



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

Fund news

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

The International Fund for Ireland announces £12m/€14.4m to promote sharing and integration

Following the Fund's most recent Board meeting in County Antrim on 4 November 2010, Fund Chairman Dr Denis Rooney CBE announced £12m/€14.4m funding to support a wide range of pioneering community relations initiatives in shared education, youth work, community development and re-imaging.

Dr Denis Rooney said: "This funding announcement demonstrates the Fund's

continued commitment to bringing together people from the Unionist and Nationalist traditions, be it in a classroom, on a youth programme, in housing or through work with local communities.

"The Fund is committed to supporting projects that seek to dismantle traditional barriers in an effort to create a truly integrated society that will underpin a lasting peace, long after the Fund ceases to exist.

"In building these closer links from primary school age and upwards, we are trying to foster a greater understanding of and respect for both traditions - to live peaceably in a shared and tolerant society."

Full details of this latest funding announcement can be viewed on our website: www.internationalfundforireland.com

Fund's Shared Neighbourhood Programme reaches its target

The Shared Neighbourhood Programme, which is designed to support and encourage shared neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland has achieved its initial aim of attracting 30 participants onto the Programme in three years.

The announcement was made at an event in Forthspring on the Springfield Road in West Belfast, one of the 30 communities now committed to the Programme which is managed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on behalf of the Fund.

Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland said: "While sectarian violence may be less of a feature in our daily lives, it still takes great courage to openly commit to becoming a shared neighbourhood. The individuals

working within the 30 neighbourhoods in the Shared Neighbourhood Programme continue to experience some very real difficulties and challenges in pursuing the vision for their communities."

The special event also highlighted the findings of an independent external evaluation of the Shared Neighbourhood Programme's first phase.

The evaluation found that the Programme is just one of the many possible responses to the issue of segregated housing but it is perhaps the response with the most potential to make the most difference.

The evaluation also praised the Programme's community led nature and its success in driving forward partnerships between social housing estates, within those estates and between communities and statutory agencies.



Dr Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland and Social Development Minister Alex Attwood are pictured in Forthspring on the Springfield Road interface.

The Programme's community development approach to community relations was felt to provide immense benefits, promoting self-sufficiency and a movement away from dependence on grant income and was credited as providing a practical means for communities to move from just co-existence towards real integration.

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Foreword

Great progress has been made in implementing the Fund's current strategy which has focused on new and innovative work in education, housing, community organisations and continuing support for youth programmes.

Reflecting on the developments highlighted in this edition of Fund News, the importance of this work is evident, for instance, in the Maximising Community Space Crossing Borders Programme and also the third phase of the Shared Neighbourhood Programme. Another highlight is the launch of the Hand of Friendship Project – an innovative cross-community, cross-border schools initiative for young people from 16 primary schools throughout Tyrone, Down, Armagh, Monaghan and Louth.

As I noted in my recent Belfast Telegraph article: "Our schools need a lesson in sharing the classroom", education remains a key area of our work. The Fund recently responded to the Department of Education's consultation document entitled: "Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education", indicating our ongoing involvement in supporting schools based community relations projects. The Sharing in Education Programme that the Fund has developed and supported over the past few years, enables young people to participate in shared educational experiences and we are encouraged by the positive response from teachers, pupils, parents and communities.

We have also developed the Welcoming Schools Programme with the objective of supporting all schools to take proactive steps to make them more welcoming to pupils from all cultural backgrounds. Here the objective 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.

Our community faces considerable challenges if it wishes to deal with the issue of segregation in education. But I believe the time is right for all key stakeholders to consider how to build the pathway to truly shared education.

Enormous progress has undoubtedly been made towards a peaceful society but we cannot ignore the sectarian divisions that continue to run deep in many communities.

There is a strong feeling across the community, a view which is shared by the Fund, that there is still much work to be done to consolidate the peace process and build a truly shared society.

Given its track record, the Fund is ideally placed to tackle some of the more deep-seated divisions that characterise areas where the benefits of peace building and reconciliation have yet to be felt.

It is towards these communities that we feel the activities of the Fund can become increasingly focused should our donors be willing to provide continuing funding for the task.

This would enable the Fund to create opportunities for communities and the individuals within them, to engage in dialogue across sectarian divides, with the objective of helping them to learn, work and live together.

Fund Chairman praises ground-breaking work of Monaghan's Communities Sharing Project

At the County Monaghan Community Network AGM, Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Fund Chairman, praised the important and ground-breaking work being conducted by the County Monaghan Community Network, in particular the Communities Sharing Project which was officially launched in May of this year.

