

FUND Focus



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

The newsletter of the
International Fund for Ireland
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Your time to inspire

Participants in the Upper Springfield Development Trust Peace Impact Project share their experiences during a meeting in September.

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CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Supporting young people to become the architects of a new, peaceful and cohesive society has been a longstanding priority for the International Fund for Ireland.

Throughout the Fund's existence, our diverse range of youth programmes have secured remarkable personal transformations, created new opportunities for dialogue and mutual understanding and equipped thousands of young people to improve their academic results, skills and self-esteem.

The Fund's interventions in Shared Education, for example, has led directly to the development of government policies that address community separation in the education system in Northern Ireland and the lessons are being shared with other regions emerging from conflict.

Engagement with young people, particularly those who are vulnerable and/or marginalised, is a central theme in our Community Transformation Strategy. Sadly many young people continue to be drawn into illegal and sectarian activity or are being targeted for recruitment or attack by paramilitaries.

Last year, more than 700 people were convicted of rioting in protests linked to parades. The majority were young men under the age of 23 with barely any memory of the Troubles.

This edition of Fund Focus concentrates on some of the inspirational community groups who are successfully challenging the next generation to raise expectations of themselves and their prospects. The bravery, leadership and vision of these projects are to be celebrated, as are the young participants who have kindly shared their experiences.

We're particularly grateful to Chris Mellon from the Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association who penned the article for this edition. His story reflects the very real impact that Fund-supported projects are having on individuals, families and communities across Northern Ireland and in the southern border counties.

The communities we support are developing innovative models to tackle contentious issues in their neighbourhoods, but they cannot do it alone. It is critical that the efforts they are making are matched by positive political leadership and the ambition to bridge deep division.

At the time of writing, multi-party talks are underway in Northern Ireland aimed at finding agreement on a wide range of political issues and building on the foundations laid last year by Dr Richard Haass in relation to flags, parades and the past.

It is in all our interests to see these talks succeed and we commend the parties for their commitment to secure a deal that will offer better options for the next generation.


Dr Adrian Johnston
CHAIRMAN

International Fund for Ireland commits £203,000 /€244,000 towards eight community projects

In November, the International Fund for Ireland confirmed financial assistance worth more than £203,000/€244,000 for eight community groups in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties.

The funding, approved at the organisation's recent Board Meeting in Fermanagh, will support five new projects that aim to address complex issues linked to the past and provide new options for marginalised young people.

A further three existing projects based in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry will share £22,980/€27,576 to assist communities reach a position where they feel it is safe and appropriate to proceed with the removal of Peace Walls in interface areas.

Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, said: "For almost three decades, the International Fund for Ireland has advanced the push for peace by supporting communities to take necessary risks for peace and secure positive change in difficult areas.

The eight projects awarded in this round of funding reflect the type of ambitious work that we are committed to supporting and our willingness to go where others cannot in order to help stabilise the Peace Process.

"In less than two years, our Peace Walls Programme has delivered significant progress in terms of confidence and relationship building measures, and has begun a schedule of works to transform interface neighbourhoods. Similarly the Peace Impact Programme has encouraged communities to bring forward innovative solutions to complex issues like parading and interface tensions. Many are making the first efforts to engage with marginalised individuals – particularly young people – and groups who remain disconnected from government interventions."

Details of the latest funding are available at the International Fund for Ireland website: www.internationalfundforireland.com



Above: Pictured at the International Fund for Ireland's recent Board Meeting in County Fermanagh are Board Members: Billy Gamble; Siobhan Fitzpatrick; Winston Patterson; Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman of the Fund; David Graham and Dorothy Clarke.



Inspiring leadership and changing lives

Chris Mellon, 24, is Bandmaster for Randalstown Sons of Ulster and is a member of the Orange Institution and Apprentice Boys of Derry. He shares his experiences with the Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association Peace Impact Project.

Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association (SCAA) is playing an important role in leading young people towards a better future in Northern Ireland. They work with community groups who have had very little involvement in the peace building process across Derry/ Londonderry and Antrim.

