



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

Fund news

Spring 2008

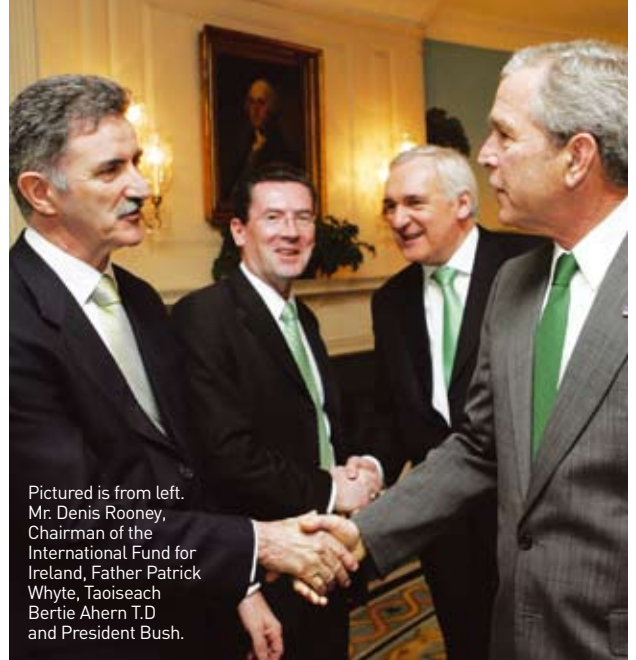
The Newsletter of the
International Fund for Ireland
www.internationalfundforireland.com

Fund Chairman visits Washington

The Chairman, Denis Rooney, met President Bush when he visited Washington in March. He went on to hold a series of meetings with USAID, members of Congress and other parties to update them on the Fund's recent work and to lobby for continued financial support.

Meetings were held with Dr Douglas Menarchik at USAID as well as with Congressmen Richard Neal, Jim Walsh, Maurice Hinchey, Tim Murphy, Joseph Crowley and Senator Pat Leahy. He also met with senior staff of the offices of Congresswoman Nita Lowey and Congressman David Obey as well as with Mark Powell and Leah Pease at the State Department.

The Chairman hosted a dinner for participants of the Fund's Ambit Programme and attended a number of events including the American Ireland Fund, Reception at the Embassy of Ireland, the Northern Ireland Bureau Breakfast, the speakers lunch and the St. Patrick's Day celebrations at the White House on March 17th.



Pictured is from left. Mr. Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, Father Patrick Whyte, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern T.D and President Bush.

£1.1m/€1.6m for 'Respecting Difference' Pre-School Programme

The International Fund for Ireland is to provide just over £1.1m/€1.6m for an innovative new pre-school project aimed at helping young children to develop positive attitudes to diversity.

Developed and run by Early Years - the Organisation for Young Children, the 'Respecting Difference' Programme will deliver mutual understanding and diversity training and resource packs for teachers, parents and pre-school management committees across Northern Ireland.

Teachers will then deliver the Programme to pupils, with ongoing support from Early Years' specialists. There will also be a series of TV cartoons supporting the Programme.

It is hoped that 240 pre-schools across Northern Ireland, Co Louth and Co Donegal will take part in the Programme over the next three years.

Confirming the funding for the Programme at the Fund's recent Board meeting, the Fund's Chairman, Denis Rooney, said: "If we want to move forward in our society towards lasting

peace and a shared future, we have to find ways to help our children to embrace diversity and difference. The 'Respecting Difference' Programme provides an innovative and proven way of helping young children to understand the need to be inclusive and respectful of others. We are delighted to be able to support such an initiative."

The 'Respecting Difference' Programme is also being funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

Donors to the Fund are:



United States of America



European Union



Canada



Australia



New Zealand



Foreword

As I write this, we have recently marked the tenth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the historic document which laid down the foundations for sustainable peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland.

Yet, despite the Agreement and the major political advancements that have been made in the last decade, Northern Ireland remains a divided society kept apart along sectarian divisions by our systems for public sector housing and education and by the resulting ways in which we socialise.

Research conducted in 2001 in Northern Ireland, showed that children as young as three can develop sectarian prejudices and by aged six these negative attitudes are firmly established.