The Communities Sharing Project is supported by funding from the International Fund for Ireland and PEACE 111. The Project involves County Monaghan Community Network, County Armagh Community Development, and the Regeneration of South Armagh Rural Community working together with over 200 community-based organisations, throughout Monaghan and Armagh, to create real opportunities for dialogue, learning and positive relationship building on a cross-border, cross-community basis.

The Fund's Chairman said: "The results already achieved by the Communities Sharing Project are a shining example of what is possible when we open our doors to the wider community. I am confident that this innovative project is well on its way to achieving its main objective of building positive relations at a local level, by exploring, accepting and respecting the differences between the communities involved, with the ultimate aim of celebrating this difference."

Pictured from left to right: Breege Lenihan, Project Co-ordinator, County Monaghan Community Network; Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman, International Fund for Ireland; and Mary Mullin, Chairperson, County Monaghan Community Network.





Report highlights success of Fermanagh Trust cross-community schools programme

An independent report evaluating the first year of the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme (FTSEP) highlighted the positive impact the ground-breaking pilot initiative has had on almost 1,900 participating pupils and 50 schools throughout County Fermanagh since September 2009.

The overriding finding of the report was that the FTSEP had resulted in a significant level of cross-community contact between schools and pupils in Fermanagh - almost 104,000 hours of shared education over the course of the first year. In addition to the participating schools from County Fermanagh, the Programme also included three schools from the southern border counties, thereby providing a cross-border dimension to the Programme.

98% of participating primary school teachers and pupils felt that the Programme resulted in greater opportunities for inter-sector sharing and collaboration. 100% of participating post-primary pupils felt that the Programme helped to reduce fear, suspicion and mistrust of the other community - in fact 62% felt this was either fully or mostly achieved.

The Programme has been made possible through funding of £2.1m by the International Fund for Ireland and The Atlantic Philanthropies.



Making music together: Members of a joint brass band formed by Tempo PS and St Mary's PS in Tempo as part of the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme are pictured with (L-R) Dr Denis Rooney CBE, International Fund for Ireland; Joanna McVey, Fermanagh Trust; and Padraic Quirk, The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Artwork signifies beacon of hope for Gortview and Killybrack Close in Omagh



Fund Chairman Dr Denis Rooney CBE, officially unveiled two large pieces of artwork at the entrance of Gortview and Killybrack Close, Omagh as part of the Re-imaging Communities Programme of which the International Fund for Ireland is a key funder.

The Programme which is led by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland through the Shared Communities Consortium, places artists in the heart of communities to work with local people to tackle visible signs of sectarianism and racism to create a more welcoming environment for everyone.

The £21,950 project has been delivered by Lisanelly Regeneration Group with the assistance of artist Alan Burke and is being used to symbolise the huge strides the Gortview and Killybrack community has already undertaken to build a peaceful place to live where everyone is accepted and respected.

Zoe and Jade are pictured at one of two new sculptures that act as beacons of hope for Gortview and Killybrack Estates. Also pictured is from left Ann Ward, Arts Council NI; Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland; and Siobhan McDermott, Lisanelly Regeneration Group.

Integrating Communities

Grange and Bush 'Integrate Communities' with new project

At a meeting of the Board in November 2010, Grange and District Residents Association and the Bush Old School House Committee, both from the Cooley Peninsula in Co Louth were awarded funding of €14,962/€17,955 by the International Fund for Ireland towards a project designed to build relationships between the two groups (one predominantly catholic and the other protestant) and the communities they work in.

This grant builds on the participation by the two groups in the year long training and mentoring phase of the Fund's Integrating Community Organisations Programme. The Fund is also supporting the Bush

School House group with a capital grant to allow the old school house to be brought back into community use.

Westlife's Shane Filan lends his support to the Riverbrooke Cross Border Initiative

Friday 11th June 2010 proved to be an exciting and memorable day for children from the areas of Brookeborough (Co Fermanagh) and Riverstown (Co Sligo).

The Riverbrooke Cross Border Initiative, funded through the Integrating Community Organisations Programme, brought almost 100 pupils from eight schools to the Folk Park in Riverstown to celebrate their involvement in the Cultural Awareness

projects. The children worked together on a cross-community basis to explore the rich cultural traditions of a range of places and then presented their findings on the day.

The event was made extra special with a surprise visit from local celebrity Shane Filan of the internationally acclaimed boy band Westlife, who took time out from his busy schedule to come along and say hello, and to congratulate the children on their work and peace building activities.

This is but one example of a large number of challenging initiatives that the groups have used to cement long-term relations between the two areas and communities.