Their on-going work aims to resolve disputes related to parades, raise mutual understanding of cultural traditions and communicate with people just like me.

Before I was introduced to the discipline of a flute band and the responsibilities of leadership, I was a typical young tearaway. After my mother and father divorced, I left my home and moved in with my grandparents in a Loyalist housing estate.

I don't want to portray all housing estates as troublesome, but many have the temptation for disorder and unfortunately it is a route that many feel is their only option. As a young Protestant, I believed I had to protect my culture by whatever means necessary. This behaviour resulted in several court appearances, fines, cautions and almost a custodial sentence.

Under the leadership of SCAA and its mentors I turned my life around and have also completed courses including conflict management, life and diversity and event management.

Thanks to the opportunities I have received with them I've been able to share my experiences with other

groups. My aim is always to educate younger members about embracing a more peaceful, positive cultural identity and also encourage them to cultivate key skills and qualifications, which could lead to future employment.

The strong influence of these community groups have made me the man I am today.

There is nothing special about me as a person, I hold no amazing skills or talent but what I do hold is a passion; a passion to learn, a passion to change and develop young men and women in the marching band scene in Northern Ireland.

I now understand that protecting my culture and tradition is not best fought on the streets over controversy, but in the corridors of power, through dialogue, council chambers and the ballot box.

I would like to share another personal example of how our culture can have a positive impact on someone's life.

In 2009, a very nervous 12-year-old boy came to our band hall for the first time. Interested in learning the flute, I took him through the usual procedure, supplying him with music notes, a flute and a tutor to accompany him with his learning.

After a number of weeks, the tutor approached me during practice to inform me of the young man's lack of progress. Meeting that young man's mother to inform her that her son was struggling and would most likely not make it is one of the hardest things I've had to do.

I was then made aware that the young man was dyslexic and had severe problems with social interaction. The following weekend the band visited a venue in North Antrim to listen to a traditional music night.

Embracing the Irish ballads I watched this young man instantly relate to rhythms through music by tapping his foot to the steady beat. His ability to follow rhythmic patterns has today made him one of the best drummers in our band.

A little while later, we received great news that his involvement in the band had given him a boost in confidence. He had progressed a lot in school and was comfortable with social interaction.

This was a true moment of recognition for me. The band prides itself in our culture but also teaches valuable life skills such as time keeping, commitment, charisma, leadership, team building, respect, appearance and discipline. A year in a band had changed a young man's life forever.

With the steering of community groups such as SCAA the positive outcomes are endless.

They continue to improve perceptions of flute bands, engage with marginalised young people and create opportunities for a new generation of educated Loyalists- leading by example through positive community relations, music and education.

CASE STUDY:

Londonderry Bands Forum

The Londonderry Bands Forum draws together 14 bands from across the city to collectively improve leadership, upgrade constitutions and policies and offer training and accreditation that can support Bands Masters and young band members to have a broader positive influence in their communities.

It encourages and promotes engagement through a range of good relations and community development activities including; conferences; networking events; workshops; community festivals and musical master-classes.

David Blair has been instrumental in setting up Caw Flute Band, instilling confidence in young people and helping reduce anti-social behaviour in his local estate.

"I became disillusioned with life and felt that my identity and culture was being eroded. My previous band had paramilitary connections, which meant I was very active in flag protests and I was often involved in anti-social behaviour.

"I realised I wanted to improve community spirit and help other people with

opportunities in the local area. St Columb's Park House was very supportive and I participated in community relations workshops covering areas such as flags, emblems and identity issues.

"Music was always an interest of mine so I was encouraged to join the Londonderry Bands Forum who assisted me in forming a new Flute Band in the Caw/ Nelson Drive Estate."

David's involvement with this programme has resulted in event management training, youth leadership, volunteering programmes and a visit to Croatia to study the impact of conflict.

"Caw Flute Band offers young people an opportunity to learn a lifelong skill in fluting and drumming as well as boost confidence, self-esteem and reduce anti-social behaviour.

