



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

Fund news

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The Newsletter of the International Fund for Ireland
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Fund pledges further £3.7m/€4.5m for peace building projects

In November 2011, the International Fund for Ireland approved a further investment of £3.7m/€4.5m for a wide range of initiatives which will contribute towards peace building and reconciliation between Unionists and Nationalists in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties. Of particular note was a financial commitment of £1m/€1.2m by the Fund towards the cost of establishing a new Hume/O'Neill Chair of Peace Studies, currently being proposed by the University of Ulster and to be located at the Magee Campus in Derry/Londonderry.

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Pictured at the recent Board meeting of the International Fund for Ireland which took place in Rathmullan, County Donegal are from left: Mr Winston Patterson; Dr Adrian Johnston; Mrs Anne Henderson; Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland; Ms Mary Southwell; Mr David Graham OBE; and Ms Rose-Mary Farrell

Irish language centre receives £1.9m facelift



Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland is pictured with from left: Martin McAleese; President McAleese; Howard Hastings, Chairman of Northern Ireland Tourist Board; Rosemary Kelly, Chairman of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland; and Will Haire, Permanent Secretary of the Department for Social Development.

A new £1.9 million refurbishment and extension to Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich was officially opened by President McAleese and Fund Chairman Dr Denis Rooney CBE in September 2011.

The refurbishment and extension project received £516,000 financial assistance from the International Fund for Ireland.

Dr Rooney said: "The restoration and extension of the Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich building has created a significant landmark in West Belfast, which will act as a focal point for cultural and cross-community activity in the area.

"Providing modern community space where local residents can come together and meet in a welcoming environment is vital if we are to encourage contact and dialogue between the two communities.

"The International Fund for Ireland is pleased to support projects like Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich, which will continue to have a positive and lasting impact long after the Fund ceases to exist."

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Foreword

The last few months have been very busy for the Fund and have been marked by various events which reflect our central objective of developing and funding initiatives that tackle segregation and promote integration to build a lasting peace in Ireland. This edition of Fund News carries details of some of these key developments.

The Fund, following its most recent Board meeting in November, has announced financial assistance for a range of initiatives, two of them focusing on the future through our Leaving a Legacy Programme. Foremost among these is a commitment of €1m/€1.2m towards the cost of establishing a new Hume/O'Neill Chair of Peace Studies, currently being proposed by the University of Ulster and to be located at the Magee Campus in Derry/Londonderry.

In September I was joined by President McAleese to reopen the restored and extended Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich Centre which has created a significant landmark in the heart of West Belfast. Providing local and international audiences with access to the Irish language, the building has become a focal point for cultural and cross-community activity.

In Lurgan work is underway to create a new building for the YMCA that will allow the organisation to centralise its operations under one roof and take its work with young people of all ages and from both communities a step further.

Fund News also reports on a very successful education conference that looked at what we have all learned from four years' experience of the Fund's Sharing in Education Programme.

Sharing in Education has become a real talking point in society for various reasons. Much of the debate focuses on the benefits to greater understanding and better relationships between communities; some of it focuses on the economic benefits that can also flow from it. With a major review of the schools estate underway, the Education Minister, John O'Dowd MLA, not unexpectedly told delegates that he foresaw an increase in the level and types of sharing.

The event enabled all of us - from the Fund through to teachers, administrators and pupils - to assess the achievements so far and explore new models for sharing.

The Sharing in Education Programme has been more successful than we anticipated. We now have 150 schools working together across 44 separate partnerships involving more than 10,000 pupils, figures far ahead of what we expected.

The Fund is driving the shared education agenda in other ways. We have launched the Welcoming Schools Programme which is designed to support all schools in taking proactive steps to make them more welcoming to pupils from all cultural backgrounds. The aim is to try to move a stage beyond collaboration on a curriculum basis to the position where an increasing proportion of cross-community pupil intake will be encouraged.

Despite all this, however, we are a long way from resolving the issue of segregation in education. It is my view that we have to nail down how we are collectively going to achieve the change needed. It will require all stakeholders to agree a pathway to a truly shared education system and to establish clear objectives, delivery mechanisms and measures of progress.