The International Fund for Ireland is addressing this issue by leading the way in identifying new interventions in education and by creating opportunities where the young can learn, grow and develop understanding of others. As I mentioned in the last edition of Fund News, our Sharing Education Programme, for primary and secondary school children, will be of vital importance over the next five years. We are also making substantial investments in a number of other innovative areas for young people including our pre-school 'Respecting Difference' Programme and Sesame Tree (the Northern Ireland version of Sesame Street) aimed at three to six year olds.

In March we set aside over £1.1m/€1.6m for the 'Respecting Difference' Pre-school Programme. We are working in conjunction with Early Years - the Organisation for Young Children, the Department of Education, and The Atlantic Philanthropies to equip teachers and parents with the tools to help them tackle issues of sectarianism and inclusion in our youngest generation.

More recently I attended the launch of Sesame Tree. The Programme features Potto and Hilda, along with old favourites Elmo and Cookie Monster with the action taking place in and around the Sesame Tree. It is a wonderful tree where children can ask questions about their own identity and the cultures of others and have them answered in ways that help them develop personal mutual understanding of their local and wider community.

These initiatives provide innovative ways to help young children understand the need to be inclusive and respectful of others and make critical steps towards tackling sectarianism.

By reaching out to our children we are ensuring that this generation and the next can live happily together in a more integrated society - this is our common purpose and something we all are all working to achieve.

New 'Integrating Community Organisations' Programme launched by International Fund for Ireland

'Integrating Community Organisations', a new support programme created to help community organisations that wish to work for the benefit of their community, was launched on February 19th in Armagh by Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland.

The Programme, managed by the Rural Development Council (RDC) on behalf of the Fund, will help community organisations from Northern Ireland and the Southern border counties, that wish to co-operate on a cross border and/or cross community basis, to improve their communities.

The new Programme will offer training, support and mentoring and the opportunity for groups to work together on small joint projects. In addition, pairs of community organisations may subsequently access funding for large scale projects via the Funds other programmes.

Speaking at the launch, Denis Rooney, said: "Much has been achieved to date by the Fund in bringing communities together, however, divisions within our society remain.



Pictured are Mr. Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland and Caroline Breakey, Chair of the Rural Development Fund at the launch.

"The Fund enables communities to grasp new opportunities, to step beyond the normal boundaries to which they have become accustomed and to develop projects that increase community knowledge and understanding of other traditions and cultures. We look forward to engaging in a meaningful way with successful applicants."

Leitrim's Rossinver Organic Centre receives funding of £283,464/€360,000

The International Fund for Ireland is to provide funding in excess of £283,464/€360,000 for the Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim. The centre's Sustainable Communities Project will work with clusters of primary schools and community garden groups to promote inter-generational and community cohesion.

The closely related Women's Horticulture Training Project will work in partnership with the Women's Institute of Northern Ireland and the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) to provide women with organic horticulture skills for domestic and/or small-scale commercial production. Both projects will create synergies for building peace, social capital, and sustainable local economic development.



President McAleese officially opens new projects in Lisdoonan

President Mary McAleese officially opened a number of International Fund for Ireland co-funded projects in Lisdoonan, near Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan in January 2008.

The projects, which were facilitated by Lisdoonan Recreation and Development Association Ltd, included a community owned shop, community centre, office space and industrial units.

Commenting on the projects, Mr. Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, said: "The International Fund for Ireland has attempted to nurture regeneration in border areas over the last two decades. These projects demonstrate the value of local community groups, people coming together and pooling their resources to a common end. The shared vision of those involved in the community facilities has transformed the village and will continue to have a real and lasting impact upon Lisdoonan."



President McAleese is pictured performing the official opening ceremony of a number of projects in Lisdoonan, Carrickmacross.

Development to bring 100 jobs to city peace line area

The Fund's Chairman, Denis Rooney, officially opened a substantial new extension to North City Business Centre on February 21st.

The business centre bridges a once notorious peace line area between New Lodge and Tigers Bay in Belfast and has the potential to create in excess of 100 new jobs for the area.

Speaking at the official opening, Denis Rooney, said: "This extension will not only make a strong contribution to cross community relations in this interface area but will have a real and lasting impact on the long term economic prospects of North Belfast.

"The construction of these new units, which marks phase three, all partly funded by the

Fund will enable North Belfast Business Centre Limited to continue its vital work in providing business units which are used by both sides of the community and where political opinions are left firmly at the door."

North City Business Centre is currently occupied by 42 tenant companies and organisations from both sides of the community that employ up to 1500 people in a range of businesses.



