart and home of Pipe Bands world wide. The RSPBA is the recognised Centre of Excellence for the promotion and development of Pipe Band Music internationally. Its services and facilities include:

- *education, training and certification in Piping, Drumming, Drum Majoring and Pipe Band Adjudication;*
- *an annual Summer School;*
- *an Academy of Pipe Band Musicianship;*
- *setting standards of Pipe Band competition performance;*
- *organising the World, Scottish, British, Cowal and European Pipe Band Championships as well as the World Solo Drumming Championships;*

- *publishing the official summaries of the results of the 5 Major Championships and the results of other Pipe Band competitions run under RSPBA rules.*

*The RSPBA liaises closely with affiliated Pipe Band Associations world wide*¹³

This is a very disciplined and structured approach to “excellence”, where one of the key drivers for pipe bands is taking part in competitions. As a consequence, RSPBA affiliated bands believe they are playing to the highest standards – the return being four current world champion bands, and two world champion drum majors. However, consultees from outside the pipe band fraternity often feel the approach and the level of rules applied are too regimented and constraining. It was also reported many pipe bands have origins in more traditional marching bands.

Whilst there is a strong pipe and brass/silver grouping, accordions, flutes and drums tend to make up the largest proportion of the marching bands genres. This equally applies to bands that are perceived to be from a Loyalist or Nationalist background. The approach to tuition and learning is much more informal. Tuition tends to be done by other more experienced band members, where learning tends to be done by ear and by watching others. Formal graded music training is not overly prevalent in accordion and flute bands, although they do use a simple alpha-numeric form of music rather than traditional sheet music. Their approach to learning an instrument is likely to be driven by a number of factors such as: the existence of less formal structures and organisation, a desire not to be over governed, learning is handed down through the generations, and this type of band tends to be more community or socially based.

One of the strongest genres particular to the Loyalist group is that of “blood and thunder” bands. (The CUB estimate there are around 300 blood and thunder bands). Again this type of band is well documented by Darach MacDonald in his book. However, other consultees supported the view that this is a major sub group within the marching bands sector with its own particular style and appeal. It was pointed out that whilst the music is important, the appeal of blood and thunder bands is much more than music. It is about the entire performance including “discipline, marching, deportment, style and appearance”. One consultee (a PhD student from Queen’s University) who has studied this genre closely, described differing styles even within the genre, where the basis of the music in one band is based on hymn tunes and another band may be based on sea shanties.

From a competition perspective, consultees report that genres such as Blood and Thunder bands are competing more than they used to. Blood and Thunder bands are starting to hold winter competitions, so playing and performing is not limited to the summer months as many people perceive. (Bands are playing 2-3 nights per week in the summer, and practice 1-2 nights in the winter). However, consultees were careful to point out that it is often the competitors that define quality, not standardised rules. It could be argued that performances from genres such as B&T bands do not easily fit with the commonly held views of what formal musical quality is. The CUB view is that marching bands are not solely about the music. They intrinsically connect music making with a sense of community, national identity, cultural heritage, public performance, entertainment and self expression.

¹³ Royal Scots Pipe Bands Association website. <http://www.rspba.org/>

Undoubtedly competitions drive quality improvement regardless of genre. However, “quality” in Blood and Thunder band competitions is not just about playing. It often includes demeanour, volume, and the showmanship of the playing. Blood and Thunder bands were also described as being “measured on the road”. One way they also “celebrate their excellence” is a through a wider use of media such as YouTube and Facebook where bands post their performances and information about their activities.

Nevertheless, despite the majority of tuition being given by more experienced band members, marching bands are beginning to recognise the need for more consistent and higher quality tuition. Thus, external tutors are being used more frequently, partially through funding support from the Ulster Scots Agency (which is over subscribed), and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland are certainly encouraging higher quality playing and tuition, but are currently not providing funding for this. However, partially due to limited formality across the many areas, it is difficult to assess the level of tuition. ACNI suggest bands could help improve quality by promoting and marketing the positives, including musical masterclasses, and provide opportunities for wider community playing.

