



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

Fund news

Spring 2007

The Newsletter of the
International Fund for Ireland

President of the European Parliament briefed on the Fund's work

The Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, Mr. Denis Rooney, met Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles, President of the European Parliament in Dundalk on December 1st during his official visit to Ireland.

Mr. Rooney briefed the President about the Fund's work in bringing together the nationalist and unionist communities in Northern Ireland and in the border counties at a meeting on 'The European Union and the Peace Process' at Dundalk County Hall. Mr. Rooney also introduced representatives of cross-border and community groups who have benefited in recent years from EU support, including funding from the IFI, to the President. These included the New Border Generation Carlingford, Ardee Community Development Company Ltd, Carlingford Community Development, Redeemer Resource Centre/Cox's Demense, Kingscourt Enterprise Centre, Altanaveigh House in Co Down and also Knowledge Through Enterprise for Youth [KEY] which organises business training courses for 14 -16 year olds from schools in Northern Ireland and the border counties.

Speaking about the President's visit, International Fund for Ireland Chairman, Denis Rooney, said, "I was delighted to have had this opportunity to brief the President on the valuable work of the Fund and especially that currently being done in this cross-border region. A key aim of the Fund is to enable communities to help themselves. The groups which the President met here today are testament to the Fund's success in this regard, which has been greatly assisted with European Union support."



The Fund's Chairman, Mr. Denis Rooney is pictured with the President of the European Parliament Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D.

Donors to the Fund are:



United States of America



European Union



Canada



Australia



New Zealand



Foreword



As I write this, we have just passed the first anniversary of the launch of our five year strategy, 'Sharing this Space'.

In developing that strategy, we were conscious that while on the surface Northern Ireland and the border counties are more prosperous and stable than ever before, we needed to deal with the unpalatable fact there is still substantial segregation of the communities in these areas.

We made provision within our strategic planning therefore to look at how the Fund might best work to build integration, tackling particularly housing and shared education - two fundamental elements of our day to day lives which need to change if we are to see real and lasting change in our society.

We also felt that in keeping with the Fund's history of pioneering work in reconciliation and social development, our commitment to building integration should have the scope to allow us to fund pilot programmes, identifying and supporting best practice, allowing it to be shared more widely.

I am delighted that our 'Sharing Education' programme is now getting underway. The programme will be co-funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and managed by Queen's University Belfast. 'Sharing Education' will facilitate and encourage Northern Ireland's 12 Specialist Schools to share their academic expertise with other schools, using this sharing as a means of promoting contact and mutual understanding between schools for the benefit of everyone involved. Specialist Schools are schools which have been officially recognised by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland as having a very high standard of teaching in different curricular areas including performing arts, information and communication technology, business and enterprise, science, music and languages.

There will also be a strong emphasis on extending this contact and mutual understanding into the communities within which these schools are based.

The programme has been developed in consultation with the Specialist Schools and we have been encouraged by their enthusiasm and willingness to embark on this pilot with us. We are optimistic that by working with these schools over the next three years, the Fund will be able to make a lasting contribution to bringing children from all backgrounds in Northern Ireland together in a meaningful way through education.

Fund Chairman and delegation visit Canada



Pictured is Mr. Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland meeting the Honourable Peter MacKay, P.C., M.P. Minister of Foreign Affairs during his recent visit to Canada.

The Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, Denis Rooney, accompanied by the Joint Directors-General, Alexander Smith and Maeve Collins, visited Canada from October 31 to November 2.

Following consultations with the Irish Ambassador to Canada, H.E. Declan Kelly, the Chairman had meetings with a number of prominent Canadian politicians, including the Honourable Peter MacKay, P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs, members of the Canada Ireland Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group, representatives of the Canada Ireland Fund and other senior Canadian Government Officials. The Chairman also met with the US Ambassador to Canada, H.E. David Wilkins and attended a dinner hosted in his honour by the British Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Mr. Julian Evans.

The delegation discussed the work of the Fund and its relevance to peace building and post conflict models elsewhere in the world.

As a contributor to the Fund since 1987, Canada's donations are targeted specifically at the training of young people. Canada is the principal destination for trainees on the Wider Horizons Programme, which provides vocational training, personal development and work experience opportunities for 18-28 year olds. In the last ten years, 200 Wider Horizons projects and almost 4,000 young people have visited Canada for their overseas training.

On the final day of the visit, the Chairman visited a Wider Horizons group in Cambridge, Ontario and met a number of young participants, host families, host employers and their trainers.

USAID sees Fund at work across Ireland

Marilynn Schmidt, Director of the Office of European Country Affairs of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), visited a number of IFI funded projects across the island of Ireland in November.

The four day visit was an opportunity for Ms. Schmidt to see first hand how the Fund is making a tangible difference to many communities throughout Ireland. Eleven projects were visited in total, including The Corrymeela Community, one of Northern Ireland's oldest and most respected reconciliation organisations, which provides reconciliation programmes and opportunities tailored to the needs of schools, youth groups, Churches and

community based organisations on an island-wide basis.