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Commenting on the announcement, Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the Fund, said:

"We are immensely proud of the contribution the International Fund for Ireland has made in the North West region over the past 25 years. This area was gravely affected by the violence of the Troubles and people here have known particular hardship. The Fund has supported a wide range of economic initiatives and community relations programmes aimed at realising the extraordinary potential of the North West region, and we are proud to continue our efforts.

"This funding announcement is particularly focussed on looking to the future in Northern Ireland and in the border region, and through our Leaving a Legacy Programme we are delighted to give our financial commitment and support to two exciting projects that will make a sustainable contribution to promoting peace building efforts. We are also supporting a significant number of projects under our Community Based Economic and Social Regeneration Programme in which we aim to promote cross-community and cross-border contact in recognised areas of disadvantage and social isolation."

The funding package which amounts to €3.7m/€4.5m includes:

- The Fund's Community Based Economic and Social Regeneration Programme will provide €1.25m/€1.5m to several projects that will help to bring about lasting community development and positive change. Among the beneficiaries will be Belturbet Community Development Association in County Cavan.
- The Fund's Community Bridges Programme will provide €510,326/€612,391 to two projects to continue community relations and reconciliation work. The LINC (Local Initiatives for Needy Communities) Resource Centre will receive €289,442/€347,330 towards the cost of its Learning Through Engagement Project. The 174 Trust has been awarded €220,884/€265,060 towards the cost of the Together Stronger Project.
- €109,930/€131,916 has been allocated to the Derry/Londonderry YMCA/YMCA Ireland (Donegal) organisations under the Fund's Integrating Community Organisations Programme. The funding will support the next phase of the Finding Your Place Project, which aims to build the capacity of young adults in Donegal, Strabane and Derry/Londonderry in order that they will be able to join existing community/voluntary groups in their communities at a decision-making level.
- €1,903,845/€2,284,614 allocated to the Fund's Leaving a Legacy Programme. This includes €903,845/€1,084,614 for the Open Hands Centre, Belfast by providing capital funding towards the building of a shared centre adjacent to the Peace Wall in Northumberland Street, Belfast. €1m/€1.2m has also been committed by the Fund towards the cost of establishing a new Hume/O'Neill Chair of Peace Studies currently being proposed by The University of Ulster. The Chair would be based at the University's Magee Campus in Derry/Londonderry.

Conference considers next steps for Sharing in Education

A recent conference organised by the Sharing in Education Learning Forum (SELF) to discuss the lessons learned from more than four years of sharing education attracted significant interest.

The conference proved so popular that it had to be moved to a larger venue at short notice. In addition members of the Education Committee chose to attend the conference rather than hold their scheduled meeting in Stormont.

The conference was organised by the three groups who make up SELF: Queen's University; Fermanagh Trust; and the North Eastern Education & Library Board.

Funded by the International Fund for Ireland and The Atlantic Philanthropies, the Sharing in Education Programme encourages schools to work together, to find new ways of sharing education to offer additional curriculum-based educational opportunities for students. In doing so the programme provides the means for sustained and regular contact among people from different communities to promote understanding and reconciliation.

The conference also looked at the objectives achieved since the programme was launched in 2007 which now involves 150 schools, across 44 separate partnerships and more than 10,000 pupils throughout Northern Ireland.

Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, said: "This conference is about learning the lessons of the last four years so we can look to the future of sharing in education with real ambitions for its continued development and continued success.

"We would now like to see the models of sharing education, represented at this conference and which we have helped to establish, adopted by the wider school community and supported by policy and adequate resources to help them become embedded as part of every day school life. Now is the time for the key stakeholders in education to reflect, engage and negotiate the pathway to sharing in education with appropriate objectives, targets and delivery mechanisms."



Pictured at the conference were from left: Naomi McGinley from St Mary's Primary School Tempo; Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland; Jessica Long from Tempo Controlled Primary School; and Minister for Education John O'Dowd.

Minister of Education John O'Dowd said: "There has been much debate recently regarding shared education and the benefit that it could bring both economically and in terms of improving relations between communities. I welcome that debate.