Another element of competition is that uniforms are now much more important. Historically, bands often wore simple white shirts for playing. Much more is being spent on uniforms as bands see them as helping bring more pride through their appearance that ultimately helps performance. On a related and negative note, the Parades Commission report that the use of uniforms, as well as flags and regalia can be used in a negative way to show links with proscribed organisations. Their view is that this is often done to provoke or “challenge the system”, but that it also serves to reinforce the negative views that the general public can have of marching bands. The Parades Commission have produced a draft code of conduct aimed at providing guidance to bands to help reduce tension. Uniforms, but more so flags and regalia, would be covered by this code of conduct.¹⁴

From a development perspective, the CUB and others, in particular the Ulster Volunteer Force Memorial Regimental Bands Association, (the “36th”) would disagree that issues around the linkages highlighted above still exist in their bands, but they do recognise that public perception around flags and regalia has yet to catch up. The 36th in particular are keen to demonstrate this, and the work they have been doing to address it is described in a submission (in their own words) from them which can be seen at Appendix 7.

They are also clear that the various forums and associations need to take ownership and focus on initiatives such as band development schemes. These would not just be about better playing and tuition, but also address more practical issues such as developing the skills to engage with funders, forming policies, and getting bands to “be the best they can be” in the widest sense, but obviously within the bands’ own expectations and communities.

¹⁴ Parades Commission Submission on Draft Code of Conduct.

<http://www.paradescommission.org/fs/doc/publications/parades-commission-s-submission-on-draft-code-of-conduct.pdf>. See also Parades Commission Way Forward, and Parades Organiser’s Guide <http://www.paradescommission.org/fs/doc/publications/pull-out-section.pdf>

Strengths and Areas for Development

This section sets out the strengths and potential areas for development across the marching bands sector. It can be seen from the previous evidence that the existence of marching bands does bring benefits to individuals, communities and the economy, albeit, this is difficult to accurately quantify. However, there is also clear evidence to show that marching bands *per se*, have specific development needs that can be aimed at the individual, bands themselves, and their wider contribution and impact on society.

It should also be recognised that not every strength or development need applies to every band or genre.

Therefore, this section sets out the strengths and areas for development that have been evidenced across the whole marching bands sector. Not all apply to every marching band or genre, but all can be considered individually by any marching band as a potential area to learn from.

Strengths

- 1. Young People and Learning.** Young people are given opportunities to learn when they become part of a marching band. The obvious opportunity is that of learning to play an instrument; at one end of the scale learning by ear and watching others play instruments such as a side drum or Bb flute, through to learning to sight read on brass, woodwind or pipe. Other learning opportunities becoming more prevalent, particularly in those areas where a coordinating forum exists, including citizenship, child protection, and community relations. These elements are more recent developments, specifically driven by the Northern Ireland cultural and political environment.
- 2. Social Benefits.** Marching bands bring significant social benefits to many areas. Engaging with difficult demographic groups, such as young people, was commonly cited as one of the major benefits. For this group, social benefits come through making music together and the enjoyment of parading and performing. However, they may also come from playing football, social events, and youth club type activities within a band. Other social benefits include greater drug and alcohol awareness, and the discipline required to be part of a marching band.
- 3. Charitable Giving.** A social impact of marching bands largely unseen by many people is that of charitable giving. Many bands hold parades and events specifically aimed at raising money for charities, such as Action Cancer, Help for Heroes etc. However, the amount given to charities is not quantifiable, although consultees speak about “thousands” of pounds for many bands.
- 4. Increasing Oversight and Coordination.** The existence of overseeing governing bodies such as the RSPBA, the more recent emergence of band forums, and the Confederation of Ulster Bands, is seen as a positive step forward. Well-managed and equitable oversight bodies can only be a benefit to the marching bands sector through bringing increased co-ordination, regulation, standards, and the spreading of knowledge and best practice. The stated reason for forming the CUB was to bring “strategic direction” to the Loyalist marching bands sector, and they have now “documented their reason d’être”. Many bands also now have band contracts with the organisation hosting a parade. Hence, this is a practical example of where

bands are trying to improve. Forums are developing long term strategies to cover 5 - 10 years.