Two new projects launched by The Columba Community

Two innovative new projects have been launched by The Columba Community, a cross-community and cross-border organisation, to address the needs of people adversely impacted by the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland and the southern border counties.

The Young Adult Reality Dreams (Y.A.R.D.) Project, based at Columba House in Londonderry/Derry is a youth support initiative that aims to give young people and their families hope in their lives. The three-year project delivers spiritual development, self esteem building and accredited training to young people aged 15-25 and also provides information and support to young people and families affected by the disease of addiction.

The Sanctuary (Tearmann) Project is based at six chalets at the Iosas Centre at White Oaks in Muff, County Donegal. The Project is a new outreach service from the Columba Community, which offers a unique residential and conference facility for the local community and for target groups. It aims to bring cross-border, cross-community and inter-denominational bodies together in a safe place to share their stories and move further on the path to reconciliation.

Fr Neal Carlin, Columba Community and Dr Denis Rooney CBE, International Fund for Ireland discuss the Sanctuary Project at the Iosas Centre in Donegal.





Hand of Friendship reaches across communities and borders to advance Sharing in Education

The start of the school term in September 2010 marked the start of the Hand of Friendship Project, an innovative cross-community, cross-border schools initiative for young people from 16 primary schools throughout Tyrone, Down, Armagh, Monaghan, and Louth.

The aim of the three-year Hand of Friendship Project is to create solid cross-border and cross-community links, by examining the causes of sectarianism and promoting reconciliation with young people in their last two years of primary school.



Over the course of the three years, the Hand of Friendship Project will impact on nearly 1,300 young people, 100 teachers and over 200 parents. The Project is delivered by Junior Achievement Ireland, with funding support of £718,881/€860,257 from the International Fund for Ireland's Sharing in Education Programme, which is managed by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland.

Speaking at the launch, Fund Chairman, Dr Denis Rooney CBE, said: "Providing a safe and supportive environment for young people to meet, learn and work together is key to helping to foster peace and non-sectarianism - and therefore integral to the International Fund for Ireland's strategy to promote reconciliation. This Project's innovative approach and strong cross-border elements advance the concepts of sharing, integration and community relations to new levels."

Dr Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland is back at school with (from left) Caitriona Ruane MLA, Education Minister NI; Seán Haughey TD, Minister for Lifelong Learning Rol; and Della Clancy, Executive Director, Junior Achievement Ireland.

Maximising Community Space Crossing Borders

The Maximising Community Space Crossing Borders Programme is a two strand programme designed to increase the capacity of groups managing community halls, encourage wider usage of existing facilities and foster good relations.

A total of 51 community groups throughout rural and urban areas of Northern Ireland and the southern border counties have completed Strand One - a focused programme of training and mentoring. This support included group members being able to access a recognised qualification - the Open College Network (OCN) Level One Maximising Community Space. As part of this Strand, groups have to clearly demonstrate their commitment to working with the whole community and to improving community relations.

A further 26 groups joined Strand One in June 2010.

Pictured are members from Tedd Cross and District Community Association, Irvinestown; Townsend St Presbyterian Church, Belfast; Cranfield Cultural Society, Kilkeel; Muckcross Parish Church, near Kesh; Topp Rural Regeneration & Cultural Society, Ballymoney; and North Belfast Orange Hall, Belfast who visited Gillygooley Orange Hall during a study visit of community venues in the Omagh area in June 2010.





Sesame Tree returns to TV with second series

Picture shows Chairman Dr Denis Rooney CBE with Hilda, Potto and Archie at the launch of the second series of Sesame Tree, a version of Sesame Street made entirely in Northern Ireland which returned to our screens on 22nd November 2010.

Aligned with the Northern Ireland Statutory Curriculum, Sesame Tree aims to present positive images to children of themselves and others and to emphasise the importance of valuing diversity and becoming aware of our common humanity.

The TV series, which will be broadcast on CBeebies, also aims to help those working with young children in Northern Ireland to encourage personal and mutual understanding.



Lurgan's young people empowered to build peace



Young people from across Lurgan's interface areas have been learning how to deal with community relations and take practical steps towards peace building through the Youth Reach Project.

The Project is managed by the Shankill Parish Caring Association and funded by the International Fund for Ireland's Community Bridges Programme, which provided £226,540 towards the initiative. The Church of Ireland Priorities Fund also contributed to the Project with funding of £30,000.

Pictured are some of the young people with the 3D model of Lurgan they created with Richard Dougherty, Youth Reach Project Development Officer; Dermot McConaghy, Artist; Mr Mark Phillips, Senior US Aid official; and Mervyn Johnston, ECF Links.