

DIVIS DEMOLITION COMMITTEE

The Campaign to Demolish Divis Flats

Photo: HOPE project



DivisTower today - the remaining block of the original housing scheme, whose top floors were formerly occupied by a British Army base

Divis Flats were constructed between 1966-1972 as part of a slum clearance project in the Pound Loney area of the Lower Falls Road in Belfast.

Designed by architect Frank Robertson, the deck access and high rise complex housed 2400 people, in 850 flats. Within a few years residents were experiencing poor living conditions due to damp, mould, vermin and asbestos, at a time when Belfast became consumed by ethno-nationalist conflict.



Divis Flats in the mid 1970s.



Divis Residents demonstrate outside the offices of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the early 1980s.

The demolition committee

Within a few years of the completion of the Flats, residents began to campaign for their refurbishment. Deteriorating conditions and a lack of response from housing agencies eventually lead to the formation of the Divis Demolition Committee.



At Divis yesterday (left to right): Fra McCann (secretary DRA), Donal Graham, Brian Anson, Fiona Larbalestier and Lewis Walker, members of the Divis planning group.

The Divis Planning Group, composed of local residents advised by members of the Town and Country Planning Association.

“ Divis never was, and never can be a place to put down roots. It is no place for a child; no place for the elderly - it is no place for anyone.”

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ASSOCIATION

Poor housing conditions

The demolition committee used a variety of strategies, including sit-ins, squatting, graffiti campaigns and the wrecking of vacant flats to highlight the poor maintenance service, for which campaigners were prosecuted for criminal damage.

The campaign gained further support in the mid-1980s when the Town and Country Planning Association advised residents around redevelopment, and hosted an exhibition in London to highlight the poor housing conditions. A decision was made to demolish the entire complex in 1986.