5. **Discipline.** Importantly, developments in this area should come from within the sector itself and should not be imposed upon it due to the strongly independent nature of marching bands. Therefore, government and its agencies should continue to encourage and support these developments. The RSPBA sees itself as well regulated. They have clear rules, accountability, a complaints procedure, and structure. They have an AGM and fairness is ensured through voting on important issues. Fairness is seen as important. From a discipline perspective, bands do not get to play in competitions if they do not adhere to rules, occasionally bands can also be fined. Pipe majors are seen as an important figure for discipline. The RSPBA have a full time development officer who has a development plan, and helps with business cases

Opportunities for Development

1. **Musical Development.** Musically, consultees are broadly content with the types of music they play. They are also careful to state that any change in musical genre or style that bands make should come from within the band itself and not be imposed upon it. However, they do recognise that tuition is important to help develop current playing ability and more importantly to develop new players. There were mixed views as to whether bands, particularly PUL, should move away from their main type of playing platform, i.e. parades. It was suggested by some consultees that marching bands “need a wider programme, not just marching”, and that for example, playing in a concert setting could improve playing ability and public image. This is of course a format that bands such as pipe, accordion, and silver bands are more familiar with. However, the CUB would hold the view that Blood and Thunder bands in particular would feel this is not a relevant or appropriate platform, and that the act of marching is intrinsic to their “raison d’etre”.
2. **Contentiousness¹⁵.** Contentiousness or “sensitive” (parades) could be considered the largest single issue facing the marching band sector in Northern Ireland today. Bands do recognise that there is a particular issue with public perception, and that a “reimagining” programme is required. However this will take time. The CUB openly admits that the PUL sector has never been a “PR organisation” and that they need to be more “media savvy”. They recognise that work is needed with the press, and that the wider public needs to be better informed. This will take persistence, and positive TV and radio news coverage.

However, consultees also have significant frustration with the issue too. The majority of parades do pass off peacefully, and many bands would state “why defend ourselves when we have done nothing wrong?” They also feel that too much emphasis is placed on contentious parades, and that “many people don’t see a problem”.

¹⁵ In assessing contentiousness, the Parades Commission look at issues such as the likelihood of disorder, community relations, the impact on the community, and conduct and traditionality. These factors provide a challenge to all sections of society. They state that “Our society needs to bring everything back into a civic space where everyone is comfortable”

Appendix 3 gives a breakdown from the Parades Commission for parades and contentious parades across Northern Ireland in their last reporting period. Of a total of 3,801 parades, 65% were defined as Loyalist/unionist and 3% nationalist. The remainder were defined as church, club, festivals etc. Of the 221 parades defined as contentious, 93% were Loyalist/Unionist and 7% were Nationalist – however, according to the CUB, only 36 contentious parades were organised by bands. 74% of all contentious parades had some form of restriction placed upon it by the Parades Commission. (It should also be noted, that of the 6% of parades deemed contentious, (221/3801), many of this figure are generated by a single parade with multiple and repeated applications, for example at Drumcree with over 50 applications.) Naturally of course, the number of parades does not directly relate to the number of bands, but, in the perception of the public, the two are inextricably linked.

Some practical examples of issues of a contentious nature could be complaints about the time of the parade, the behaviour of those who take part, spectate or protest (particularly late at night in residential areas), inconvenience to a community through restriction of movement or a feeling of being “cut off” during a parade, and the clean up after a parade has passed – particularly if there have been disturbances associated with the parade. There are also the well publicised and significant differences of a religious, political and/or sectarian nature.

3. **Symbolism.** One of the more serious issues cited, particularly by the Parades Commission was that of paramilitary connotations, particularly through the use of flags and other regalia. In Northern Ireland society, symbolism, for example through flags and regalia, is a very sensitive and complex issue and extends far beyond parades and bands. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this research, society in general needs to work more to address this issue.

Related to symbolism, consultees also recognise that there are issues related to website content. The particular challenge with website content was that it can be unregulated and often sits outside the direct influence of the bands themselves, and is therefore unpolicable by them. Thus content can be created by any individual of any age and from any background.

4. **Links with Education.** Throughout the consultation most consultees commented on the lack of linkages between marching bands and the education sector. There are many children of school age in marching bands (despite the lack of musical learning in the classroom), and this is seen as a missed opportunity to bring more music into the classroom. For example, teaching the recorder was cited as being less relevant to children in Northern Ireland today than a Bb(flat) flute. Some commentators have mentioned that there is evidence to support improved academic achievement with involvement in music. However, there is currently a lack of evidence to support this hypothesis. Differences in approach between the maintained sector and state schools were also reported, where the maintained sector teach music with a cultural theme, and state schools do not. The implication of this being that the state could do more to support the cultural dimension of all parts of the community.

5. Marching bands are seen to be helping preserve cultural and musical tradition, musical knowledge and skills - not just written traditions. Therefore, more should be done to help preserve these unwritten cultural assets.

