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UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEACE III PROGRAMME

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This paper outlines the progress made on implementation and closure of the PEACE III Programme since the last Monitoring Committee meeting on 29 July 2015.

2.0 PEACE III - Key Programme Indicators

2.1 All PEACE III project activity ceased on 31 December 2015.

2.2 Programme expenditure levels have exceeded 99% of the Programme value.

2.3 The PEACE III Programme has 21 indicators which have Programme targets; 16 have been met or exceeded and 5 are still not complete as the activity continues to be recorded against these indicators. Please note, these figures are taken from the latest Programme Annual Implementation Report submitted to the Commission in June 2015, and then will be updated as part of the closure process to reflect progress until the end of December 2015.

A selection of key targets for the PEACE III Programme are listed below with the Programme targets identified:

- 7,252 events that address sectarianism with over 174,000 participants having attended these events against respective Programme targets of 5,000 and 56,000;
- 7,367 individuals have received trauma counselling against a Programme target of 5,600;

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- 2,169 conflict resolution workshops have been held with 25,296 participants having attended these workshops. These are against Programme targets of 1,300 and 13,000 respectively.
- 2.4 Of the 215 programme projects, 198 project files have now been closed and 17 remain “open”. All 17 remaining project files will be closed in early 2016 following the completion of any outstanding administrative issues.
- 2.5 In the Annual Control report for 2015 the Audit Authority has reported a total projected Programme error rate of 0.12% which is well below the materiality level of 2%.
- 2.6 As a multi-annual programme PEACE III required pro-active management of the levels of commitment over the programme period. The level of slippage, both actual and anticipated were closely monitored and levels of commitment adjusted accordingly. Over the programme period the SEUPB issued letters of offer to the value of €367.7 million, which represents 110% of the programme value.
- 2.7 A slippage level of €3.4 million crystallised late in 2015. SEUPB actively managed this gap in expenditure from early in 2015, however late and unforeseen under-spending in projects occurred in the final months, resulting in the gap. This level of slippage should be set in the context of the following:
- the removal of a €21.19 million project (Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre) late in 2013, which then required the re-allocation of this money late in the programme period;
 - the underspend of significant levels of funding from Local Authorities;
 - the delays and underspends occurring in the Girdwood project, which was allocated a sizeable additional offer early in 2015 in line their projections, but unfortunately resulted in a significant underspend late in 2015;
 - The budget of the programme is in Euros, and all claims and reimbursement from the EU are in Euros. However a significant proportion of the letters of offer and subsequent expenditure occurs in sterling and over the lifetime of the programme the exchange rates have varied from 1.11 to 1.51. This represented

a 36% change in value and presented a significant requirement in the management of commitment and expenditure.

Despite these challenges the programme has achieved a very high level of absorption. The SEUPB continues to explore options with DFP /DPER and relevant Accountable Departments to maximise the drawdown of EU funds through the closure period, by utilising other potentially eligible expenditure that was incurred by projects that has not been certified to the EU Commission.

3.0 Closure Activity

- 3.1 In order to ensure that all closure documents are submitted to the Commission by the deadline of 31 March 2017, the SEUPB has developed a detailed work plan to ensure the successful and efficient administrative closure of the PEACE III Programme. As part of this SEUPB will prepare the final draft closure/implementation report by June 2016. This will then be forwarded to the Audit Authority by September 2016. All the closure documentation, including the final Implementation Report (Managing Authority), the Final Claim (Certifying Authority) and the Final Control Report (Audit Authority) will be submitted prior to the deadline of 31 March 2017. The PMC will approve the Final Implementation Report before submission.

4.0 Update on recent PEACE III project achievements

- 4.1 Significant PEACE III project achievements since July 2015:

The 'V36' cross-community park officially opened on 23 September 2015. An exciting new state-of-the-art facility situated beside the Valley Leisure Centre in Newtownabbey and named after the postcode of the area, the 'V36' project received £3.58m of EU PEACE III funding and has transformed an area of contested, under-used open space into an iconic new shared facility. A floodlit 3G pitch suitable for football, rugby and Gaelic sports has been created, in addition to a civic linear park with a performance area for events and a unique 'Gulliver's Travels'- themed adventure play area for families. The park also includes areas of open space, paths, public art displays and a picnic area. These new attractions will complement the existing leisure and play facilities currently on offer at the Valley Leisure Centre.

The People's Park in Portadown was officially launched on 26 October 2015. The refurbishment of the Park was made possible following Craigavon Borough Council securing £5,469,045 for the SPACE Project from the European Union's PEACE III Programme. Finance Minister Arlene Foster MLA attended the launch to witness the fantastic new features dotted throughout the sprawling urban oasis including a state-of-the-art play park, themed gardens, a pond area, two bridges, two grass soccer pitches, a grass multi sports pitch catering for Soccer, American Football, Gaelic Games and Rugby as well as a 7-aside 3G synthetic pitch, an amphitheater and 5-aside multi use games area (MUGA), both of which are flood-lit.

The Termon Project, which was launched on 14 December 2015, is designed to support greater levels of cross-community engagement on the border of Donegal and Fermanagh. In receipt of €8 / £5.6 million worth of support the project has helped to transform the twin villages of Pettigo in Donegal and Tullyhommon in Fermanagh using the river Termon as a focus for the regeneration work. Much needed community and recreational facilities have been provided under the project in order to create a safe, shared space where people from different communities and cultures can meet and learn from each other. A pedestrian footbridge has been constructed, which spans the river Termon, uniting both villages across the border line. A picnic area and village gateway into a public riverside park on the Tullyhommon bank of the river has also been created to encourage more interaction between the two villages.

The Girdwood Community Hub project, which was launched on 15 January 2016, received £12 million of PEACE III funding and involves the creation of a shared space community leisure facility on part of the former Girdwood Barracks site in North Belfast. It will include multi-purpose meeting rooms and opportunities for sports coaching in order to develop cross-community good relations activities. It will also provide education and vocational courses for the local communities.

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4.2 Upcoming PEACE III project events:

Date	Project	Funding Award	Location
March TBC	Apprentice Boys of Derry – Siege Museum project The project involves the creation of a new visitor's centre and renovation of the existing Apprentice Boys memorial hall. The visitor's centre has been designed to educate people about the Great Siege of 1689 and build upon the cross-community outreach activity, already undertaken by the ABOD.	£2m	Society Street, Londonderry
March TBC	Earls' project – involves the construction of a new 30,000 sq. ft. community building at the Beechvalley/Railway Park site; the development of a 6.9km long community integration trail around Dungannon town centre to link historically segregated communities; and the implementation of a programme of integration and peace-building events and activities.	£7m	Dungannon

5.0 Recommendation.

The Monitoring Committee is requested to:

- **Note** the Progress in implementation and closure of the programme;
- **Note** the upcoming project events for the programme.