Pictured from left are Mr. Irvine McKay, Chairman of North Belfast Business Centre Limited, Anna McCorry, widow of the late Michael McCorry Centre Manager from 1993 to 2006, Mr. Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland and Economy Minister Nigel Dodds.

Delegates travel to North America as part of Fund's AMBIT Programme

14 people from the business, community and voluntary sectors in Northern Ireland took part in a two week visit to North America recently as part of the Fund's American Management and Business Internship Training Programme (AMBIT).

The Programme, which falls under the Funds Building Foundations activity, enables candidates to explore strategies that community development corporations in the US use to sustain and grow their organisations. Strategy plans and best practices that might be adopted for specific projects in Northern Ireland are also investigated as part of the Programme.

The theme of this year's trip focused on the dynamic between government and the community in the context of shared space and the need to move beyond the mentality of 'peaceful coexistence' as an acceptable norm for society. Under this theme, participating delegates investigated areas of regeneration and collaboration, best practices of good race relations in under privileged areas and the economic ramifications of segregation.

As part of the visit the group spent time with the Governor of Maryland and visited a wide variety of community and business organisations based in Washington, Memphis and Baltimore.



Participants on the Fund's AMBIT Programme are pictured with Governor O'Malley, Governor of Maryland and former Mayor of Baltimore, Mr. Ken Gibson of the International Fund for Ireland and Mr. Peter Kageyama, US AMBIT organiser.

Timor Leste (East Timor) Visit

The Fund's Secretariat participated in a visit by the Irish Government's Special Envoy, Dame Nuala O'Loan, to Timor Leste (East Timor), in May 2008. The Secretariat briefed members of Government, including Vice Prime Minister José Luis Guterres, the staff of the UN mission and NGOs, on the Fund's experience as a vehicle for economic progress and reconciliation.

IN BRIEF

Fund Book

Award winning journalist and author Alf McCreary is currently putting the finishing touches to a book that will chart the developments and celebrate the Fund's achievements over the past two decades. Scheduled to be released later this year, the book will feature stories of the many people and organisations that the Fund has helped over its lifetime.

Fund projects receive prestigious Civic Trust Awards

Two Fund assisted projects in Northern Ireland received UK Civic Trust Awards in February 2008.

The Awards, which are coordinated annually by the Civic Trust, recognise and reward projects that are culturally, socially or economically beneficial, and make an outstanding contribution to the quality and appearance of the environment.

Landmark East, which develops unused and derelict property to provide high quality office accommodation for community, voluntary and social economy organisations received an award for Avalon House on the Newtownards Road, Belfast. Youth Action also received an award for its new headquarters in College Square North, Belfast. These were two of only 100 entries shortlisted across the UK in the 2008 awards.

Appointments

A fond farewell to New Zealand observer H.E. Ambassador Jonathan Hunt. We warmly welcome H.E. Ambassador Derek Leask (New Zealand) and Mr. George McKelvey (United States), who have recently been appointed as observers to the Fund.

Additional funding made available for Kilcar Enterprise Centre

The International Fund for Ireland is providing additional funding of £43,745/€55,557 for the Kilcar Enterprise Centre, Donegal for a project designed to facilitate the needs of both emerging start-up and existing companies. The project received £279,527/€355,000 from the International Fund in 2002 and will provide seven incubation units and a communal area within a 6,100 sq ft low-rise building.

Sesame Tree launched in Belfast

Sesame Tree, a new media project aimed at encouraging Northern Ireland children to explore and appreciate the world around them, and promote respect and understanding debuted on BBC Two Northern Ireland television on April 5th.

In line with the revised Northern Ireland Statutory Curriculum, the television series presents engaging educational messages through stories and characters. Sesame Tree will also serve as a valuable resource for children, parents and those working with children by: presenting positive images to children of the self and others; emphasising a range of objectives including valuing diversity, developing problem solving skills, becoming aware of our common humanity; and helping the early childhood community in Northern Ireland achieve its strategic goals, including personal and mutual understanding in the local and wider community.

Gary E. Knell, President and CEO of Sesame Workshop, said: "Sesame Workshop is proud to work with dedicated local partners like



Mr. Alexander Smith, Joint Director General of the International Fund for Ireland with Potto and Hilda at the launch of Sesame Tree.

SixteenSouth, BBC Northern Ireland, Queen's University, and the project's funders to create relevant, inspiring content that can bridge gaps and make a positive impact. The images we share and the stories we tell have the potential to extend far beyond the television

screen to become a valuable resource for children growing up today in Northern Ireland."