APPENDIX 1: - Detailed Specification for the Project

The project must address the following areas:

A. Measurement of existing sector:

Undertake a quantitative data gathering exercise (one month) to collect any existing research on the marching bands sector and carry out research to measure current participation. To include:

- Precise figures on numbers of participants, their geographical spread, any statistical data already collected by sectoral organisations
- Current role in society and the arts - social identities and broader cultural impacts
- Assessment of musical types, quality, application, tuition and appeal
- Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of current organisation of the sector

Existing research, including PhD studies undertaken by Queens University Belfast should be considered as part of this stage of the project.

B. Development of a Guidance Document:

Undertake a qualitative analysis and develop a final guidance document which will provide the marching bands sector with a road map for future development.

To include:

- Developing a relationship with education, including accreditation in line with Scottish model for pipe bands (broadened to include other types of bands within NI)
- Developing media relations
- Engagement with wider society - broadening and mainstreaming
- Generation of income to support purchase and replacement of instruments and uniforms
- Development of alternative approaches to performance, e.g. mainstream venues, civic entertainment events.
- Incentives to ensure bands and members continue to improve
- Development of tourism potential

D. Final Report

Deliver a final document which sets out (a) baseline qualitative data and (b) advice and guidance for future development potential in a clear and accessible way for all anticipated users.

APPENDIX 3: - Parading Statistics 2009

Parading Statistics

FIG 1. Total no of parades

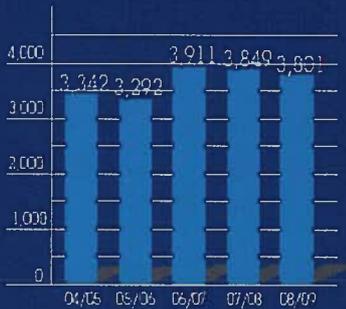


FIG 2. Breakdown of 08/09 parades

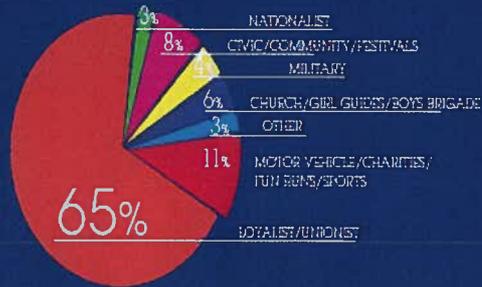


FIG 3. Breakdown of Loyalist /Unionist parades

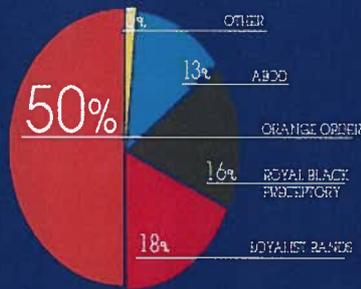


FIG 4. Total no of contentious parades

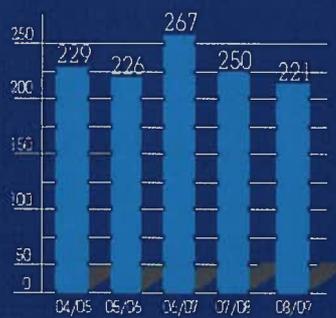


FIG 5. Total contentious parades by type

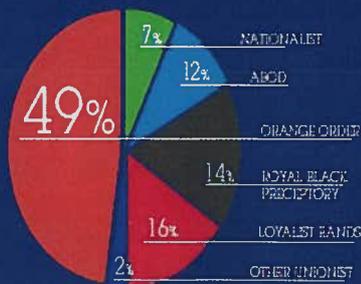
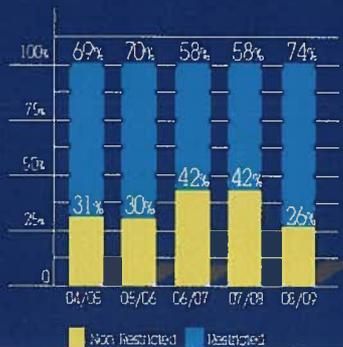


FIG 6. Restrictions on contentious parades



Extracted from Annual Report and Financial Statements Parades Commission for Northern Ireland Year end 31st march 2009

APPENDIX 4: - “The Relevance of Parading as an Expression of Faith and Culture in Northern Ireland.” CUB

“The oldest bands in Northern Ireland have been around since the late 1800’s and were predominantly Flute bands. During the 1900’s, the number of bands has risen to over 630 in Northern Ireland and 25 in Southern Ireland. This number has remained steady in recent years.