"Unlike some bands that have sectarian and paramilitary links, we have produced something different that focuses on music. Members are encouraged to think outside the box in terms of what they would traditionally associate with flute bands.

"We have worked hard to gain trust with the local community and have also taken part in Music City, The Fleadh and were the first protestant band ever to head up the Foyle Cup opening parade last year.

"Through the Fund's Peace Impact Programme we have been given a fantastic opportunity for our community to choose a brighter future. It is great that the band has earned respect and formed new friendships with all parts of the city. This is an important initiative that is delivering real change. I would encourage others to get involved."



ABOVE: Derek Moore, Londonderry Bands Forum Project Leader and Dr Adrian Johnston, International Fund for Ireland Chairman, join young bands members in Derry/Londonderry.

CASE STUDY:

Cox's Demesne Personal Testimony

Cox's Demesne Youth and Community Project works within Cox's Demesne housing estate in Dundalk. It delivers training, support and a suite of interventions to support those who are disadvantaged or socially excluded.

It offers new opportunities to young people in an area that has high levels of social deprivation, anti-social behaviour, crime, dissident activity and drug use.

The Fund has supported two focused streams of work which address sensitive and complex issues. One participant, who preferred not to be named, said the project has had a huge impact upon the lives of those involved.

"This area of Dundalk doesn't have much going for it. There's a lot of unemployment and a real lack of opportunity for young people.

"Before I became involved with the Cox's Demesne Project I was in trouble with the Gardaí quite a bit and spent most of my time taking drugs, which brought a lot of

problems including getting put out of main stream education.

"I was approached by one of the project workers who informed me about upcoming training and I decided to take part. This was a fantastic opportunity to take part in something that I never would have even considered before.

"The team here are really encouraging and have done a lot to help myself and others. Thanks to the project, my life has changed completely. I am now back in full time training, moved in with my girlfriend and ditched the drugs. I've also felt a real sense of achievement and improved self-



esteem and I want to continue to better myself with the help of the project as much as I can.

"Thanks to the Fund's Peace Impact Programme I have also found that I am a natural leader through the outdoor pursuit's activities. I have obtained some qualifications too and the instructors have asked me to volunteer to help others, which is a great feeling.

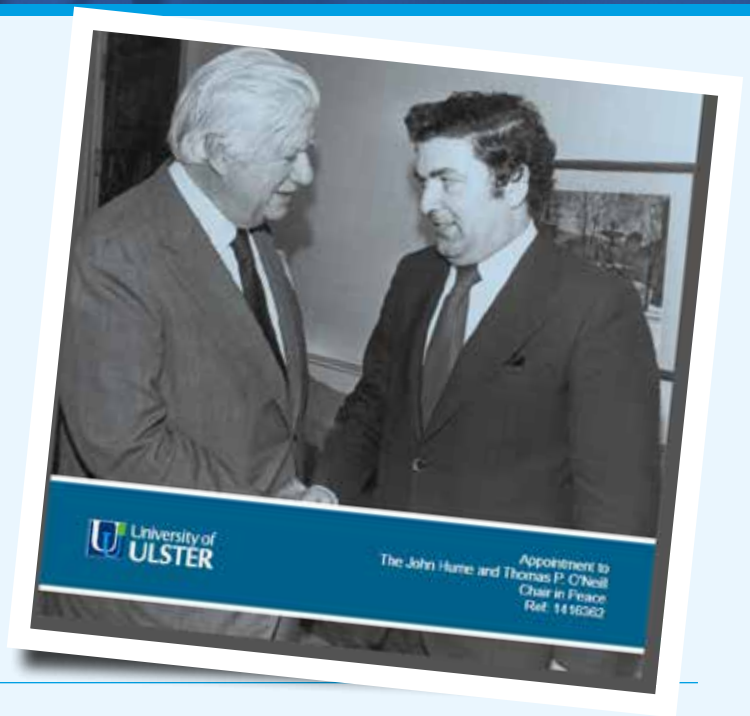
"I am currently looking into other courses that I can apply for in my local area to help further my employment opportunities and training and I'm also planning to volunteer some more with the outdoor Adventure Centre.