After visiting several other IFI funded organisations in Belfast and Antrim, Ms. Schmidt went on to Derry and the Waterside Development Trust (WDT). The Trust was established by a number of residents over twenty years ago, to create employment and develop facilities for local people. With funding from the IFI and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment the Trust has made a major contribution to regeneration of the area through the provision of low cost business facilities for new business start ups.

The final visit was to the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, where Ms. Schmidt had a meeting with the US Ambassador to Ireland H.E. Mr. Thomas C. Foley, followed by a tour of the centre. The residential centre caters for over 10,000 people annually. It is a well established and internationally respected organisation which has made a significant contribution to reconciliation and the emergence of a shared and peaceful future on the island of Ireland. The Fund has recently granted monies to refurbish the Centre's existing facilities and to provide extra space and accommodation which will increase its capacity by one third.



Marilynn Schmidt, Director of the Office of European Country Affairs of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and US Ambassador to Ireland H.E. Mr. Thomas C. Foley meet Sheila Cannon, Development Officer at Glencree Centre for Reconciliation



£8.5m / €12.4m for new projects

At its last meeting in December, the Board of the Fund approved £8.5m/€12.4m of funding to support a range of initiatives that aim to build better cross community and cross border relationships in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. It brings the Fund's total commitments since its inception over twenty years ago to £576m/€849m.

As part of the latest package of funding, the International Fund announced £0.5/€0.73m of support through its 'Community Bridges' programme, to promote reconciliation and stronger, more positive community relations, with a clear emphasis on allowing people to address their issues of difference and division more effectively.

Among the projects to benefit from this new funding is The 174 Trust, an inter-denominational faith based community development organisation in north Belfast which will receive support to implement its community relations strategy. The Trust's work focuses on areas with high degrees of violence and polarisation and aims to secure a shared future for young people and future generations.

Tides Training, a not for profit organisation established in 2000, will also receive support. Tides Training emerged from the Corrymeela Community, one of the most well established and respected reconciliation organisations in Northern Ireland. It specialises in delivering training programmes in community relations and mediation and its 'Breakout Labour Mobility Project' is designed to address the effects of sectarianism, community conflict and segregation on labour mobility. The Fund's support will make this programme more widely available following a successful pilot in south and east Belfast. It is hoped that up to 300 individuals will now be able to take part in this innovative programme.

The Holywell Trust will also receive funds towards their 'Walled City Neighbourhood Project' to be based in Derry city centre.

The project will assess the local communities' perception of the city centre as a 'shared space' and engage users in the locality to make a difference to improving community relations in the area.

The Irish Peace Institute, formally established in 1984 and based in the University of Limerick, will use funds provided by the IFI to build the Institute's capacity in preparation for a major three year reconciliation programme, building sustainable cross-community and cross border relationships between designated districts on the island of Ireland.

Speaking at the Board meeting, International Fund Chairman, Denis Rooney said: "We are finishing 2006 with a sense of tentative optimism about Northern Ireland's political future and yet there is still so much to be done to secure a lasting peace and to start to overcome the issues of the past so that we can move forward together.

"The funding support which we have announced today is part of the Fund's continuing commitment to delivering sustainable activity, which will have long term impact in local communities - we must now, more than ever, concern ourselves with delivering long term change for Northern Ireland and the border counties.

"The work of the Fund would not be possible without the support of our donors and the Board would like to express its thanks to the donors to the Fund which include the United States, the European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand."

IN BRIEF

Work of the Fund to be captured in new book

As the International Fund for Ireland approaches its 21st anniversary, the Board of the Fund has commissioned Alf McCreary, award-winning journalist and author, to write a book about the Fund's work over the last two decades on the island of Ireland.

The aim of the book is to capture the spirit of the Fund and to reveal the stories of those people whose lives have been transformed by the Fund's work in their area.

Alf McCreary, a correspondent for the Belfast Telegraph, has begun research on the project and it is due to be published in March 2008.

EU Funding Commitment To 2010

The IFI Regulation (Council Regulation concerning Community financial contributions to the International Fund for Ireland, 2007-2010) was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 21 December 2006. This provides for an EU contribution to the Fund of €60m/£40m. €15m/£10m annually for the years 2007 to 2010. This brings the amount pledged by the EU to the IFI to date to €349m/£239m.

Visit from Sri-Lankan delegation to learn about peace building

The International Fund for Ireland hosted a delegation from Sri Lanka in October. Their visit, organised by Chambers Ireland, gave them the opportunity to hear from individuals and organisations across the island of Ireland who have first hand experiences in peace building.

The senior delegation included members of the country's Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry. They heard about the Fund's strategy of using economic concerns to bring together the nationalist and unionist communities in Northern Ireland and the border counties.

After meeting in Dublin, the visiting party went to Derry to visit communities and businesses that have benefited from the work of the International Fund for Ireland.

Speaking about the delegation's visit, International Fund for Ireland Chairman, Denis Rooney, said, "We are delighted to host this prestigious delegation from Sri Lanka. Since its establishment, the International Fund has promoted economic advancement as an important means of encouraging reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland. Although much work remains to be done in this area, remarkable progress has been made towards achieving lasting peace and prosperity in both parts of Ireland. Hopefully, Sri Lanka will be able to benefit from making economic development and business co-operation a key element in building peace."