"There is already a considerable amount of sharing taking place across our education sector. This ranges from one off events, through to sharing facilities, to the ongoing engagement between schools to deliver shared classes. Over the next months and years I expect to see an increase in the level and type of sharing between and within schools and sectors."

New welcoming schools project launched

A new pilot project which will develop a welcoming ethos and atmosphere within schools was launched in September 2011.

The International Fund for Ireland's Welcoming Schools Project is a three-year initiative which aims to develop a welcoming schools agenda built on the foundations of inclusivity, respect for others and a celebration of diversity within each school culture.

Over the next three years, 24 schools will take part in the pilot project with eight participating in the first year. It is intended that, if successful, the project model could be used as a framework for shared education in other countries.

Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, said: "The Welcoming Schools Project is the latest ground breaking initiative to be launched as part of our wider Sharing in Education Programme, which is integral to one of the Fund's main aims to promote reconciliation and non-sectarianism.

"The new project will support schools to take proactive steps to

make them a more welcoming place for all pupils regardless of religion or race with the eventual aim of increasing the diversity and mix within the pupil intake.

"The impacts of this project may not be apparent in the short-term but the project has the potential to offer one the most effective and efficient solutions to segregated education in the medium to longer term."

Pictured at the launch of the Welcoming Schools Project were pupils from Presentation and Tannaghmore Primary Schools with from left: (Front) James McAllinden; Ariana Gomes; Sophie Harbinson; and Christian Alfaro. (Back): Jayne Simms, Welcoming Schools Project Manager; Dr John Novak, Professor of Education, Brock University, Ontario, Canada; Education Minister John O'Dowd; Dr Denis Rooney CBE; Plunkett Campbell, Chairman of the SELB; and John Unsworth, Assistant Senior Education Officer SELB.





Groups in County Monaghan promote mutual understanding and respect

A project that celebrates the huge diversity of cultural heritage around the border has recently been launched in County Monaghan.

Clogher Historical Society in association with the Cahans Project and a walking club called Knockatallon Ramblers have all come together to deliver Celebrating our Cultural Diversity, a cross-community and cross-border project.



Participants on the Celebrating our Cultural Diversity Project pose in costumes from our shared history with Rose-Mary Farrell (centre), Board Member of the International Fund for Ireland, at the official launch of the project.

The project will provide opportunities for contact and dialogue, not only between Nationalists and Unionists in County Monaghan but also in the neighbouring northern counties of Fermanagh, Tyrone and Armagh.

Designed as a celebration of the wonderfully diverse nature of cultural heritage in border areas, the project is based on the idea that by focusing on shared history people of all ages from both Unionist and Nationalist backgrounds can come together to share learning and develop a sense of understanding of each other.

Among the key elements of the project is a schools initiative involving the re-creation and re-enactment of historic walks based on local events of the past.

International Fund for Ireland Board Member, Rose-Mary Farrell, said: "We commend these three groups which are going far beyond their comfort zones. The challenge of reconciliation demands that people go that extra mile. We at the International Fund for Ireland are pleased to continue to support these three groups and we wish them every success for this project."

The project received financial assistance from the Fund's Integrating Community Organisations Programme which is managed on behalf of the Fund by the Rural Development Council.

Construction begins on new premises for YMCA in Lurgan

The new £1.5m youth facility will bring the work of the YMCA to one centralised site just off the main street in the town - an area that many regard as an interface.

Positioned to be easily accessible to both the Unionist and Nationalist communities, the complex will provide facilities to engage, develop and educate young people. This will include diversity and conflict management workshops, personal development and leadership programmes.

Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, said: "The Fund is delighted to contribute £856,000 towards this new facility. The building will enable Lurgan YMCA to increase its work with young people in Lurgan and help it to deliver activities to tackle sectarianism and gang involvement and promote understanding between local communities."



Pictured at the construction site were from left: Hugo Dale, Chief Executive Lurgan YMCA; Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland; John O'Dowd MLA, Minister for Education; and Mr George Emerson, Chairman of Lurgan YMCA.