"This programme has really turned my life around for the better and given me a second chance. It's a great initiative providing a real lifeline for young people in Cox's Demesne."

LEFT: Participants on the Cox's Demesne Peace Impact Project.

John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace – Leaving a Legacy

The University of Ulster's International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE) has started recruitment for the first ever John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace. Based at the University's Magee campus, the Chair in Peace is dedicated to the two men for the pivotal role they played in the peace process in Northern Ireland. The Fund awarded £1.4 million towards the Chair and its goals of actively consolidating peace locally, and globally while contributing to the research and teaching of the INCORE programme. The full-time academic position will help underpin a new INCORE peace initiative aimed at supporting young peacemakers from around the world. Following the appointment of the new Chair, the University plans to offer two 'International Fund for Ireland PhD Scholarships' over a six-year period.



PIP Cluster Event

The PIP programme currently supports around 50 projects in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties. Representatives from many of the projects including Time2choose, Cox's Demesne, Londonderry Bands Forum and Drumgor Detached Youth Project came together for the first time at a cluster event to discuss the impact of their work and the opportunities for shared learning. Groups discussed outcomes relating to Personal Transformation and Empowerment, Community Transformation and Empowerment and Economic Transformation and Empowerment. The event highlighted the positive and diverse range of impacts that PIP is having and the innovative ways that groups are tackling sensitive and challenging issues. Pictured at the event are representatives from the International Fund for Ireland and Community Foundation NI.

Upper Springfield Development Trust – Peace Impact Programme

Young people involved in the Upper Springfield Development Trust's Peace Impact Project recently shared their experiences with Dr Andrew Murrison MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office. The project, based in the Upper Springfield area of West Belfast, works in partnership with three residents groups in Whiterock / Westrock, Sliabh Dubh, Moyard and Springfield Park. Participants shared their stories of personal transformation and discussed how they now provide leadership and encouragement to their peers. The Minister also visited the nearby Black Mountain Shared Space Peace Walls Project. Dr Murrison MP (centre) is pictured with Niall Enright and Anne-Marie Mervyn from Upper Springfield Development Trust.



Forum for Cities in Transition - Peace Walls Programme

In October, more than 80 people from 15 divided cities across the Middle East, Africa and Europe visited communities involved in the International Fund for Ireland’s Peace Walls Programme (PWP). The visit to Belfast was part of the four-day Forum for Cities in Transition. Since its launch in 2012, almost £3million has been invested in the PWP by the Fund to help residents move to a position where they feel it is appropriate to discuss the potential removal of barriers. The delivery model has generated considerable momentum for positive physical transformation and received widespread acclaim from community groups, government departments and statutory agencies. Pictured with the International Fund for Ireland Chairman, Dr Adrian Johnston, are Mine Atli and Zehra Bayer from Nicosia in Cyprus.



Northern Ireland Science Park – Leaving a Legacy

A £2 million grant that helped establish the Innovation Centre at the Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP) a decade ago has been cited as one of the International Fund for Ireland’s most important investments. Opened in 2003, the award-winning centre helped kick-start a 10-year regeneration programme that has transformed Belfast’s derelict shipping heartland into a vibrant area that continues to nurture innovative local ideas, draw overseas investment and impress tourists. The NISP and the Fund continue to share many core values in relation to creating new opportunities for young people. Pictured are (L-R) Dr Adrian Johnston, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland; Dr Norman Apsley, Chief Executive, NISP; and Dr Joanne Stuart, Director of Development at NISP Trust.



Black Mountain Shared Space Project – Peace Walls Programme

In August, the Black Mountain Shared Space Project facilitated the removal of security gates at the Springmartin Road interface and the erection of new sculptures which bear the names of the local children who helped design artwork. It is the first major physical change at the Springmartin Peace Wall and follows an extensive period of consultation and discussions with local residents. Pictured at the unveiling of the sculpture are (L-R) Paul Mateer, Black Mountain Shared Space Project; Baroness May Blood, community activist; and Billy Gamble, International Fund for Ireland Board Member.