20 original 15-minute episodes have been produced aimed at children aged 3 to 6 years, with the Fund providing assistance of £307,769.

The Fund shares its experience of peace building with Croatian President

Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, Mr. Denis Rooney, met with Mr Stjepan Mesic, President of Croatia during his official visit to Northern Ireland on October 17th.

During his two day trip the President attended a special event at Youth Action's new youth facility in Belfast. At the event Denis Rooney took the opportunity to outline the work of the Fund and its strategy to 2010 which includes sharing its experience and expertise with peacebuilders in countries coming out of conflict.

He said: "We are delighted to host this prestigious delegation from Croatia.

Since its establishment, the Fund has been involved in many ground-breaking and innovative projects, particularly with young people as a means of encouraging reconciliation between communities throughout Ireland.

Although there is much work that remains to be done, remarkable progress has been made towards achieving lasting peace on the island of Ireland. The Fund is committed to sharing its experience and expertise in areas affected by conflict and we hope Croatia will be able to benefit from some of the lessons we have shared with them today."



Pictured left to right are Mr. Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland; June Trimble, Director of Youth Action Northern Ireland; Councillor, Bernie Kelly, Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast; President of Croatia, Mr. Stjepan Mesic; Dr. Ann Marie Gray, Vice-Chairman of Youth Action Northern Ireland and Mr. David Gould, Chair of Youth Action Northern Ireland.



£3.7m/€5.4m Sharing Education Programme launched at Queen's

Over 2,500 pupils from schools in Northern Ireland are set to benefit from a new £3.7 million Sharing Education Programme which was launched at Queen's University on September 24th. The Sharing Education Programme (SEP) offers students the chance to share in enhanced educational and development opportunities, while at the same time building positive relationships with those from different backgrounds and cultures.

Funded by the International Fund for Ireland and The Atlantic Philanthropies and administered by Queen's University, the Programme will involve a total of 12 collaborative projects amongst 60 schools, from across every education sector in Northern Ireland. Each collaborative project will include schools from across the different management types, that is, Controlled, Maintained, Catholic Voluntary and other Voluntary schools. Many of the projects will also involve partnerships between grammar and secondary schools, or primary and post-primary schools.

The Specialist Schools have been chosen to lead the partnerships due to their recognised commitment to collaboration and excellence in key areas.

The Sharing Education Programme aims to encourage all schools to make inter-community collaboration an integral part of their everyday life.

In addition, the Programme's funding will be used to support teaching and coordination across the schools partnerships, as well as providing curricular and practical support to enable effective collaboration.

Speaking on behalf of the Programme's funders, Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland said: "While we have made tremendous progress as a community towards becoming a peaceful society in recent months, we still have to face the unpalatable reality that we are still a segregated society in terms of where we live and learn.



Pictured from left: Mr. Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, Professor Tony Gallagher, School of Education, Queen University Belfast, Mr. Padraic Quirk, The Atlantic Philanthropies, with a pupil from Limavady High School, one of the participating schools.

"We believe that 'sharing education' is a step towards bringing all the diverse experiences in our community together in a way that creates advantage for everyone involved. This is not sharing for its own sake but a tremendous opportunity for our young people to increase the opportunities available to them at almost every level and play a fuller role in developing a more stable society for all of us."

Sports stars gather for launch of major community initiative

The Belfast Schools' Sports Partnership, a new reconciliation based community sports initiative was launched by Aston Villa manager Martin O'Neill and President of the European Athletic Coaches' Association, Dr Frank Dick, on November 6th.

Funded under the Sharing Education Programme, the project will deliver high quality sports based education to young people from across Belfast.

The Partnership, which aims to reach over 17,000 young people in its first year, is being led by St Malachy's College. It will work with other primary and post-primary schools and community groups in Belfast to create a unique network with the sole purpose of developing and enhancing reconciliation through substantial and genuine partnerships.

Praising the vision of the schools involved in the Partnership, Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland said:



Pictured at the event are Mr. Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, Education Minister Caitriona Ruane, Mr. Martin O'Neill, Aston Villa Manager with some of the pupils at the launch.

"This project uses sport as a means to bring young people together, but includes a range of learning for life and work modules as well as specifically tackling the issue of living in divided societies. This is exactly what we hoped our Sharing Education Programme would inspire and facilitate."