The membership of most bands is drawn up from their local areas and is made up from all classes of people from University Professors, College Lecturers, School Teachers, Doctors, Church Ministers, Business owners, Working class, Self employed, University students and School children. This is evidence beyond doubt, that marching bands and their parades are an integral part of the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist Culture and is essentially a forum for our cultural expression.

There is no one reason why people join bands and this makes it complex to explain, but bands and parading is woven into the fabric of Protestant society. Most bands can boast members that are third or fourth generation and some of the earliest bands were very closely linked with the churches of the time and would have played at church functions. Bands and parades are an outward expression of who we are and essentially a way of celebrating our faith and culture.

Professor Simon Schama, University Professor of History at Columbia University in New York, past professor of Harvard, highest paid performer on British Television, in his books “A history of Britain”, wrote “....for the British people the bonfire became the vocabulary that was the beacon of freedom and democracy”. For the Ulster Scots people on this Island, the parading culture is their beacon of freedom and democracy and is their way of celebrating past deliverances and remembering those who have fallen in the defence of our land.

Band parades and demonstrations are assembly points where people meet to express their culture and also manifest their religion, and as such are protected by the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to freedom of religion under articles 11, 10 and 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights.”

APPENDIX 5: - “The Meaning, significance and relevance of Parading to Broader Society in Northern Ireland” CUB

“Bands offer a safe and inexpensive environment for young people to learn a musical instrument, as well as promote – health and fitness, raising self-esteem, leadership, working as a team, responsibility and pride in achievement. It provides a recognisable focus for family involvement and community recognition.

Most bands practice about two nights a week and are “holding their own” in terms of numbers, with many growing in size. This is in stark contrast to the demise of youth clubs, the decline in other youth organisations and falling attendances at Churches. Bands are therefore providing a pivotal role in our community, by helping to keep young people off the streets and provide a focus for their energy. Most bands have strict rules on the consumption of alcohol and a zero tolerance of drugs.

The drinking of alcohol on the street by people attending parades is one aspect of parades that needs to be curtailed. However, this is not a problem that exclusively relates to these events, as it is visible at large sporting events like Football and Gaelic Football matches, Pop concerts, Saint Patrick’s day parades, Community festivals and around all the night clubs in the local provincial towns. This problem reflects a wider social problem, which requires a multi-agency approach to educate young people on the perils of binge drinking. Some bands are actively discouraging on street drinking at their parades and this is helping to make these parades much more family friendly.

With all the distractions that are available to young people today, it is surprising that so many of them are even bothering to learn to play musical instruments. It sometimes provides young people with their only other interest, apart from school, particularly in rural areas. Bands often run other activities to engage young people, like associated youth clubs and sports like football.

Government agencies should realise the worth and give greater recognition of the work bands do in the wider community in Northern Ireland, something that other parts of the U.K. are trying to get. The British Federation of Marching Bands with the help of the Liberal Democrat party are campaigning for funding for a major band in every town, something we already have!”

APPENDIX 6: - “The Impact of Parading on Northern Ireland Society in the 21st Century, in Terms of Social Economic Impact, and the International Perspective of the Country”. CUB

“Most bands raise all the money for their instruments and uniforms themselves by various fundraising activities. Very little funding is available from any other source, except the Arts Council of N. Ireland, who have grant aided a small number of bands. The money from the Art’s Council has been heavily biased towards large Concert bands. It takes thousands of pounds to start and or maintain a band. Instruments like Flutes can cost from £70 to £3000; Accordions £1600 to £5000; Bagpipes £1500; Silver/Brass instruments £800 to £4000 and drums £400. Uniforms can cost up to £450 per person. All these items are sold through local shops and most uniforms are manufactured in Northern Ireland, adding to our economy and providing employment.

Bands also hire 1000’s of buses per year and again this adds to our economy and provides employment.

Some of the larger parades have bands travelling from Scotland, England and Wales, as well as the South of Ireland. Also, people travel from Scotland and England, as well as further a field to watch the parades adding significantly to the increasing number of tourists visiting the Province each year. This adds to the bed nights used in Hotels as well as Bed and Breakfast establishments.

Most Band Parades are held at night when the shops are closed, but town centre businesses like hot food carry outs, restaurants and licensed premises, all do good business during these events. To most of these businesses, the annual parades held in their towns are their largest and most profitable events each year.

With 100’s of parades held each year, some of the largest attracting over 100 bands as well as 12-15 thousand people, there is a very significant tourist potential which has so far been largely untapped. A Dublin born producer for the BBC Declan McConnell said after making a recent radio program about band parades and “the band parading culture is Northern Irelands best kept secret”.

APPENDIX 7 - "The Ulster Volunteer Force Memorial Regimental Bands Association". CUB

"Northern Ireland's band movement in 1999 was massive, and deeply integrated into local communities across the Province everywhere bands were active. Given this basic fact, the ongoing turbulent political situation and regular communal violence, it is therefore not surprising that elements strong within Loyalist communities became reflected within the band sector.

At that time and for some considerable years previously, many of Northern Ireland's massive band movement were displaying and had displayed Ulster Volunteer Force and Young Citizen Volunteers Standards. These standards were linked with areas where the 'present day' UVF and YCV were active, and on occasion a minority of bands would also have had members on parade dressed in paramilitary uniforms.

Several individuals felt that this situation should be addressed, and that same year an impromptu meeting was held by a number of Belfast bandsmen to discuss the issue. The outcome was the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force Memorial Regimental Bands Association.

A mass meeting of flute bands across Northern Ireland was set up, where it was decided that all should be officially brought under a central structure. Within this framework the Association would work to replace all flags/ colours that may be perceived to relate to the modern manifestation of the Ulster Volunteer Force, with those specifically related to the Home Rule era Volunteers and World War One Battle Honours. In addition it would work to increase professionalism within its member bands in both dress and decorum, with a special focus on ending the practise of wearing paramilitary style regalia by some. In these initial stages of the Association a code of conduct was introduced that all member bands had to comply with.

Massive efforts were given to an extensive education process. This process encouraged members to both attend and organise lectures on The Home Rule Crisis, The Solemn League and Covenant, The formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force 1913, the heritage and tradition of Flute Bands, the formation of the 36th Ulster Division and World War 1. The aim of this process was to fully educate members on the memorial standards they were carrying within the bands, namely the 1913 Ulster Volunteer Force and the 36th Ulster Division Battalions that they became subsumed into. Since its inception the Ulster Volunteer Force Memorial Regimental Bands Association has always been concerned with ensuring that our parades and bands do not intimidate, ensuring they are enjoyable experiences for participants and spectators alike.

As mentioned, the ongoing violence in Northern Ireland often manifested itself into other practises within the Loyalist community. One such regular manifestation was the appearance of masked and armed members of the UVF at certain parades to deliver speeches or statements. This area was entirely outside the remit of the Association, however using the Progressive Unionist Party as mediators, we engaged with the UVF on the issue. Comprehensive discussions and debates were held with the outcome that the UVF accepted Association proposals. The Association is glad to report that as a direct result of its actions, there have been no paramilitary displays at any events for at least eight years.

Effectively we had achieved what some had thought to be impossible and what many could not. Albeit on a small scale, we had taken the gun off the streets.

Despite the efforts and work carried out by the Association and its member bands, the flags and emblems displayed still come under considerable attack. These attacks are based in misinformation, ignorance and sometimes are simply a deliberate political tactic. Perceptions of who and what our bands and standards are, we admit, are relevant. However the Association has had a clear goal from its inception, namely the removal of paramilitary symbolism, and it has achieved that goal. It is both unfair for statutory, community and political bodies to disregard that fact, and to hold the bands in question responsible for the ignorance of others. We cannot and should not be held responsible and punished for ill informed perceptions.

The Association will keep working towards addressing issues and problems. In all of this modern context however, primarily our core purpose is to keep alive with honour and dignity the memory of those who gave their all on the fields of France and Belgium so many years ago.

Who we are...

United Kingdom wide the Ulster Volunteer Force Regimental Bands Association represents in the region of one hundred bands. Membership averages at least fifty per band, which equates to a minimum of 5000 members, an impressive mandate for any community based body. In line with our duty of care to our extensive membership, we stipulate that several members per band should attend courses to achieve NVQ Certificates in First Aid, Childcare and marshalling.

We maintain an ongoing and close working relationship with the PSNI in regards to parade organising, marshalling and general security. On a regular basis we meet with PSNI Belfast Divisional Commanders to discuss the same.

In the past we have outreached to local church youth groups hosting question and answer presentation evenings, with a view to educating young folk as to the true meaning of parading with a YCV/UVF Memorial Flute Band."

